



**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
هيئة الأمم المتحدة - المفوضية السامية لشؤون اللاجئين



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# A Year in Review 2013

**UNHCR Syria**



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Reporting Unit  
Damascus, Syria



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## Glossary

<b>AGDM</b>	<b>Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming</b>
<b>AV</b>	<b>Armoured Vehicle</b>
<b>CBI</b>	<b>Community-based Initiatives</b>
<b>CBO</b>	<b>Community-based Organization</b>
<b>CRI</b>	<b>Core Relief Item</b>
<b>CS</b>	<b>Community Services</b>
<b>DOSA</b>	<b>Department of Social Affairs</b>
<b>DRC</b>	<b>Danish Refugee Council</b>
<b>FO</b>	<b>Field Office</b>
<b>GBV</b>	<b>Gender Based Violence</b>
<b>GoH</b>	<b>Governorate of Hassakeh</b>
<b>GOPA</b>	<b>Greek Orthodox Patriarchy</b>
<b>IDP</b>	<b>Internally Displaced Person</b>
<b>IMC</b>	<b>International Medical Corps</b>
<b>IOM</b>	<b>International Organization of Migration</b>
<b>IPs</b>	<b>Implementing Partners</b>
<b>LNGO</b>	<b>Local Non-governmental Organization</b>
<b>MFA</b>	<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b>
<b>MHPSS</b>	<b>Mental Health and Psychosocial Support</b>
<b>MoE</b>	<b>Ministry of Education</b>
<b>MoH</b>	<b>Ministry of Health</b>
<b>MoLA</b>	<b>Ministry of Local Administration</b>
<b>NFI</b>	<b>Non Food Item</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-governmental Organization</b>
<b>OCHA</b>	<b>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</b>
<b>OVP</b>	<b>Outreach Volunteers Programme</b>
<b>PHC</b>	<b>Primary Health Care</b>
<b>POC</b>	<b>Person of Concern</b>
<b>PSS</b>	<b>Psychological Social Support</b>
<b>PU</b>	<b>Première Urgence</b>
<b>RSD</b>	<b>Refugee Status Determination</b>
<b>SARC</b>	<b>Syrian Arab Red Crescent</b>
<b>SGBV</b>	<b>Sexual and Gender Based Violence</b>
<b>SHARP</b>	<b>Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan</b>
<b>SSSD</b>	<b>Syrian Society for Social Development</b>
<b>SWU</b>	<b>Syrian Women's Union</b>
<b>The Trust</b>	<b>The Syria Trust for Development</b>
<b>UASC</b>	<b>Unaccompanied and Separated Children</b>
<b>UNDSS</b>	<b>United Nations Department for Safety and Security</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	<b>United Nations Population Fund</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children's Fund</b>
<b>UNMAS</b>	<b>United Nations Mine Action Service</b>
<b>UNRWA</b>	<b>United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees</b>
<b>WASH</b>	<b>Water Sanitation and Hygiene</b>
<b>WFP</b>	<b>World Food Programme</b>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>World Health Organization</b>



UNHCR Representative Tarik Kurdi with the Syrian IDPs in the cash assistance center in Damascus/B.Diab. ©UNHCR Damascus 2013

## Foreword from the UNHCR Representative

This year, we have witnessed the third year of the crisis in Syria. As the year ends the statistics show that 6.5 million people are internally displaced within Syria and 9.3 million people in need. These statistics do not include the 42,246 vulnerable refugees that remain within Syria. The needs are great and as we continue to do our best to help, it must not be forgotten, the biggest humanitarian body in Syria is the Syrian people. It is admirable that at this point in the crisis the fact that Syrians are helping other Syrians can still be witnessed in every governorate in Syria.

Despite all this assistance the effects of this crisis can be seen everywhere. I do not need to look beyond our own staff, 391 of them, who regularly come to me with heart breaking accounts of loss. Homes have been destroyed, people have been kidnapped or suffered from the inevitable rise in criminality that comes with such a situation. Approximately half of UNHCR staff are themselves displaced, despite this our staff continue to work and because of these heroic efforts we have been able to stay and deliver. UNHCR will do this, because until a political solution can be found, I firmly believe that we as the international community have the responsibility to strive to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable in Syria. Our every move must be to do that.

There are challenges, but where there have been challenges, we have found a way. Access being a key challenge; many commentators simplify the issue and ask us if it is the fault of this or that side, or if we have delivered to this or that side. In order to deliver responsibly, UNHCR makes assessments on whether to go into an area depending on which checkpoints will be passed, who is controlling what area, specific information available as to the needs in that area, the availability of implementing partners willing and able to be

there, and the ability of UNHCR to subsequently monitor the assistance. Whatever happens UNHCR's efforts will be focused on delivering to the most vulnerable Syrians wherever they may be in Syria.

There are more challenges to be considered and more ahead. During these difficult times our refugee community is a source of strength. There are still 42,246 refugees, mainly from Iraq but also from countries like Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan who have fled their countries and continue to be displaced internally within Syria. I have spoken to many of our refugees and I am inspired by the way that they keep on going. We have reassured them we will continue to assist them alongside the Syrians.

This report will show our challenges, our key successes and the ways in which we could improve. There is one thing that I would like to mention here; out of real concern for the safety and security of staff we were cautious about providing more information on the work that we are doing in Syria and the challenges we face. We continued to work without highlighting many activities that we do. The situation in Syria has changed, with more reporters in country than ever before, it is clear that there is more information that we can share. With the ambitious plan of 2014 we look forward to being able to tell the story, so that we can provide a better understanding of the plight, concerns, and needs of the most vulnerable within Syria.

**Tarik Kurdi**  
Representative



## Introduction

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and find solutions to refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

UNHCR started its operations in Syria with the first Iraqi war in the early nineties and expanded its operation exponentially with the massive influx of Iraqi refugees in the middle of the last decade. In 2012 in the context of the Syrian crisis, UNHCR expanded its operations to support the increasing number of internally displaced Syrians.

UNHCR receives facilitation from the Syrian Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirming the Government's commitment to expand humanitarian space including to hard-to-reach areas. Furthermore, approvals have been granted to bring food and Core Relief Items across the Iraq-Syria border. Procedures taken by the Syrian Government have been simplified to facilitate passage through checkpoints, to issue visas for international staff, and

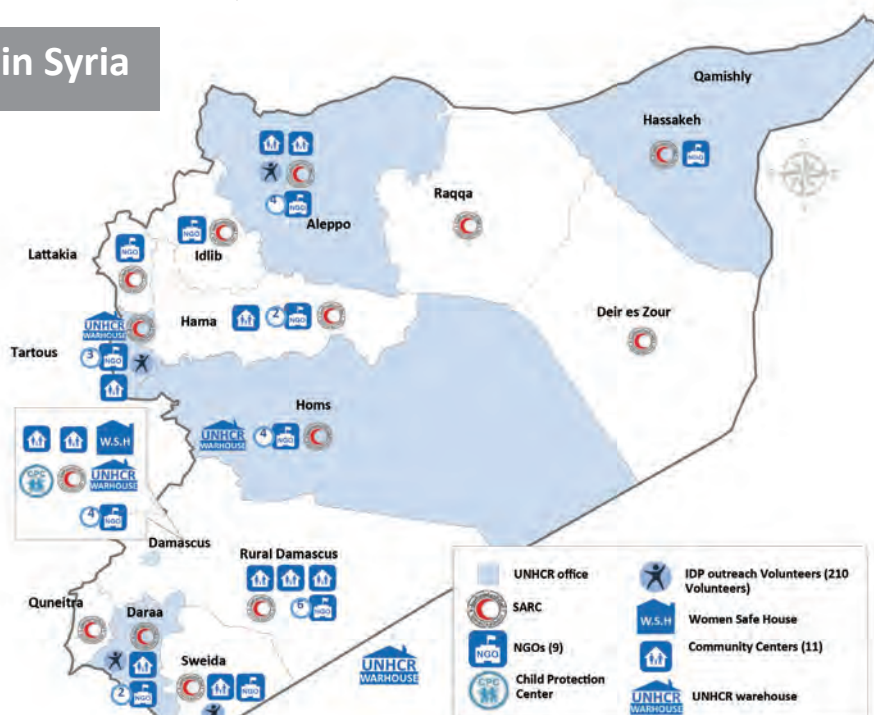
to establish UN hubs in different areas in the country in order to improve outreach to beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, UNHCR work has faced many challenges such as the difficulty in making new partnerships due to illegibility and incapacity of some partners, and fluidity of the security situation due to shifting lines of conflict causing repetitive displacement and thus making it difficult to locate and assist IDPs. Other challenges include the damage to essential services, lack of basic infrastructure, and difficulties in verifying the credibility of the information received. Furthermore, the operation in Syria has recently been rated to be an E class, non-family, hardship duty station due to the rise in mortar attacks, shelling, and kidnaping of UN staff.

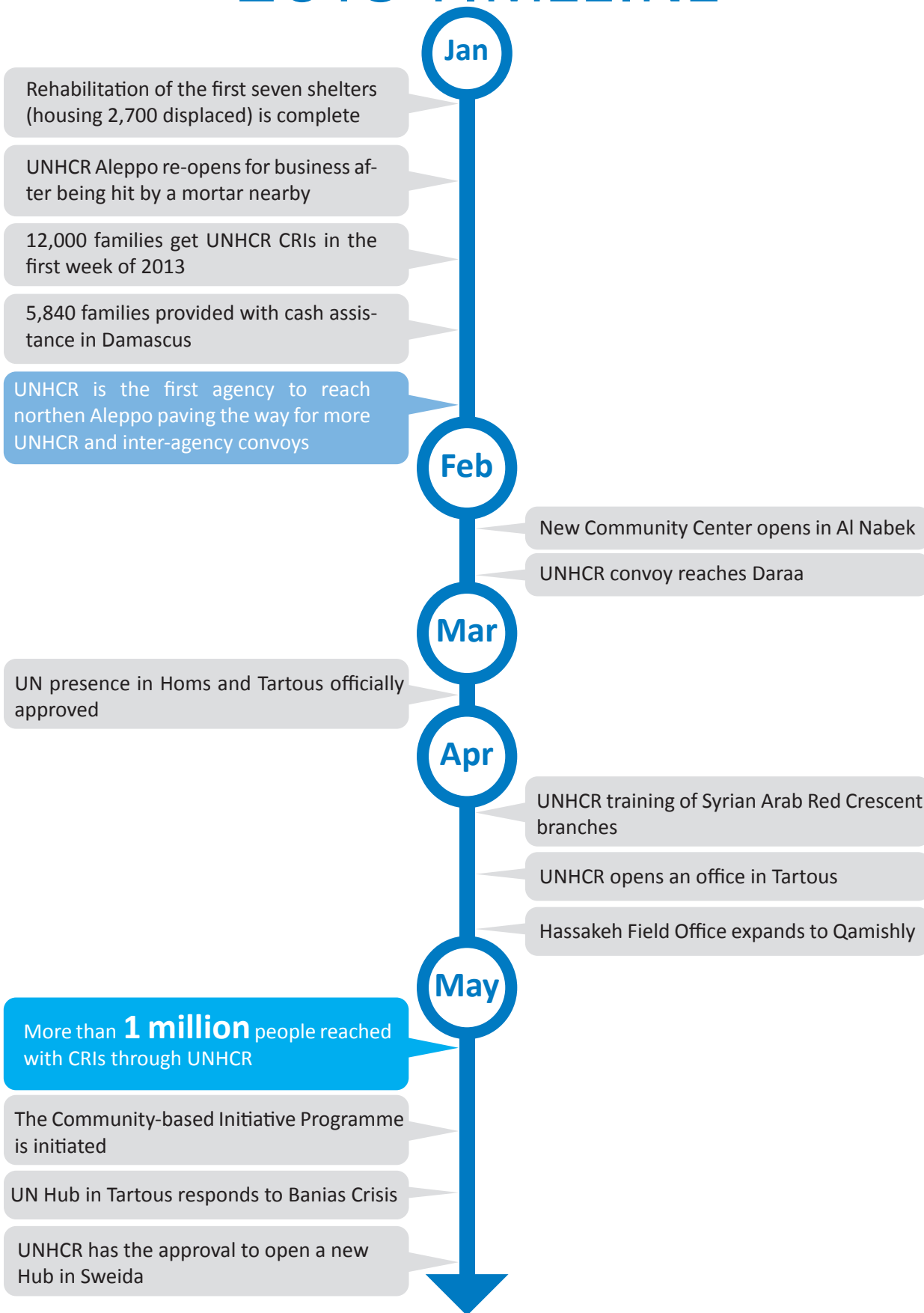
In spite of all these challenges, UNHCR is still committed to achieving its objectives in Syria and helping vulnerable people all around the country through its operations, outlined later in the report.

N.B: As the statistics in the report are being produced right at the beginning of the year many of them are subject to verification and may change later on. The statistics provided are either final or based on realistic estimates of figures for the end of 2013.

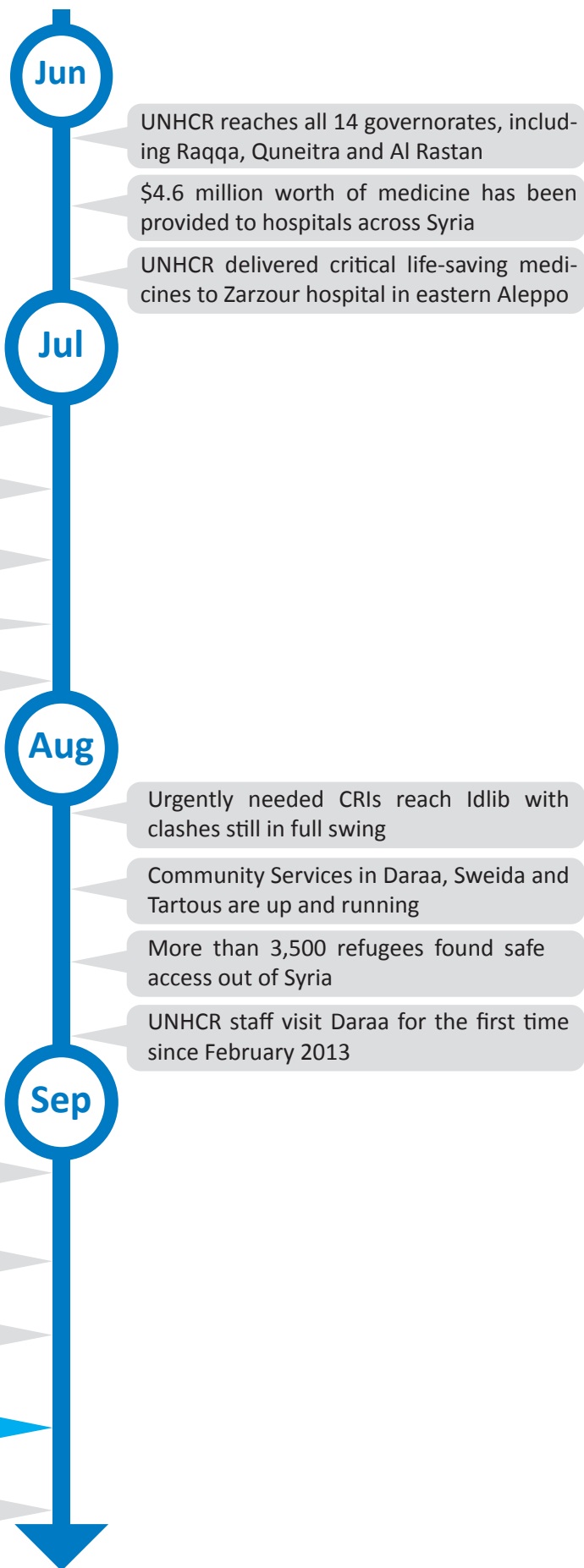
### UNHCR Presence in Syria

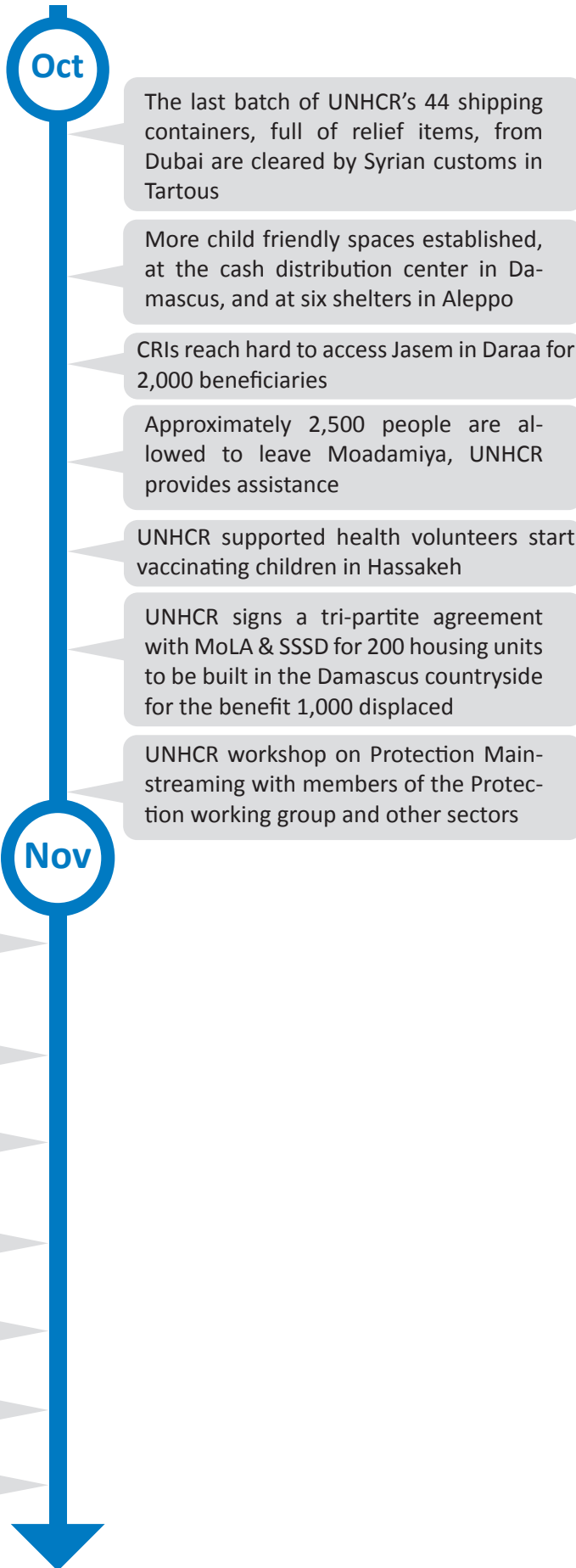


# 2013 TIMELINE









8 out of 16 trucks are confiscated at the last checkpoint to Zafaraniyeh, Homs – returned on the same day following intervention by the MFA

UNHCR provides cash grants to 7,800 children from Iraq for primary & secondary education

Al Nabek Community Center closed on account of the security situation

UNHCR airlifts Polio vaccines into Hassakeh for 538,000 children

Dec

UNHCR outreach volunteers participate in 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. 650 refugees and IDPs benefitted from awareness raising sessions, and recreational activities

More than **3 million** people reached with CRIs through UNHCR

Capacity building in Child Protection: 50 participants from 14 NGOs across six governorates

Cash assistance finalized in Lattakia - 32,750 individuals reached

SHARP 2014 finalized

UNHCR airlifts items for 50,000 IDPs from Iraq to Hassakeh

End  
2013

## Operations in 2013



Protection



Core Relief Items



Shelter



Health



## Protection and Human Rights Based Response

## Protection and Human Rights Based Response

UNHCR's presence in Syria since 1991 and its mandate have enabled unique access and insight into the country. Since the advent of the crisis in Syria, UNHCR has exercised its leading role in protection to full effect. However, the scope and modalities of UNHCR's engagement in the IDP situation is different; protection interventions including prevention and response activities are fulfilled primarily through implementing partners. Therefore, the primary area of focus has been capacity building alongside a myriad of other activities tailored to either prevent protection concerns from arising or to provide support to survivors. The consideration of protection concerns is integral to all work done by UNHCR, including within Syria.

### Protection of civilians and advocacy to promote principles under international humanitarian and human rights law

UNHCR took the lead in supporting the Humanitarian Country Team's advocacy on the protection of civilians in Syria and access to humanitarian aid in hard-to-reach areas.

The objective of UNHCR's work with IDPs is to promote the protection of their human rights on an equal footing with other citizens, focusing on those protection issues and needs that directly relate to displacement. In situations of armed conflicts, all parties have the responsibility to respect the rights of all civilians, including the fundamental guarantees provided for under the international humanitarian and human rights law. UNHCR along with members of the Protection and Community Services Sector and the Country Team advocated throughout the year for access to IDPs in hard-to-reach areas; these included, amongst others, Moadamiya, Zahraa and Nubel, Daraa, Deir es Zour and Aleppo. Impartiality, confidentiality and neutrality are core protection principles that have been mainstreamed in all UNHCR programmes. Further advocacy and promotion of the law is done through the various training sessions intended to build capacity within Syria (outlined below).

### Protection Monitoring

UNHCR has systematically observed the needs and concerns of the displaced persons, through five offices, 11 Community Centers and visiting collective shelters. The protection team also visited over 300 shelters, assessing vulnerabilities and mapping the protection concerns of more than 8,000 households all across Syria: in Aleppo, Homs, Hassakeh, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Tartous and Daraa.

Through the protection monitoring exercise, UNHCR collected and analyzed information on the situation of women, children, disabled, elderly, and practices of discrimination against IDPs. Additionally, one of the objectives of UNHCR's protection monitoring was used to ensure that humanitarian assistance was carried out in accordance with the principles of humanity and impartiality and without discrimination.

It has been clearly observed by UNHCR staff, outreach volunteers and implementing partners that since late 2012 that there has been a marked increase in domestic violence, a significant rise in child labor and still more family separation. In addition to the general observation of human rights violations and the failure of all parties to adhere to the provisions of international humanitarian law, a full outline of protection concerns noted by UNHCR staff and partners are: sexual and gender-based violence, child protection concerns, documentation issues and lack of access to services and humanitarian aid.

## Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

SGBV is one of the most challenging to identify within Syria as survivors are reluctant to report or speak out often on account of stigmatization, shame or fear.

**Domestic Violence** remains the most widely reported issue faced by women and children in Syria. The instability and financial difficulties in Syria continue to affect the entire household. Many men have lost their jobs and cannot afford their families' living expenses.

Focused group discussions revealed that many women had experienced an increase in violence towards them by their husbands after their displacement. Reports from implementing partners also indicated that parents have become increasingly violent and aggressive in their behavior towards their children, presumably due to conflict-related stress, financial strains and the lack of long-term solutions for their families. As such, growing levels of domestic violence have been reported between parents and parents toward their children as well as between siblings and peers. Implementing partners report that as a result children have suffered from a range of psychological symptoms such as speech difficulties, slurred speech, dysphasia and high levels of fear.

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

**Forced Marriage/Early marriage:** In 2013, reports revealed an increasing prevalence of forced and early marriages in IDP communities, where families have resorted to it as a negative coping mechanism due to general insecurity and lack of livelihood opportunities. Young females living in areas of conflict or in collective shelters are among those who have been largely affected. In the present circumstances, families believe that early marriage is a necessary means of protection for their daughters in the current situation.

‘Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties’ (Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

**Trafficking** for exploitation has been reported as an increasing trend. Traffickers often deceive women into some form of unofficial marriage, but in extreme cases, young women and girls have been trafficked with the full knowledge of their families.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude (Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

**Sexual violence:** Unverified reports from implementing partners reveal that more women are subjected to sexual violence. However, because societal norms can often reinforce survivors stigma and support impunity for perpetrators, victims have been reluctant to report incidents. Risk of exposure to sexual violence has been exacerbated through protracted displacement, lack of basic services and limited support mechanisms. Therefore, in 2014, UNHCR will seek to strengthen its services to prevent and capacity to respond to reports of sexual violence.

The Government of Syria has made efforts to restrict such practices through Law 11 (2013), which amended Article 489 of the Penal Code:

- “1. Whomever coerces any person into participating in a sexual act using violence or threat shall be sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour.
2. The offender should be sentenced to death if:
  - a. The victim is under fifteen (15) years of age;
  - b. The sexual assault has been committed at gunpoint.”

## UNHCR Response

### (a) Preventative measures

For internally displaced SGBV victims, awareness-raising sessions are held in collective shelters, while refugees are able to derive benefit from awareness-raising activities in community centers. The sessions are extended to women, men, girls and boys, and are tailored to address the most common concerns in an effort to alter per-

ception towards SGBV. Focus group discussions have also been organized to address issues such as early marriage and domestic violence. In 2013, through various implementing partners, general counseling and support was provided to 6,738 women.

A further 32,059 individuals benefitted from one-time cash-assistance, especially the most vulnerable groups, including female headed households, which mitigates the effect of displacement. It is hoped that it will also prevent vulnerable IDPs from resorting to negative coping mechanisms.



### (b) Assisting survivors

Outreach volunteers conduct frequent home visits to survivors in their communities, to bring support directly to them. After counseling, SGBV survivors are referred to the relevant services such as medical assistance, psychosocial support, financial assistance, safe houses for survivors at imminent risk and empowerment activities. The referral system put in place ensures confidentiality is respected at every level of the response.

In Damascus and Rural Damascus, UNHCR has two psychosocial support programmes, aimed to assist in healing the trauma suffered. Psychosocial support is provided at SARC clinics in Zahera, Mezeeh, Qudsaya, and Al Nabek, where 2,224 displaced individuals have benefitted. Also, under a joint project between UNHCR, UNFPA and the SARC, mobile teams visit collective shelters in Damascus and Rural Damascus where 20,114 displaced individuals were provided with psychosocial support through a range of activities and facilitated sessions.

**More than 22,000 displaced individuals have received psychosocial support in Damascus and Rural Damascus**

UNHCR also, through an implementing partner, runs a safe house for SGBV survivors. Women, children and other survivors of SGBV are also provided with recreational activities and educational courses, to help improve their general well-being. Fostering safe spaces and safe houses are essential for recovery and reintegration. The capacity of the UNHCR-supported safe house has been expanded to accommodate up to 40 individuals. In total and across Syria nearly 40,000 individuals have been provided with recreational and psychosocial support. A further 9,871 have benefitted from livelihood and self-reliance activities.

## Child Protection Concerns

**Unaccompanied/Separated Children:** Separation of Syrian families has been a major concern for UNHCR. Through monitoring visits, partners and outreach volunteers reported that a growing number of children are unaccompanied and separated from their parents due to internal displacement, death of family members or movements to neighboring countries. In Syria, young children and infants are also exposed to the risk of being unaccompanied or separated.

**“States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will...” Article 9(1) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child**

**Child Labor** has been consistently reported as a problem in Syria even before the crisis. However, there has been a tangible increase, with UNHCR staff and implementing partners identifying approximately 10% of children at collective shelters in Damascus collective working in carpentry, factories and food delivery, to support themselves

**‘The right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development’ (Article 32 (1) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child)**





and/or their families. Families are under considerable financial pressure, which contributes to decisions to send children out to work.

**Child Recruitment:** Increasing numbers of children in Syria are being recruited by different armed groups on both sides of the conflict with, unaccompanied and separated children more at risk than others. Children under 18 years of age have been used in both combat and support roles, such as loading bullets, delivering food and evacuating the injured.

“States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities” (Article 38(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

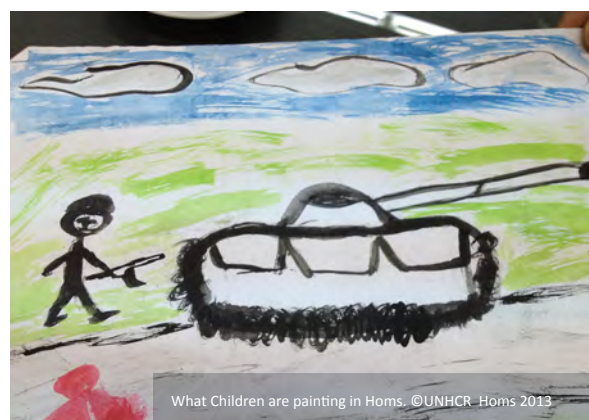
On 24 June 2013 the Government of Syria issued Decree 11/2013 that states that “all persons who recruit children (under the age of 18 years) with a view to involve them in combat operations or other related work ... will be subject to hard punishment...”

## UNHCR Response

UNHCR’s child protection response has been three-fold, and achieved through two implementing partners, the SARC and Syrian Society for Social Development. 27,976 children benefitted

from activities and assistance to address these protection concerns. The types of assistance included, amongst other things:

- i. Child Friendly Spaces: 10 Child Friendly Spaces were established in Damascus and Aleppo, in addition, to the Child Friendly Center in Damascus.
- ii. Material assistance was provided to 15,969 children, such as pajamas, toys and other items to keep children warm during winter.
- iii. Recreational activities took place in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Aleppo and Hama with 9,614 children benefitting.



## Documentation Issues

Most displaced persons, who are compelled to flee their homes due to insecurity, leave their personal status documents behind, or otherwise lose them during their flight. Undocumented individuals, including those who fail to register civil events, are among the most disenfranchised, which is a growing concern as it leaves them vulnerable to harassment, exploitation, detention

“Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law” (article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

“The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his parents” (article 7(1) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child)

and other dangers. In addition, it makes it more difficult for them to access the few amenities left, including education. There is therefore an urgent need for legal assistance, counseling and intervention.

## UNHCR Response

Through The Syrian Woman's Union (SWU), UNHCR provided legal counseling and awareness raising on documentation and personal status law. This assistance was provided in seven areas of Damascus and Rural Damascus. In September 2013, this assistance was expanded through implementing partner Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) who has been providing this assistance in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo and Tartous through a network of lawyers in those areas. 5,406 individuals benefitted from legal advice and assistance in 2013.

## Capacity Building

As the Protection lead, UNHCR has put a strong emphasis on enhancing the operational and protection capacity of national and international partners to respond to the emerging needs of IDPs and to support existing and local community mechanisms. Throughout 2013, UNHCR has conducted twelve trainings for a total of 356 staff members from local NGOs, UN agencies and on occasion members of key governmental departments. The training covered five key areas: i) the code of conduct, protection principles and standards for humanitarian workers, ii) the legal framework in relation to protection assistance for the displaced, iii) protection responses to sexual and gender based violence, iv) child protection and v) training on community-based approaches and management of community centers.

### **Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Workers:**

Training sessions on the code of conduct for humanitarian workers as well as national stakeholders, including on needs assessments, were provided to 80 NGO staff members accredited in Syria to work with international organisations on three separate occasions. The first of these events was heavily reported in the local media and was also attended by key individuals from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

**Legal Framework on Protection for IDPs:** Lawyers employed with UNHCR implementing partner, Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) received training on the guiding principles of internal displacement and the legal framework in relation to protection for IDPs. A further set of trainings were organised for 21 lawyers operating in Damascus, Tartous, Homs and Daraa on mediation skills.

**Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV):** UNHCR organised a series of training for implementing partners on SGBV prevention, response and mainstreaming. The training highlighted 10 priority topics including, trauma, gender, roles in the family, early marriage, domestic violence, women empowerment, confidentiality and sexual harassment.

**Child Protection:** Based on the increasing need to respond to child protection concerns, UNHCR, in conjunction with International Medical Corps (IMC), conducted three sets of training, lasting seven days at a time for 70 frontline workers from NGOs operating across Syria. The main aim of the training was to create a common understanding on child protection and establish what could be done to increase children's access and enjoyment of their rights. The training involves two stages. Level 1, which was conducted in 2013, targeted the majority of NGOs involved in child protection and focused on psychological first aid and support to children witnessing displacement and/or suffering trauma as well as the conduct of assessments and establishment of child friendly spaces. Basic training was also given on child protection monitoring, minimum standards and response.

These trainings have also been the source of a useful exchange between NGOs and UNHCR, which revealed that information gaps continue to exist within the NGOs and on the humanitarian situation in their respective areas.



A child taking part in World Refugee Day activities. ©UNHCR Damascus 2013

## Community Based Protection

The impact of the crisis in Syria is complex and wide ranging. It has caused forced displacement, sudden destitution, break up of families and communities, as well as the collapse of social structures. Therefore UNHCR's response in identifying, understanding and meeting the various needs of the scattered populations had to be quick while taking into account the community capacities. To do so, UNHCR has developed four main community services programmes to outreach the affected populations and work closely with them, namely Community Centers, Outreach Volunteers, the Community-based Initiatives, and the Empowerment of Local Organizations.

## The Community Centers programme

The creation of a network of Community Centers was identified as the most suitable approach to respond to some of the major challenges in the Syrian context, such as access and outreach to the population and promotion of community participation, while providing social and protection services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable population.

The Community Centers respond to the main goal of social mobilization and provide protective and calm spaces for IDPs and vulnerable persons within the host community. All interventions are designed in line with UNHCR's AGDM, with particular attention given to persons with specific needs, such as children, women, persons with disabilities and elderly. The Community Centers provide a wide spectrum of activities, including skills development courses, remedial education, education for persons with learning difficulties, life skills courses, social and recreational activities, vocational training activities, legal counseling, education counseling, mass information campaigns, and health awareness. The Community Centers are a fundamental tool to support the psychosocial well-being of the affected populations. The centers provide points of access and outreach and are important venues for regular interaction with the population. The centers give insight into their needs and provide services, either in the center itself, or through referrals to specialists outside the community. The project promotes IDP participation and strengthens existing response and coping mechanisms at the community level.

In May 2013, UNHCR conducted a three-day capacity building workshop for implementing partners on IDP guiding principles, community mobilization, community-based approach, AGDM, education and livelihoods activities, UNHCR mandate and code of conduct, PSS programmes and data management.

In 2013, with the support of UNHCR, 11 community centers were operating through five partners; DRC, SSSD, GOPA, SARC, Al Batoul in seven Governorates; Damascus, Rural Damascus, Daara, Sweida, Tartous, Homs and Aleppo. UNHCR's network of Community Centers provided services and activities to more than 40,000 beneficiaries

in 2013. The Community Centers proved to be an effective programme to access and outreach beneficiaries in the most challenging context, while at the same time promoting peaceful coexistence and community participation.

## The Outreach Volunteer Programme

Since the beginning of the crisis, spontaneous solidarity and social participation have been the most effective means to respond to humanitarian needs. However, with the prolongation of the crisis these community solutions are becoming overstretched. Moreover, there are several areas in the country out of reach for international organizations. Therefore, empowering and strengthening the participation of local communities is a key element of the humanitarian response. The need to reach the IDP population, ensure participation, identify vulnerabilities and provide proper support was the main reason to replicate the refugee outreach programme, for the benefit of IDPs and affected populations.

During 2013, the UNHCR outreach volunteer programme was rolled out by five partners; GOPA, SSSD, Al Nada, Al Batoul and Al Taalouf in seven Governorates. 132 outreach volunteers have been selected. The selection process was conducted according to the AGDM approach and it ensured participation of women and men of different backgrounds. In 2013, standard operating procedures for the project were developed in consultation with partners in 2013. In addition to their advocacy role to ensure persons in need have access to humanitarian services, volunteers provided different services to IDPs including care giving to persons with specific needs, information dissemination and awareness-raising, as well as specialized services such as medical and psychosocial support.

## The Community Based Initiatives Programme

With the ongoing displacement, new social dynamics are developing. Spontaneous community initiatives based on the Syrian tradition of solidarity have emerged to respond to humanitarian needs in Syria. The Community-based Initiatives (CBI) programme with its implementation guidelines was designed by UNHCR in consultation with

## 11 Community Centers and 132 outreach volunteers operating in seven Governorates

its partners to support solidarity initiatives and solutions created by self-managed groups from the affected communities. The programme encourages the affected populations to implement ad-hoc natural support solutions to meet their own needs in a participatory manner.

Since the programme commenced in May 2013, 31 CBIs have been implemented in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Tartous, Daraa, Sweida, Homs and Hassakeh impacting positively 6,416 displaced persons with the support of UNHCR and its implementing partners, Al Batoul, Al Nada, SSSD, and DRC.

These CBIs vary according to the needs of the community, which participates effectively in the concept of the initiative and its implementation. In 2013, UNHCR supported initiatives to clean, sterilize and seal water tanks in shelters, make Eid sweets for IDPs, improve and prepare rooms for teaching classes for children in the shelters, paint shelters, control rodent, sew mattresses faces and pillows for IDPs, and clean shelters.

### The Empowerment of Local Organizations Programme

Due to the difficulty in reaching some areas in Syria for security reasons, UNHCR worked on empowering local organizations and strengthening the participation of local communities to respond to the humanitarian needs. Through a network of local partners, UNHCR developed implementation guidelines for the programme and provided humanitarian assistance and services to the most affected populations in Syria.

Through a core group of implementing partners GOPA, Al Taalouf and SSSD, UNHCR provided grants for implementation of quick impact projects in the field of protection, assistance to persons with specific needs, psychosocial support,

education and women empowerment. These projects were implemented by LNGOs trained by UNHCR.

In 2013, a total of nine capacity building grants for implementation of quick impact projects were granted in Tartous, Lattakia, Homs, Damascus and Aleppo.

### Education

Education is not only about learning to read and write, it is a human right and a fundamental protection tool that brings an opportunity for children to regain a much-needed sense of normalcy. With the on-going displacement, many children drop out of school. Schools in safer areas are crowded and families face difficulties to enrol their children at schools in safe areas. Lack of space in schools located in relatively safe areas is among the reasons for non-attendance for children. On the other hand, families who continue to live in hot areas are reluctant to send their children to schools due to security concerns. Other reasons for non-attendance/drop-out include lack of financial resources, suspension of classes due to worsening security, shortages of staff, as well as the relocation of families from tension areas to safer locations. Many families have developed alternative education systems for their children not necessarily linked to the formal education system such as home schooling, private lessons, and educational activities provided by charities.

Before the crisis, an estimated 97% of primary-age children were attending school (UNICEF, December 2013), and Syria's literacy rates surpassed the regional average. However, nearly three years in crisis have reversed more than a decade of progress in children's education in Syria. Many children have already lost one or even two years of schooling, while others have dropped out with little chance of a return to school or benefitting from alternative learning opportunities. The MoE estimates that at least 1.9 million children have dropped out of school since the onset of the crisis, approximately 1.1 million of whom remain in Syria.

In 2013, UNHCR actively participated in the Education Sector Working Group chaired by UNICEF and MoE. The working group has discussed hu-



Summer camp. ©UNHCR Aleppo 2013

manitarian needs and strategies to respond to education needs in Syria, as well as developing standards and guidelines of intervention. Moreover, UNHCR had regular bi-lateral meeting and discussions with UNICEF, MoE and other key stakeholders.

According to the Ministry of Education, approximately 3,004 schools have been damaged or destroyed and 1,068 schools are being used as shelters for displaced persons, while other schools cannot be reached by the MoE. The education sector indicated that education facilities are a priority. In the last quarter of 2013, through its partners, GOPA and PU, UNHCR rehabilitated three schools in Daraa and provided six pre-fabricated classrooms in Rural Damascus. In 2014, UNHCR plans to rehabilitate 25 schools.

Moreover, in 2013 UNHCR distributed a total of 13,000 school kits in Aleppo Governorate and provided school furniture for 12, 840 children in Daraa, Homs and Damascus. UNCHR through its partners Al Nada and SSSD provided informal remedial courses to more than 3,000 IDPs students in the collective shelters hosting IDPs in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo and Homs. Activities included as well a literacy programme for adult IDPs females and males over 20 years.

Through its network of 11 Community Centers across Syria, UNHCR has supported a wide range of education-related activities that have benefit-

ted more than 7,000 individuals. Activities included counseling to displaced families, awareness sessions to promote enrollment and return to school, remedial classes, catch up lessons in summer camps and preparatory lessons to obtain certificates of secondary education and lessons for children with learning difficulties.

## Sense of ownership helps restore Al Nabek community center

In November 2013, clashes escalated in Al Qalamon area reaching Al Nabek where UNHCR is running a Community Center in partnership with SARC.

The center had to close and its activities were stopped. The armed clashes lasted for four weeks during which the center was unfortunately damaged.

Once normal life resumed in the town, a group of local and displaced men and women approached the center offering support to fix the broken glasses and clean the center. The center was back to normal thanks to the IDPs and the local community.



UNHCR warehouse for CRIs in Tartous/B.Diab.  
©UNHCR Tartous 2013

## **CRI** Core Relief Items

In situations of displacement, affected people usually leave their personal properties and flee with almost nothing but the clothes on their back. Therefore, in addition to food, they need basic items for their survival.

UNHCR distributes Core Relief Items (CRIs) to internally displaced people in Syria in accordance with the needs assessed by field staff and implementing partners on the ground. The normal set of CRIs to IDPs includes recreational kits, plastic rolls, tents, lanterns, educational kits, carpets, fans, winter clothes, diapers, quilts, bed sheets, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, jerry cans, plastic sheets, sanitary napkins, sleeping mats, mattresses and blankets.

UNHCR also focuses on the provision of CRIs tailored to different needs in summer and winter.

“Summarized” relief items included a rechargeable fan, to help IDPs to cope with the heat. Winterized relief items were also distributed to assist IDPs in overcoming the cold weather in winter and keeping them warm and safe. These relief items include high-thermal blankets, plastic sheets, solar lamps and winter clothes for adult and children.

**Nearly 3.4 million displaced people have been provided by Core Relief items in 2013 in all 14 Governorates of Syria**

To fulfill the growing needs in 14 governorates in Syria, UNHCR had to run a huge logistical operation going through various different stages from forecasting, planning, and budgeting to local, regional or global procurement.

UNHCR has a weekly delivery schedule based upon requests coming from the field. These are in turn based on needs assessments on the ground. Each week CRIs for 75,000 individuals are delivered. The delivery process faces many challenges such as the limited trucks due to the crisis, truck retention, lengthy process to get the necessary approvals, and crossing the checkpoints of different parties.

UNHCR worked hard during the year to overcome these challenges, depending more on reliable service providers to ensure proper delivery and strongly advocating for the humanitarian nature of shipments.

In 2013, in spite of the difficult operational environment in the present emergency situation, UNHCR distributed around 8,468,355 core relief items to 3,389,000 individuals in all governorates of Syria including hard-to-reach areas surpassing the 2013 target. This included the distribution of additional high thermal blanket and plastic sheeting, key complements of UNHCR “winterized” item package. The dispatch of 250 trucks continued every week through Syria to carry relief aid for the benefit of 75,000 persons.

When access remains difficult, in particular with the closure of key access highways in Syria, airlifting was adopted to reach displaced households. Through airlifting, UNHCR dispatched 300 tons of winterized core relief items for the benefit of 50,000 IDPs mainly in Hassakeh and Qamishly.

## Cash Assistance

Cash assistance is a dignified way to support beneficiaries by giving each family the possibility to invest in what they consider to be their priority needs. It is a cost-effective method that maximizes the impact on beneficiaries’ welfare by doing away with the logistical costs, lengthy procurement procedures and security constraints normally associated with other types of assistance.



Syrian IDPs in the cash assistance center/B.Diab ©UNHCR Damascus 2013

“Cash in lieu of NFI” was adopted to support multiple domestic and family needs that are not covered by standard CRI distribution and shelter projects, replacing the package of core relief items with the amount of \$150 per family.

**207,905 vulnerable displaced have received Cash Assistance in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Hassakeh, Tartous, Latakia, and Homs**

The selection of IDPs eligible for cash assistance is usually done according to UNHCR’s vulnerability criteria, which gives priority to unemployed Syrian displaced families, especially those who are elderly, as well as members with special needs or chronic and incurable diseases.

In 2013 207,905 vulnerable individuals were assisted by UNHCR with the amount of SYP 795,035,000 (\$5,412,290).





Jaramana Collective Shelter/B.Diab  
©UNHCR Rural Damascus 2013

## Shelter



Due to the continuous clashes in Syria, 1.2 million houses have been damaged, out of which 400,000 have been totally destroyed causing millions of people to flee to official collective shelters such as schools, public buildings, tower buildings, hospitals, basements and mosques or to host families mostly from the local communities in other areas.

Collective shelter inhabitants include women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Most of them face trauma, distress or a great deal of suffering due to the conflict. They reside in poor living conditions due to the lack of basic services such as food, water, electricity and garbage solutions, which resulted in the outbreak of diseases.

## UNHCR Response

UNHCR continued to respond to the emergency shelter needs in 2013, working very closely with its implementing partners, the Ministry of Local Administration, Première Urgence (PU), Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), Syria Trust

for Development, Secours Islamique France (SIF), Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and UN-Habitat to provide appropriate and equitable shelter to affected populations in order to save lives, reduce suffering and manage vulnerability.

Emergency shelter interventions are formed in the rehabilitation of collective shelters, private shelter upgrade, the provision of individual housing units and the provision of tents. In addition, winterization measures have been applied in the shelter intervention to help people overcome the harsh winter months.

### Shelter Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation has been undertaken at official collective shelters in order to improve the physical condition of the buildings including water sanitation facilities. The minimum standards were agreed upon by the Shelter Working Group to guide agencies and ensure that all required facilities were available in collective shelters.

UNHCR and implementing partners have conducted detailed technical assessments of the needs for each collective shelter and, in 2013, rehabilitated 92 collective shelters in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Tartous, Lattakia, Homs, Aleppo, Hassakeh, Hama, Daraa and Quneitra for the benefit of more than 30,867 IDPs.

### Private Shelter Upgrade

In the beginning of 2013, UNHCR's shelter intervention was limited to the rehabilitation of collective shelters. Given that the collective shelters cover less than 5% of the displaced population in Syria, where 983 shelters house 182,530 displaced individuals, it was clear that shelter assistance for IDPs living in unfinished or destroyed buildings was necessary.

Accordingly UNHCR led the process of developing the concept of the Private Shelter Upgrade with the Shelter Working Group in 2013. This initiative is one of the main shelter interventions assisting IDPs who live outside official collective shelters. Through the use of sealing-off kits and WASH kits, the project was able to successfully improve the physical conditions of private shelters, mostly unfinished buildings and partially damaged houses, by sealing open windows, fixing doors and setting partitions in open spaces to provide privacy to families.

The project began in September 2013, which coincided with the implementation of the Government policy to evacuate IDPs from school buildings. 516 families have been assisted with this project till the end of 2013.

### Housing Units

UNHCR, MoLA and the Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) signed an agreement for the construction of 200 housing units in Rural Damascus to serve as temporary housing centers, in order to relieve the burden on schools, where IDPs sought shelter, and were therefore unable to continue with their original education functions.

Due to the scarcity of housing options and limited absorption capacity to accommodate IDPs in exist-

ing damaged settlements, the use of public buildings, in particular school buildings, was considered as a temporary measure to accommodate IDPs.

However, this led to the disruption of basic services and put a strain on service delivery for IDPs as well as the affected population. It is anticipated that the project will benefit more than 10,000 individuals currently located in school buildings.

### Tents

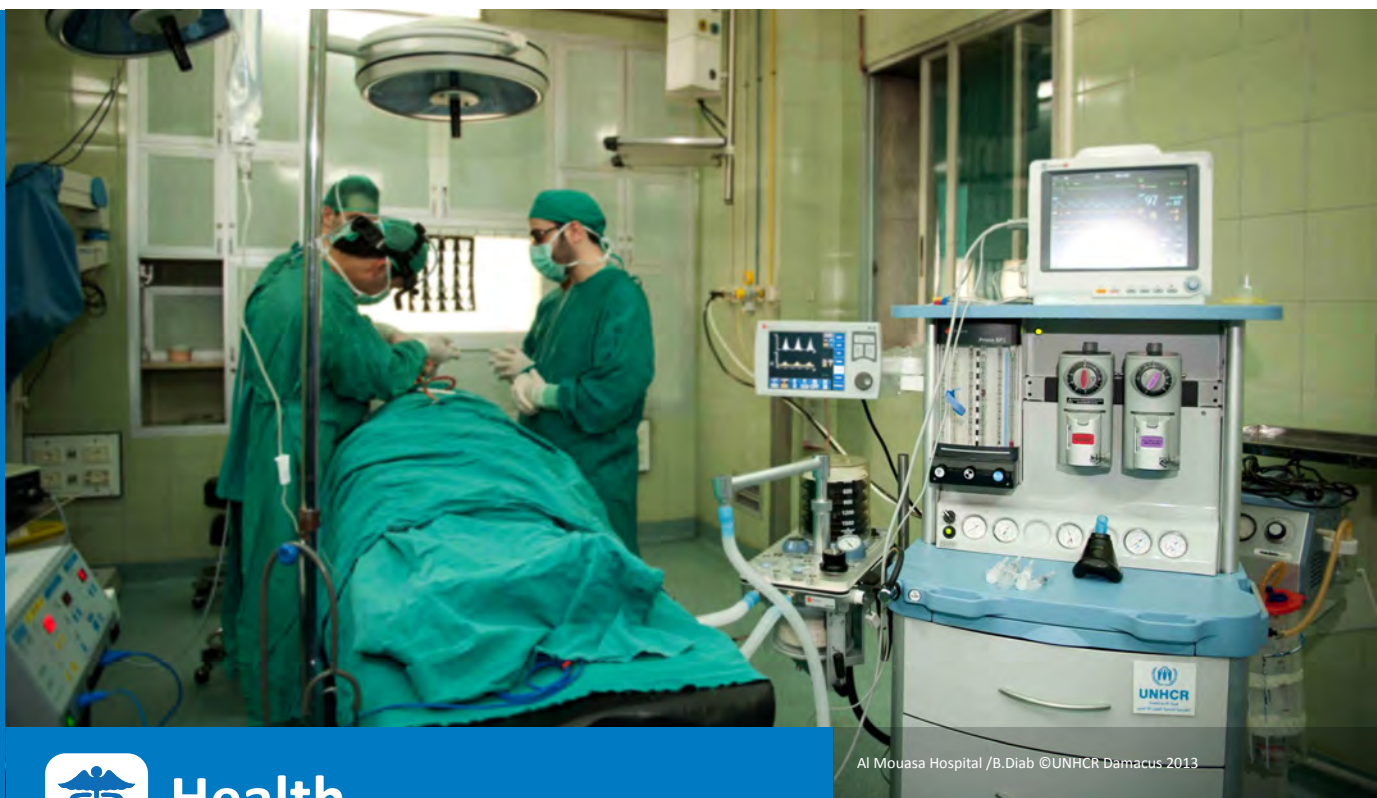
When providing shelter was not an option, tents were distributed to IDPs, giving the priority to people in areas close to the borders with neighboring countries. In 2013, UNHCR provided 4,480 tents to internally displaced people in Izaz, Hassakeh, Hassiaa, Idlib, Tal Abyad, Dahyet Al Assad, Al Karnak camp and Tartous.

## Shelter Needs Assessment

While continuing the emergency responses, UNHCR started to expand its scope beyond the emergency response phases.

Given that the needs of shelter vary considerably due to the security situation, coping mechanisms, local needs and available shelter options it has been acknowledged that a variety of shelter response activities are necessary to address the current and future shelter needs for IDPs.

Likewise host communities as well as the people who remained at or returned to their homes and whose houses were destroyed or damaged are also in need of shelter support.



Al Mouasa Hospital /B.Diab ©UNHCR Damascus 2013



## Health

In 2013, the protracted crisis contributed to increased morbidity and mortality, increased risk of the spread of diseases, heightened vulnerability to mental health and psychosocial distress and malnourished children.

All public and private health services have been overwhelmed with demands, particularly with over 64% of Syria's public hospitals, 38% of public healthcare centers, and 92% of ambulances damaged or out of service due to the crisis. Over 80,000 medical staff left the country resulting in shortages of qualified health personnel and pharmaceutical production has been heavily impacted due to the destruction of factories due to the crisis.

### The Response

UNHCR has built upon its existing refugee health programme to form its IDP response. In 2013, UNHCR provided free access to primary healthcare, including medical consultations, laboratory investigations, provision of essential medicines and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). In addition, it has enabled access to

primary healthcare through outreach facilities as well as with support to health facilities through the provision of life-saving medicines, medical equipment and medical devices.

Healthcare and medical support has been provided to 991,350 IDPs and 21,672 refugees in 2013.

### Primary Health Care

UNHCR supports nine primary health clinics in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Hassakeh and Aleppo. In 2013, UNHCR provided a comprehensive package of primary health including medicines for acute and chronic diseases. UNHCR's intervention has increased its capacity to reach more

**991,350 IDPs have been reached with access to health-care and medical support**

individuals in need and has also allowed longer functional hours in all clinics and the availability of additional medicines.

In July 2013, UNHCR expanded its primary health-care assistance through a polyclinic in Hassakeh, where 151,825 IDPs are registered and could benefit greatly from free health services. The polyclinic was staffed with 52 health personnel, including 24 doctors. Access to some UNHCR supported health clinics such as the ones in Qudsaya and Al Nabek in Rural Damascus was affected in November due to the security situation, triggering the search for alternative locations to ensure vulnerable persons can access health services.

### Outreach Services

The most vulnerable patients are often unable to reach the health facilities available. In order to

assist them, UNHCR's outreach volunteers conduct regular checks on the well-being of individuals who are housed in their own communities. In 2013, over 5,000 health outreach services, such as counseling, health awareness and case management were provided to IDPs and refugees in Damascus, Rural Damascus and Hassakeh.

**703,000**  
IDPs have received medicines, or a course of medicines

health awareness and case management were provided to IDPs and refugees in Damascus, Rural Damascus and Hassakeh.

### Provision of medicines

UNHCR has primarily provided medicines for chronic and acute diseases, but on several occasions has also provided life-saving medicines at the secondary and tertiary healthcare levels. These medicines have been delivered to hospitals in Damascus, Idlib and Aleppo. In addition, medicines procured by UNHCR have been supplied to allow for continued availability of medicines in functioning health centers. In June, UNHCR also provided critical life-saving medicines to a hospital in eastern Aleppo, a hard-to-reach area. UNHCR also supports associated hospitals in the treatment of emergency referrals for expensive medical, surgical and obstetrics care.

### Provision of medical equipment

Throughout 2013, UNHCR supported various health facilities with medical equipment, including ventilators, incubators, anaesthesia machines, haemodialysis machines, surgical kits and X-ray machines. Medical items were delivered to hospitals in Damascus, Hassakeh, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Sweida, Hama and Daraa. In November, urgently-needed essential life-saving equipment was airlifted into the inaccessible governorate of Hassakeh.

**3,000 IDPs** were referred out to associated hospitals and provided with emergency secondary and tertiary healthcare

### Provision of medical devices

95 disabled IDPs have been provided with, amongst other things, wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, oxygen cylinders and masks. In 2013, 500 IDPs vulnerable men, women and children who had lost their limbs were provided with artificial limbs and rehabilitation in Al Amin center in Rural Damascus supported by UNHCR a couple of years ago. The service is open to both refugees and displaced Syrians.



Incubators were provided by UNHCR to hospitals in Damascus, Al Nabek, Hassakeh and Homs. The picture shows a pre-mature born baby to an IDP family from Jidaydet Tartous. ©UNHCR Damascus 2013

### Provision of vaccines

The large number of Syrians displaced by the crisis and living in close quarters, with deterioration in environmental health conditions, has increased vulnerability to communicable diseases.

In 2013, UNHCR delivered tens of thousands of vaccines against meningitis, tuberculosis, MMR, and tetanus and Polio which started to spread as of October in Deir es Zour and later in Aleppo and Rural Damascus according to WHO. As a response, UNHCR contributed to the national vaccination campaign launched on 24 October. 680,000 shots of vaccines, including 538,000 shots of Polio vaccine, were administered by UNHCR. Furthermore, UNHCR airlifted 528,000 Polio vaccines to Hasekeh, in cooperation with UNICEF, WHO, and MoH, for the second round of vaccinations on 8 December.

### Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

In order to respond to the prevailing psychosocial concerns of displaced persons, a joint project between UNHCR and UNFPA, implemented by SARC, was initiated in April to provide all levels of MHPSS. In 2013, 16,009 displaced persons living in shelters have been provided with PSS mobile services, of which some were also provided access to specialised services from psychologists and psychiatrists.

A further 2,224 IDPs and 607 refugees were provided with specialised services at three UNHCR-supported SARC clinics in Damascus and Rural Damascus, such as access to a psychiatrist or psychotherapist along with the appropriate medication.

### Awareness Raising

In 2013, UNHCR has helped communities protect themselves by raising awareness of health matters. Prior to the crisis, non-communicable diseases were already the leading causes of mortality. The ongoing crisis has resulted in limited access to health facilities and drugs. This is made worse by the substandard living conditions and improper nutrition. UNHCR has held regular sessions on diabetes, nutrition and general health awareness.

## Monitoring the Assistance

Monitoring of Humanitarian aid provided by UNHCR is done either directly by UNHCR and/or in places where UNHCR staff cannot access through implementing partners.

Monitoring assistance is also done through a 'Project Tracking Database', a tool also used by UNHCR in Iraq. This is an indirect monitoring tool, which uses GPS technology to monitor and collect information on the implementation of its IDP response.

Monitoring/Evaluation of Shelter rehabilitation has been reinforced by a global agreement with an international organization: 'Baltic Control' who will be producing evaluation reports on shelters once the work is completed.



The beginning of Baba Amr neighborhood/B.Diab ©UNHCR Homs 2013

# Field Offices



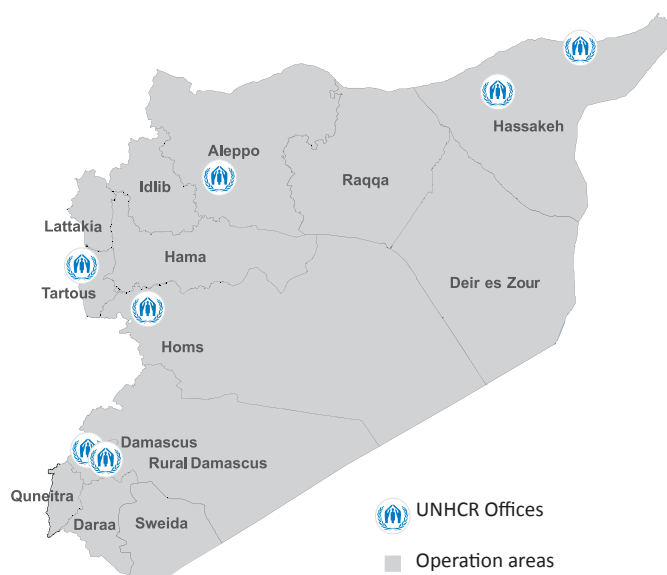
## Overview

In view of the rapidly increasing needs in the country, decentralization was identified as an essential part of the strategy to scale up assistance in Syria in 2013. UNHCR located and planned additional sub/field offices in various Governorates.

Missions to field locations were also conducted during the year to identify the necessary intervention in order to start discharging work from there. Accordingly, additional staff members were recruited. To date, 424 staff members are working for refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs, including 33 international staff, and 391 national staff.

UNHCR is present permanently in Damascus, Aleppo, Hassakeh, Qamishly, Homs and Tartous. UNHCR also has four warehouses inside the country and one in Jordan.

Furthermore, UNHCR signed partnerships with 17 international and local partners and a number of charities and community-based organizations to expand the implementation of its refugee programme and its IDP response.



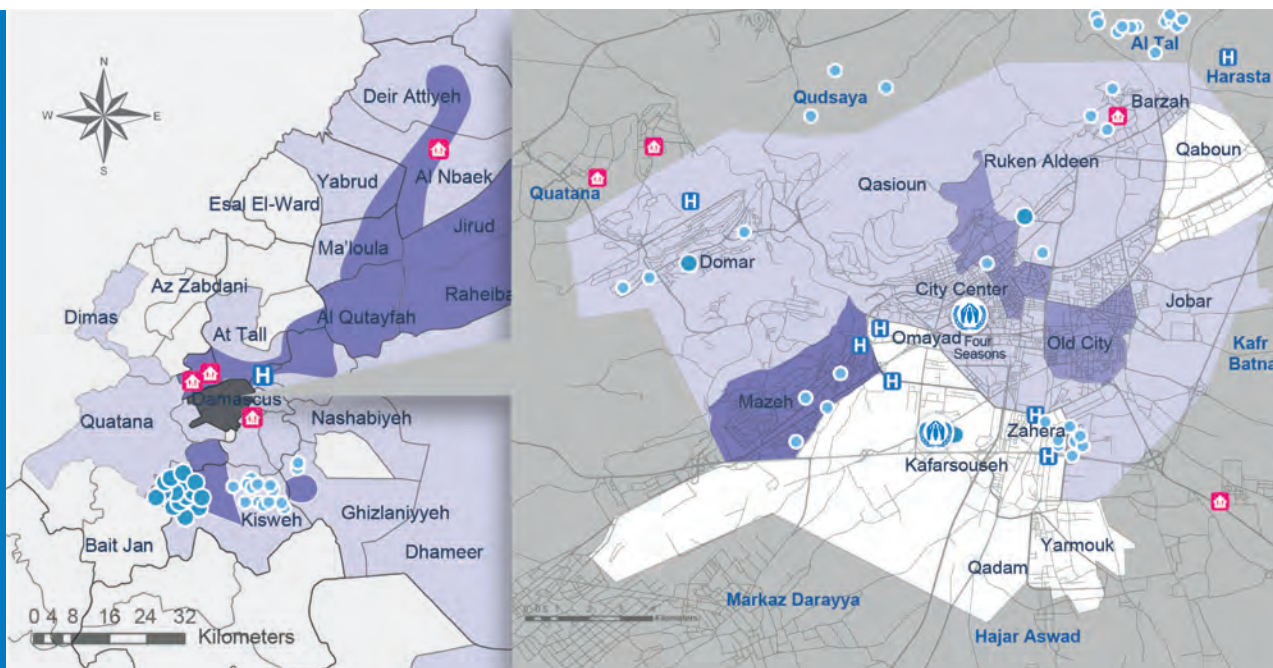


Cash assistance center/B.Diab ©UNHCR Damascus 2013



## Operations in 2013 Damascus and Rural Damascus





## Background









The UNHCR office in Damascus is the central hub for all sub-offices in the country. As such, all of the main activities are supported by the hub. However, the office has a particular responsibility to monitor and respond to the needs in Damascus and Rural Damascus. According to the latest official statistics, approximately 1.1 million Syrian displaced live in these two governorates. Areas in Damascus itself are generally accessible, however, in 2013, Rural Damascus has become increasingly difficult to access. The security situation has placed considerable pressure on the facilities in parts of Rural Damascus. In November it was clear that the security situation is affecting access to UNHCR-supported health clinics in Qudsaya and Al Nabek.

## The Response

### Monitoring and Responding to the Needs – Collective Shelter Visits

Despite access constraints in 2013, UNHCR conducted 166 visits to 83 shelters in Damascus and Rural Damascus where almost 10,000 displaced Syrians were residing. During this time, 45 needs assessments were completed and 61 focus group discussions conducted. UNHCR was able to assess needs and protection concerns and immediately follow up either through direct assistance or with referrals.

A good example of this has been the coverage of Al Kisweh area in Rural Damascus. In December, following improved access, a team of protection monitors focused most of their attention to the Al Kisweh area, which reportedly received 47,000 newly displaced in 2013. Most of the displaced were women and children who came from areas such as Darayya and Yarmouk. UNHCR has identified 62 official and non-official shelters in the area. During 13 shelter visits UNHCR conducted 15 focus group discussions and 25 individual interviews. The main protection concerns noted amongst 725 displaced were issues related to documentation, education, health and child protection. The follow up has been immediate. Through UNHCR implementing partner, Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), legal awareness sessions on personal status documentation such as child birth registration, the issuance of ID cards and family books were provided in five shelters. Other concerns related to access to educational materials have been referred to UNICEF

-  UNHCR Offices
-  Community center
-  Areas reached through Syria Trust, Syrian Society for Social Development and Alnada
-  Areas reached through, PT Roman Catholic, GOPA
-  Areas reached through SARC
-  UNHCR-supported health facility (hospitals and clinics)
-  Shelter under rehabilitation
-  Supported shelter by CRI

## 166 shelter visits conducted with immediate follow up on needs and protection concerns

through the Education working group. The health unit in UNHCR followed up on the health concerns raised, which included, amongst other things, tuberculosis and chicken pox.

In addition, UNHCR was able to deliver CRIs to the majority of the IDPs in the area. The implementation was undertaken by UNHCR's partners, SARC and The Trust, who were able to deliver CRIs to 65,000 beneficiaries in Al Kisweh city itself and more than 35,000 to Rural Al Kisweh.

Many vulnerable people residing the non-official collective shelters and the farms were assisted with the CRIs, especially the plastic sheets, which were used as roofs and tents.

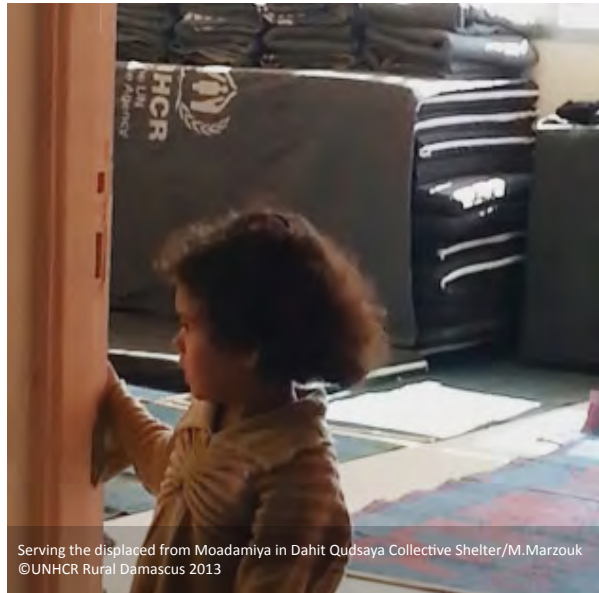
### Engaged in the Community

UNHCR has also been fully engaged in the community. Recreational activities are held in community centers and shelters for festive occasions such as Eid, Christmas, New Years and World Refugee Day. In addition, regular awareness-raising activities took place, the most recent of note included '16 days of activism' organized through Outreach Volunteers in Dahit Qudsaya, activities centered on 'Safety in School' whilst teachers and students united to make schools free of gender-based violence. Some 24,065 beneficiaries have been reached in Damascus through such activities.

### Delivering Core Relief Items to Hard-to-Reach Areas

Early in 2013, UNHCR managed to dispatch CRIs, reaching 15,000 people in Al Nabek, 15,000 people in Deir Atiya, 10,000 people in Qara and 10,000 people in Qteifeh. Dispatches were constantly postponed and finally suspended due to the heavy military operations.

Since March 2013, Moadamiya in Rural Damascus has been completely besieged. It is one of the many areas in Syria that has been 'sealed-off', where civilians have been unable to benefit from regular assistance, due to restrictions on humanitarian access. On 12 and 13 October, approximately 2,500 people began to leave



Serving the displaced from Moadamiya in Dahit Qudsaya Collective Shelter/M.Marzouk ©UNHCR Rural Damascus 2013

the besieged area of Moadamiya to a shelter in Dahit Qudsaya where UNHCR relief items, including carpets and blankets, were waiting. The following day, UNHCR visited the shelter to assess the needs and monitor the protection concerns. A follow up visit attempted on 20 October could not go ahead on account of security reasons. However, on 22 October, UNHCR successfully visited the shelter and found that only 500 to 600 women and children remained. Their needs were assessed and the relevant follow up was made.

In December, UNHCR, in close coordination with partners on the ground and after significant developments in terms of the dynamics of the crisis, dispatched CRIs in order to meet the urgent needs of IDPs in Al Qalamoun district - Al Nabek, Deir Atiyah and Quteyfeh - as well as people who fled from Adra district - Al Doumir and Al Dowir. By the end of the exercise UNHCR will be reaching 50,000 IDPs and 122,500 IDPs respectively.

## Material assistance was provided to 2,500 people as they came out of the besieged area of Moadamiya

In 2013, UNHCR dispatched CRIs to 352,000 beneficiaries in Damascus and 786,000 beneficiaries in Rural Damascus. Aside of delivering items in hard-to-reach areas, districts with large numbers of displaced people were benefitted by CRIs within 2013, having a sustainable impact on the living conditions of people hosted in Jaramana, Sehnaya and Al Tal.



Cash assistance center/B.Diab ©UNHCR Damascus 2013

### Financial Assistance to the Most Vulnerable

In 2013, 82,738 individuals benefitted from financial assistance in Rural Damascus. This was distributed in accordance with UNHCR’s vulnerability criteria. A child friendly space also exists at the distribution center where children are able to play with SARC volunteers whilst their responsible adults collect their cheques. During distribution, UNHCR heard various accounts, one was of a lady who arrived alone with her child. Her husband was missing and she had recently relocated from one extremely dangerous area of Rural Damascus to a less dangerous one on the road to the airport. The route out of this area is perilous, to the extent that her daughter can no longer go to school. On the day of distribution, in October, her daughter was smiling, and her mother said that:

**“Although she can’t go to school she can use this money to buy books. She plans to study on her own.»**

## Individual Story

### 39 members of his family were lost in the rubble

Through an individual interview in one of the shelters visited in Rural Damascus, Khalid\*, a 55 year-old man from Darayya, reported that he fled his home with his son and five minor daughters after he lost 39 family members. When talking about his story, the man mentioned that his house was destroyed as a result of the clashes and on-going shelling in the area.

“I lost my father, my mother, two brothers, my sister, and my wife, all my family, we were 46 members and now we are only 7; we used to live together in the same building, when shelling happened in our area and the houses were destroyed massively, I couldn’t find them under the rubble.”

He said he had led a comfortable life running a small shop in Darayya, south-west of Damascus. Now he has started working as a delivery man using his small pick-up truck to afford the basic needs for his children, being the only provider and caregiver. For the time being Khaled stays in a collective shelter occupying one room with his children. The situation is dire, UNHCR with its partners have supported shelters through rehabilitation work and CRIs to improve the living conditions of the hosted population in the shelter. According to the shelter coordinator, 70% of the IDP population hosted in Al Kisweh has fled from Darayya. “God knows where this war will take us, I miss my family, my house, my friends, I want everything back, and I want to go back to Darayya to rebuild my house again”.

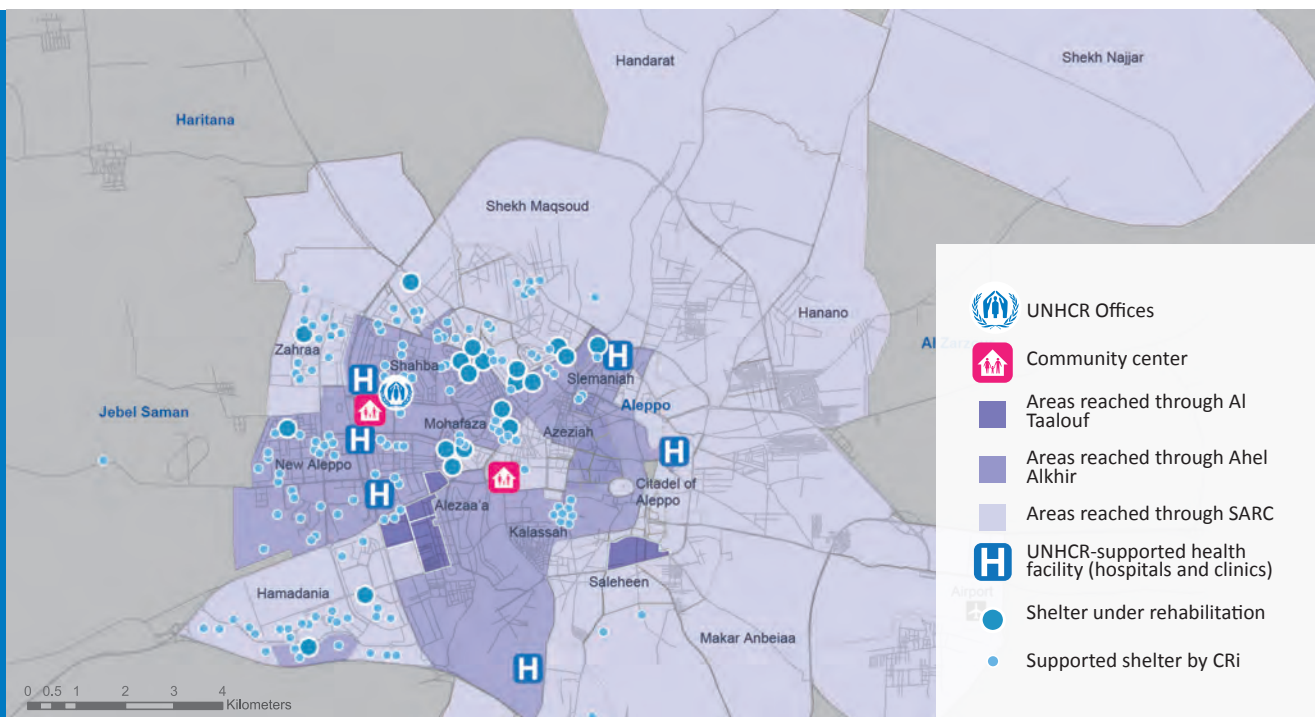


Staff member conducting shelter visits in Al Kisweh ©UNHCR Rural Damascus 2013



Provision of CRIs in Fardous, Salhin and Karm Homed/ Al Taulouf ©UNHCR Aleppo 2013

## Operations in 2013 Aleppo



## Background

UNHCR Aleppo covers assistance in Aleppo Governorate and, for the first half of 2013, it covered Idlib as well (this responsibility was subsequently transferred to UNHCR Tartous). Official figures estimate that 1,735,000 Syrians are internally displaced in the Governorate, which amounts to more than 27% of the total number of displaced in Syria. The office in Aleppo originally opened in 2010 in response to the refugees fleeing Iraq, however, since the beginning of the crisis it has been providing assistance to a high number of directly affected Syrians who are internally displaced or still living at home but under very difficult circumstances.

The city of Aleppo has been divided into two distinct parts; Western and Eastern. Most of the countryside is isolated and often besieged and the security situation remains highly precarious. Access to public services such as water, electricity, fuel and telecommunications was limited throughout the year. Despite the fact that telecommunications are often down, the team continued to operate on the ground when possible and it resumed work under the harshest of circumstances.

**27% of Syrians displaced are in Aleppo**

## The Response

### Protection and Community Services

Protection is mainstreamed into all activities and it is part of the standard shelter visits and assessments. Throughout the year, orphanages and homes for the elderly were visited to identify issues of concern and provide support with key implementing partners. The Syria Trust for Development is running a UNHCR-funded community center and a series of community service activities while Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) is conducting child protection and PSS activities in shelters and in their community center.

The office has provided in-office and in the field training for partners to ensure high delivery standards on community-based protection and targeted interventions. Accordingly vulnerable cases have been identified and referred to specialists or provided with assistance such as wheel chairs, diapers or appropriate shelter.

By the end of 2013, more than 100 collective shelters were available in Aleppo, mostly located in the Western part of the city. Despite the security situation, a total of 249 visits were conducted by UNHCR during the year to 71 shelters focusing on needs assessments and monitoring of protection issues as well as delivery of services and assistance through partners.

**249 visits were conducted to 71 collective shelters focusing on needs assessments, protection monitoring and monitoring of the delivery of services and assistance**

Through the recruitment of outreach volunteers and the provision of cash grants to community-based initiatives, UNHCR was able to extend its support and presence in areas inaccessible to the staff. Volunteers are recruited across the Governorate covering 12 areas of the city.

Two quick impact projects were identified and supported in 2013, a medical center in the old city and an initiative for women empowerment and income generation run by Nama'a charity.

Aleppo also has a Community Center run through SSSD. The center has proved it has excellent capacity for PSS and recreational activities with children. It has proved an ability to access the population in the most challenging security situations.

With the security situation preventing garbage collection in many neighborhoods of Aleppo, health conditions worsened. Hence, UNHCR, along with hundreds of citizens, twelve associations and charities, and Aleppo municipality took an active role in the "Cleaning Aleppo City" campaign organized for Aleppo.

## Shelter

In 2013, UNHCR rehabilitated 29 collective shelters housing 16,040 individuals/3,208 families. This work was done in collaboration with The Trust, Danish Refugee Council and the SSSD. As the year was coming to an end upgrade work was underway in an additional 853 apartments housing 6,000 individuals.

## Core Relief Items

Many internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled their homes with little more than the clothes on their back. Therefore, Core Relief Items (CRIs) were distributed to refugees and IDPs in accordance with the needs assessed by UNHCR staff and implementing partners on the ground. During the year, UNHCR dispatched 1,088,113 CRIs to 496,000 beneficiaries in Aleppo through its implementing



Provision of CRIs in Fardous/ Al Taalouf ©UNHCR Aleppo 2013

partners. The CRIs included blankets, diapers, mattresses, sleeping mats, sanitary napkins, plastic sheets, jerry cans, hygiene kits, kitchen sets, bed sheets, quilts, winter cloths, fans, carpets, lanterns, tents, plastic rolls and educational and recreational kits.

**Nearly 500,000 beneficiaries of Core Relief Items in Aleppo Governorate**

CRIs are delivered throughout the Governorate and UNHCR spearheaded the expansion of assistance with the first two convoys to have access to hard-to-reach areas. The convoys paved the way for further inter-agency missions and more regular dispatches to partners operating in these areas.

The delivery of CRIs is mainly done through four UNHCR implementing partners, SARC, Al Taalouf, Ahl Alkheir and The Trust. Other associations have been providing targeted assistance to specific geographical areas of vulnerable individuals. This network of partners allowed rapid identification and delivery.

## Health

UNHCR-supported health institutions covered the Eastern and Western parts of the city, which includes three hospitals, one healthcare center and two clinics, all run by different NGOs. The support was mainly through staffing, medical supplies and medicines. In 2013, 10,643 IDPs received treatment at the medical installations supported by UNHCR. With the spread of contagious diseases in Aleppo such as lishmaniasis, hepatitis A, meningitis, lice, scabies and polio, UNHCR's response was particularly important.



Talking to Jehan at a collective shelter in the University of Aleppo/ S.Abajy ©UNHCR Aleppo 2013

### **“I will keep searching for him... no matter how long it will take me”**

Jehan, or the mother of Mohamad as she prefers to be called, is one of the most optimistic internally displaced people (IDP) residing in one of the shelters rehabilitated by UNHCR in Aleppo.

She is 63 years old but continues to carry out daily trips searching for her lost son Mohamad who went to check on his family in-law after a mortar had fallen over their house but never came back.

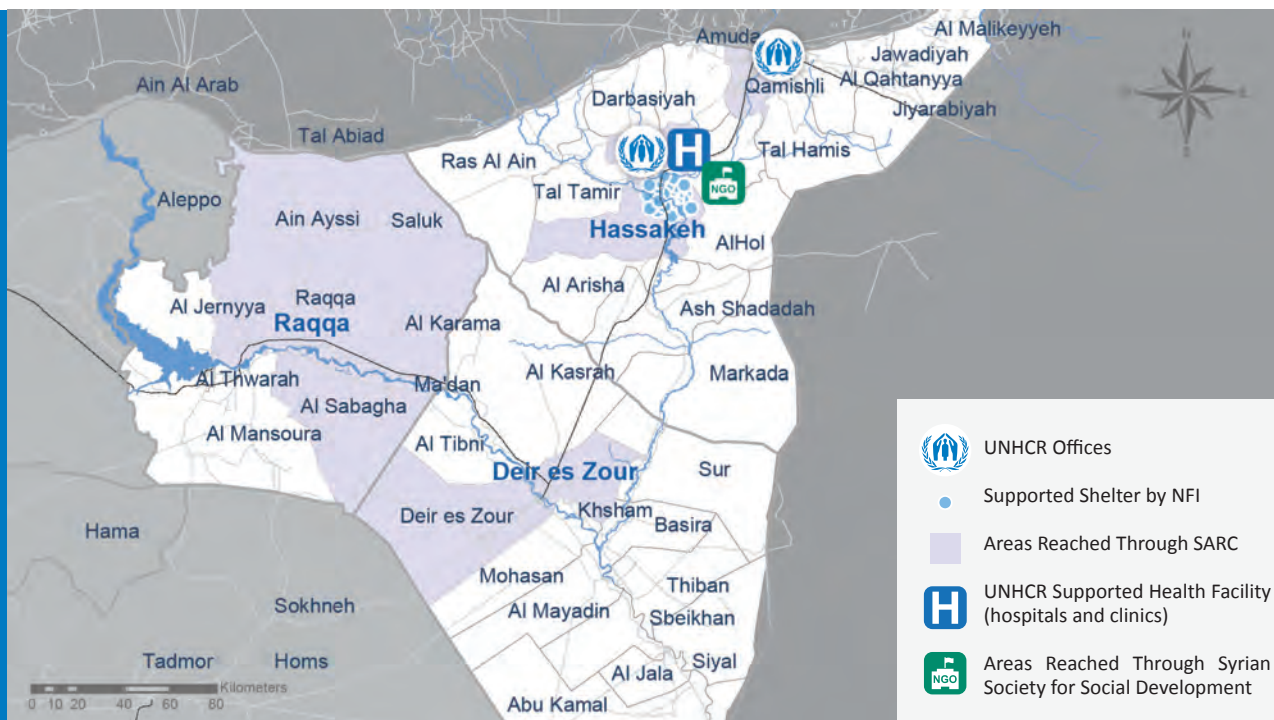
“I found in the shelter the house I lost. I need nothing here except my son. I will keep searching for him ... no matter how long it will take me” said Jehan.

Jehan is one of UNHCR’s CRI beneficiaries receiving support from the shelter in tracing her lost son.



## Operations in 2013 Hassakeh, Raqqa and Deir es Zour





## Background

UNHCR has had an office in Hassakeh since 1991 covering the operations also in Raqqa and Deir es Zour. For much of the year most of Hassakeh Governorate has been affected by major fighting, with slightly safer spots in Hassakeh city and Qamishly city. In April, UNHCR staff members based in Hassakeh were required to move to Qamishly, which was considered by UNDSS to be safer at the time.

The fighting in the areas surrounding Qamishly and Hassakeh cities forced mass displacement into other areas, including into neighboring Iraq. In 2013, 89,000 newly displaced people were registered in Hassakeh. UNHCR continued to expand in this area to meet the needs of the growing population as well as the 4,300 refugees. This population inevitably suffered from a shortage of basic items, communications were often down and illnesses including polio started to spread. What was particularly notable in the Hassakeh area was the general rise in kidnappings and abductions. No items have been able to reach Hassakeh by road since May as the warehouse continues to deplete and the needs for life-saving items increase. UNHCR has opted for an alternative method for getting life-saving items into the area: **the airlift.**

## The Response

Currently, refugees are assisted directly by the office in Qamishly. With the closure of Al Hol refugee camp at the end of June 2013, UNHCR assistance to refugees was shifted to cash assistance to cover the cost of the refugees' rent, food and medicines.

Towards the end of 2012, UNHCR was involved in registering the newly internally displaced people (IDPs) through its implementing partners and local IDP communities. UNHCR also established a registration and counseling center in the old carpet factory in Hassakeh. This responsibility has now been transferred to the Governorate of Hassakeh (GoH).



IDP registration/G. Belobesian©UNHCR Hassakeh 2013

UNHCR implementing partners in the area include: Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), The Syria Trust for Development (The Trust), Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the Governorate of Hassakeh (GoH) working hand in hand with UNHCR on core relief items (CRIs) distribution, shelter, protection, community services and cash assistance.

## Protection

Counseling services were provided to IDPs and refugees who needed support on issues related to displacement. In 2013, 2,500 counseling interviews were conducted where most of the cases needed counseling on birth registration, family status, residency and food/ financial assistance.

Through 2013, 225 shelter visits were conducted, 11 focus group discussions took place and 120 individuals were interviewed. In addition, 2,000 IDPs came to the converted carpet factory for counseling. Through this interaction, the most noted protection concern reported in Hassakeh was the increased violence against children. An agreement has been negotiated with the Armenian Catholic Church to establish the first com-

munity center in the area where educational and recreational activities will be implemented. Another observed concern is the need for medical services. UNHCR worked closely with department of health in the GoH to support the Hassakeh polyclinic in providing medicines and supplies.

Furthermore, 24 outreach volunteers in Hassakeh played a major role in the polio campaign and contributed to the vaccination of 5,640 IDPs in Hassakeh and Qamishly.

UNHCR will continue to explore possibilities to increase the capacity of partners to deal with protection concerns.

## Core Relief Items

Over the course of the year, UNHCR and its implementing partners faced increasing difficulties in providing CRIs to 75,500 individuals in Hassakeh, 101,000 in Deir es Zour and 79,000 in Raqqa. These items were distributed despite significant challenges such as fuel shortages and criminality which resulted in attacks on UNHCR trucks and the looting of items on the way to Hassakeh.



Polio vaccines were airlifted into the area for 538,000 children

Unloading life-saving items airlifted from Erbil to Qamishly ©UNHCR Qamishly 2013

The logistical challenge of attempting to serve Hassakeh, an area in which UNHCR has unique access and therefore clear knowledge of the needs, was to incrementally assess and serve areas on the way to Hassakeh. Some of these areas, which clearly needed support, were the vulnerable Palmyra and the inaccessible Deir es Zour, where approximately 116,000 individuals were provided with urgently needed mattresses, hygiene kits, jerry cans, kitchen sets and plastic sheets.

Despite these attempts, access by road to Hassakeh has not been possible since May 2013. Although UNHCR is closer to the delivery of urgently needed relief items by road from Damascus to Hassakeh, through deliveries to hard-to-reach areas, the urgent need to provide life-saving medical equipment could wait not longer. On 24 July, UNHCR airlifted relief items and lifesaving medical equipment, worth more than \$260,000, and comprised of incubators, ultrasound machines, hemodialysis machines and other relief items delivered to health facilities in Hassakeh and relief supplies distributed to 2,000 families. Moreover, on 28 and 30 November, UNHCR successfully airlifted medical supplies from Damascus into Hassakeh including polio vaccines for 538,000 children, incubators, medical supplies, high thermal blankets, plastic sheet and a UNDSS armoured vehicle. Following an agreement with both the Iraqi and Syrian authorities to open new aid routes, the last UNHCR airlift in 2013 started on 17 December through Qamishly airport carrying 12 special cargo flights totaling nearly 300 metric tons of relief aid to help more than 50,000 people in north-eastern Syria cope with winter. UNHCR's relief items included thermal blankets, plastic tarpaulin, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, jerry cans and hygienic supplies. The airlifting is still ongoing.

### Cash assistance

Refugees and IDPs usually are notified to attend the office to receive cash assistance through text message or over the telephone.

**Word of mouth has proved to be the best mass information tool for our refugees in Hassakeh**

This year, even though telecommunications were down, word of mouth worked as a mass information tool and 65,253 vulnerable displaced Syrians in Hassakeh showed up to receive SYP 241,026,000 (\$1,525,698) of urgently needed cash assistance.

Thankfully, many of the needs that could not be met by UNHCR's depleting warehouse, was met, in some way, by cash assistance provided in September and October to displaced residents who were selected in accordance with UNHCR's vulnerability criteria. This included, amongst other things, those with disabilities and female headed households such as a widowed mother who fled from Aleppo to Qamishly and was assisted with cash to be able to buy milk and diapers for her child. The assistance amounted to \$150 per family, which is the equivalent of usual CRIs estimated value per family. Interviews with beneficiaries revealed that cash assistance was used to buy food, clothes and other basic needs.



In 2013, 860 refugee cases approached public hospitals and were supported, in addition to 4,758 refugees who visited medical points. During the year, UNHCR supplied anesthesia machines to public hospitals which increased their capacity to conduct medical surgeries for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Due to the low quality, limited capacity and access difficulties of primary health care services in Hassakeh, in July UNHCR started to support a Has-

sakeh polyclinic through the provision of medicines, supplies and training a team of volunteers to join internally displaced physicians in shelters. Until the end of 2013, the polyclinic has provided primary health care to more than 90,615 individuals including 12,472 IDPs.

Following confirmation of the polio outbreak in Syria, the national vaccination campaign began in Hassakeh, Deir es Zour and Raqqa on 25 October. Medical volunteers supported by UNHCR and GoH assisted in all phases of the polio campaign. More than 36,637 children were vaccinated as at the end of 2013.

## Shelters

In 2013, 225 shelter visits were conducted in Hassakeh and Qamishly for assessment, registration or CRI distribution. Volunteers helped gather information about shelters outside Qamishly city, which was inaccessible by UNHCR for security reasons.

The shelters of Scout camp and Tel Hamees camp were rehabilitated in 2013 and handed over to the Governorate to provide wider services to IDPs.



CRI Distribution/Governorate of Hassakeh ©UNHCR Hassakeh 2013



Talking to Rania ©UNHCR Hassakeh 2013

## Life continues

“When fighting started in our village, my husband insisted that we leave. This was the last time we ever saw him” said Rania, a 35 year old mother of four children.

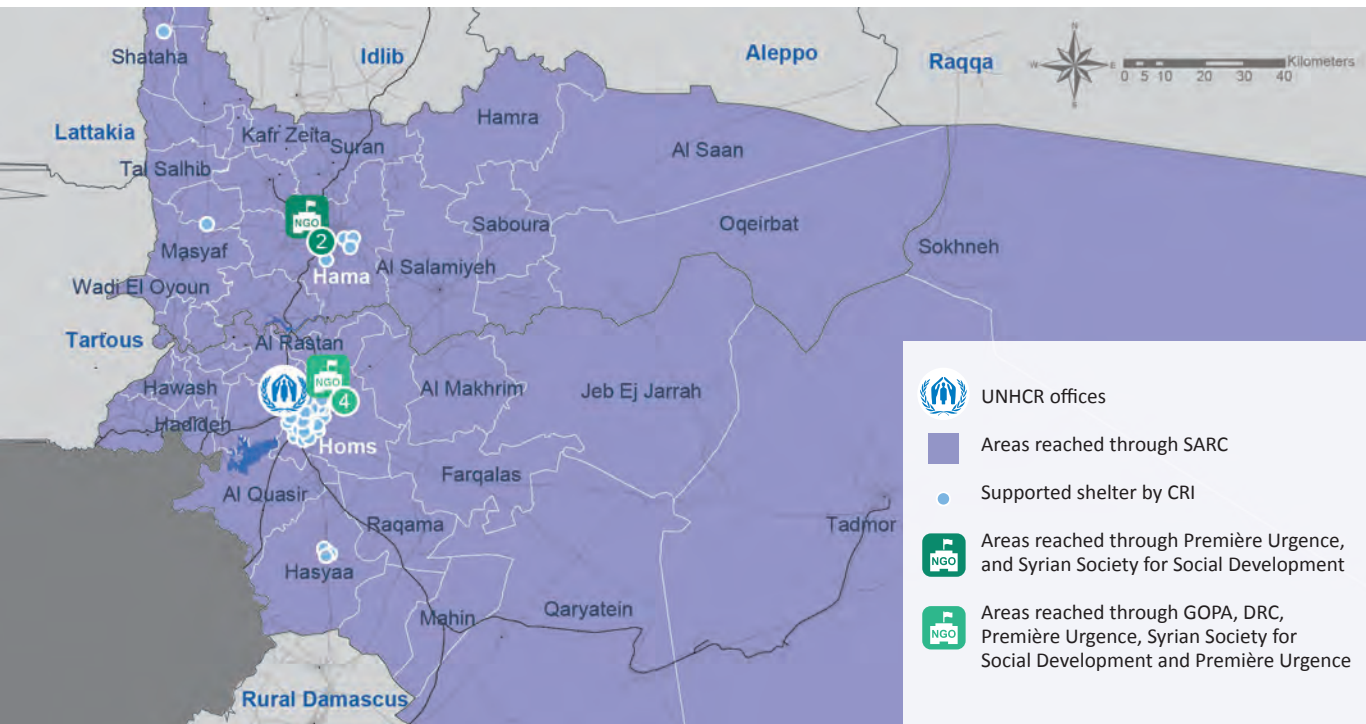
Rania’s husband died during shelling in Tel Hamees before he could see his newly born twins. Despite all difficulties, Rania who is displaced to Qamishly had to resume her life to support her kids.

Rania is receiving cash assistance distributed by UNHCR. Through this support, she managed to start a micro-income generating project of cleaning vegetables and selling them to the local grocery stores. Rania said “Now I can finally make sure that my kids will keep warm in winter”.



Collective Shelter/B.Diab ©UNHCR Homs 2013

## Operations in 2013 Homs and Hama



## Background

UNHCR operations in Homs started in November 2012 before a concrete presence was established through the UN office in Homs in May 2013, expanding the UN's reach in the field to Homs and Hama Governorates.

Homs has become one of the most affected Governorates by the crisis, with some areas completely inaccessible. The security situation has gradually deteriorated making the delivery of humanitarian aid extremely challenging especially with the occasional closure of the main road to Homs, which has affected the work of the Field Office on the ground. In addition, the staff were advised by UNDSS to suspend movements to Homs city and cancel all official missions.

Around 650,000 people have become displaced in Homs and 800,000 in Hama. Some of them sought refuge in collective shelters while the remainder either stayed with host communities or left their Governorate.

## The Response

UNHCR Homs relies on its implementing partners to reach out to a greater number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Homs and Hama.

These partners include the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) for the rehabilitation of shelters and delivery of core relief items (CRIs), Greek and Orthodox Patriarchy (GOPA), Première Urgence (PU), Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), in addition to local NGOs such as Al Birr and Al Aoun for the timely distribution of CRIs and access to non-Government controlled areas.

These partners work complimentary to each other as their areas of operation are controlled by different parties, which guarantees the fair provision of assistance. Some of these partners have a huge capacity of outreach to IDPs, such as Al Aoun, who can reach up to 20,000 families a week.

Furthermore, UNHCR Homs worked closely with the UN Country Team and participated in 20 inter-agency missions to provide urgent assistance to the displaced in hard-to-reach areas.

## Protection and community services

Protection concerns related to the violation of human rights and humanitarian law have been reported and observed in Homs. The security situation and the lack of operational partners and space has restricted protection delivery. Difficulties in relation to access for humanitarian aid and the difficulties civilians face fleeing certain areas have been among the reported protection concerns.

UNHCR extended protection and community services activities through partners. UNHCR also invested in their capacity building to assist them in the identification and response to emergency needs. However, in 2013, around 3,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) benefitted from protection and community services activities extended by UNHCR and partners. One community center (newly inaugurated in the Fayrouza area) organized a series of activities for IDPs of different age groups. The activities included vocational, educational and recreational activities as well as handicraft, social and psychosocial counseling. These activities have allowed the IDPs to cope with the impact of the crisis and difficulties caused by the displacement.

Child protection is a great concern in Homs, with a large percentage of children out of school and with limited access to appropriate health facilities. Parents have indicated a growth in psychological distress among their children. UNHCR distributed recreational kits, school kits and clothing to the most vulnerable children.

UNHCR organized 50 shelter visits in Homs and six in Hama and was also the first agency to reach Al Waer area hosting around 200,000 IDPs out of the 650,000 displaced persons in the Governorate.

30 assessments were conducted with UNHCR implementing partners to identify and address protection concerns raised by IDPs. In 56 shelters visited in Homs and Hama hosting 4,000 indi-

UNHCR is the first agency gaining access to hard-to-reach areas such as Al Waer hosting a third of the displaced population in Homs



Activities at an NGO ©UNHCR Homs 2013

viduals, the main protection concerns identified include lack or loss of documentation, restricted privacy in shelters that might trigger other protection issues, need for additional relief items, lack of specialized care and education for persons with disabilities, limited access to health services, concerns related to protection of women (which remain generally under reported) and separation of families. In Homs, IDPs hosted in shelters have raised, in particular, the matter of kidnapping and disappearance of family members. UNHCR also participated in the UN joint convoy to Qsseir following the displacement of thousands of people to nearby villages.

## Core Relief Items

UNHCR worked on reinforcing the storage capacity of its warehouses to decentralize the overall management of CRIs from Damascus to Homs. An assessment of warehouses was conducted in May and, as a result, UNHCR has become accountable for the stock available and eventually also the warehouse Hub for other agencies working in Homs.

During 2013, UNHCR participated in 20 inter-agency convoys carrying CRIs to hard-to-reach areas such as Al Houla, Termalla, Al Ghanto, Al Rastan, KradDsaneh, Zafaraniieh, Direfool, Aen-Nesier and most importantly the besieged area of Al Waer. These missions faced many challenges especially in the distribution of CRIs in Homs Governorate.

In November, an inter-agency convoy of 16 trucks heading Zafaraniieh for the support of 3,500 families was confiscated, and only later released after extensive negotiations with the concerned authorities to reach their destination and return to Homs safely. Another joint humanitarian convoy desinted for Al Waer was delayed at a checkpoint for some time, preventing the performance

UNHCR participated in 20 inter-agency missions in Homs and Hama, generally to hard-to-reach areas, in which CRIs for 250,000 IDPs were provided

of a humanitarian assessment and a monitoring assessment. In December, a similar incident occurred when carrying CRIs to Al Houla. However, negotiations are still ongoing to solve these challenges and ensure that this incident does not occur again.

Hama also received humanitarian aid in November for 5,500 people during an inter-agency mission on 24 September. The needs in Hama were mainly CRIs and shelter rehabilitation. Accordingly, IDPs were assisted in collaboration with SARC, and Social Care, a local NGO. UNHCR was always able to monitor the distribution of CRIs.

Through implementing partners, CRI distribution reached a total of 727,800 beneficiaries in Homs, and 61,000 beneficiaries in Hama Governorate.



Inshaat charity CRI distribution center/B.Diab ©UNHCR Homs 2013

## Cash assistance

In 2013, UNHCR in Homs managed to deliver SYP 62,000,000 to 13,376 individuals, who informed UNHCR that they planned to use the money to buy fuel and winter clothes.

## Shelters

Rehabilitation work was done to 14 collective shelters in Homs city and 13 in Hama. Rehabilitation included installation of showers, water heaters, electric wiring, basic water piping and provision of water reservoir tanks. Furthermore, 300 sealing-off kits were set out in the areas of Deir Balableh and Inshaat in cooperation with SSSD.



Collective Shelter/B.Diab ©UNHCR Homs 2013

## Recreational activities can amount to life-saving support for suicidal children in Homs

Yamen is a five-year old boy who has been displaced with his family from Al Waer area, who have not yet been able to go back home. Once he tried to force his way in front of a sniper and screamed, "I'm sick and tired of this life and I want to die".

As the situation has worsened in Homs, children have lost hope and optimism. Their favorite games are now shooting guns and attending funerals of their dead friends.

UNHCR organizes recreational activities for displaced children in the shelters of Homs as having fun and enjoyment can help these children cope better as well as release tension and anxiety.

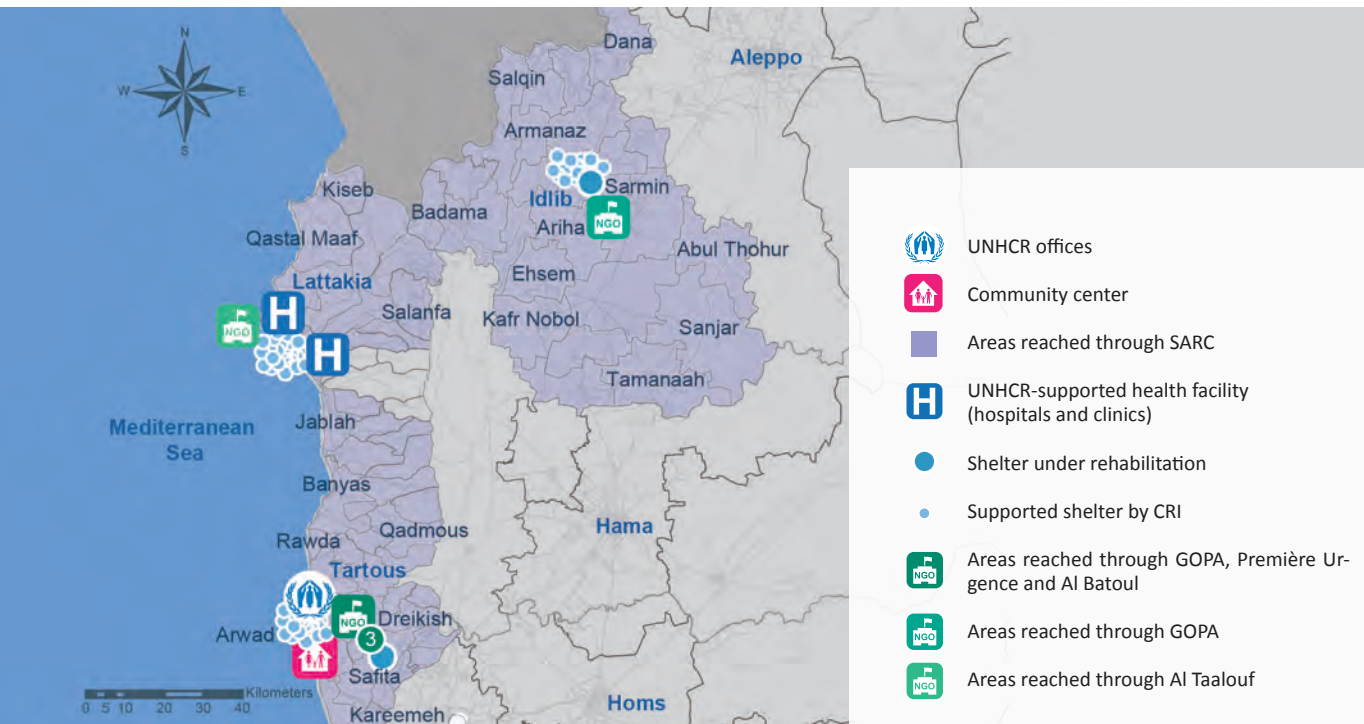




Tents at Insha'a/A.Solumsmoen©UNHCR Tartous 2013



## Operations in 2013 Tartous, Latakia and Idlib



## Background

UNHCR opened its Field Office in Tartous in March 2013, covering Tartous, Lattakia and later Idlib, offering a presence in the coastal region of Syria. Tartous is strategic location on the sea as many goods can be imported into the country through its port. This inevitably allowed for an increase in the flow of Core Relief Items (CRIs) into the country and enabled UNHCR to provide prompt responses and meet IDPs in dire need.

The coastal area is considered a safe area when compared to the rest of the country, as limited security incidents and military operations have been recorded. Consequently, a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from all over the country have sought refuge in both Tartous and Lattakia. It is estimated that 42,560 displaced families reside in Tartous, 35,000 in Lattakia and 61,570 in Idlib. 25 collective shelters in Tartous and Lattakia, allocated by the respective authorities, are receiving IDPs, all of which were identified for rehabilitation to be able to accommodate new IDP influxes or an IDP caseload with specific needs.

## The Response

UNHCR has signed agreements with five implementing partners in the area, namely, the Ministry of

Local Administration (MoLA), Première Urgence, Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), Greek and Orthodox Patriarchy (GOPA) and Al Batoul to meet the growing humanitarian needs. They mainly work with UNHCR on CRI distribution, collective shelter rehabilitation, financial assistance based on a vulnerability criteria and protection activities.

### Logistics

In May 2013, UNHCR opened a warehouse in Tartous in a suitable geographical location close to the port, where CRIs are imported, in order to encourage the smooth running of customs formalities and onward transportation across Syria. Every week, the warehouse delivers CRIs for up to 11,767 households to Tartous, Lattakia, Idlib, Aleppo and Homs, handling a heavy logistical operation. The storage capacity of the warehouse is approximately 2,500 squared meters.

Since the establishment of the UNHCR supply Hub, CRI kits are dispatched for regular and emergency distributions or for inter-warehouse transfer. In Tartous and Lattakia, close to 440,000 individuals were served with CRIs in 2013 through UNHCR implementing partners, SARC and GOPA. More than 200 trucks, having above 583 metric

## Every month Core Relief Items for 50,000 beneficiaries leaves Tartous warehouse for Tartous, Lattakia, Idlib, Aleppo and Homs

tons of items have come through the ports in Tartous and Lattakia on a monthly basis.

In October, 44 shipping containers loaded with UNHCR relief items arrived in the coastal port of Tartous from Dubai. The consignment included more than 29,000 tarpaulins, 150,000 sleeping mats, 100,000 blankets, 75,000 jerry cans and 30,000 kitchens sets stored in Tartous warehouse before distributing them to 75,000 vulnerable displaced families across Syria in 2013.

The strategic position of UNHCR in Tartous enabled the office to respond quickly to the sudden IDP influxes in Lattakia, when 4000 HHs received CRIs right after their displacement in August. Furthermore, as part of an inter-agency approach, UNHCR dispatched 1,000 CRI kits in Khanshaikhoun, located at the Southern area of the Governorate. The aforementioned opened a window of opportunity for UNHCR and other UN agencies to assist IDPs in hard-to-reach-areas.



CRI distribution in Safita/A.Hasan©UNHCR Tartous 2013

## Protection and Community Services

Protection monitoring includes the identification of needs through a participatory approach including focus group discussions and semi-structured discussions and referral of specific protection concerns to specialized units inside UNHCR and other relevant sectors.

The main protection concerns include the need for CRIs, the significant overcrowding of shelters causing lack of privacy, lack of sufficient sewage systems and garbage disposals, health problems such as skin diseases and hepatitis, high level school drop outs and the need for legal services as well as psychosocial support. Loss of documentation as well as concerns related to women's protection were also observed and attended to.

541 visits have been achieved by the UNHCR team in 2013, assessing the complexity of the dynamics of the situation and its consequences in IDP collective shelters and IDP settlements as well as related-stakeholders.

In March 2013, UNHCR undertook a comprehensive mapping of protection concerns in collective shelters and conducted a mapping of services and potential partners. Throughout 2013 several missions were undertaken to upscale UNHCR's protection response and strengthen the capacity of partners and staff newly recruited to UNHCR Tartous.

Through UNHCR implementing partners GOPA and Al Batoul, in 2013 UNHCR offered a wide range of protection activities in the community center and collective shelters. These activities include social counseling, psychosocial support, provision of targeted material assistance, awareness, vocational training and recreational activities in addition to remedial classes.

In Tartous and Lattakia it is actually possible to monitor Protection concerns both in and out of shelters

Over the year 22 volunteers were recruited by implementing partners in Tartous to increase our knowledge, expand services and extend psychosocial support to the IDP population. Through GOPA, three community-based organizations received support implementing quick impact projects aimed at empowering local NGOs in Tartous and Latakia. More than 10,767 individuals, including recently displaced persons from Aleppo, Homs and Idlib, benefitted from community services related activities in 2013.

### Cash Assistance

Cash assistance targets persons with specific needs identified by local NGOs based on UNHCR's vulnerability criteria. In 2013, UNHCR provided cash assistance to 13,788 individuals in Tartous and 32,750 individuals in Lattakia, most displaced from Aleppo, Homs and Idlib.

In 2013, the total cash assistance in both Governorates amounted to SYP 198,372,000/\$1,322,022.

### Rehabilitation of Collective Shelters

Based on a Shelter sector approach and through its implementing partner, Première Urgence and the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA), seven collective shelters in Tartous and one in Lattakia were rehabilitated by UNHCR in 2013, benefiting 3,510 IDPs.

Five others, where 1,214 IDPs are residing, are currently under implementation in Tartous. The rehabilitation included mainly partitions, WASH, electrical works and doors and windows, as well as improvements for accessibility.

## Recreational activities helps a five-year old boy communicate

Manar\* is a five-year old boy who suffers from autism, hearing impairment and mental retardation. He refused to communicate with others, not even his family, and rejected the hearing aid device he was offered.

In one of the UNHCR-supported shelters run by Al Batoul, a psychosocial support specialist followed up on the case of Manar on a daily basis. Accordingly, he was engaged in recreational activities until he accepted to wear the hearing device, which resulted in improving his hearing ability.

One day Manar overcame his incapacity of communicating with others when he took to the stage and started dancing and talking in the microphone in front of 250 kids during a play.

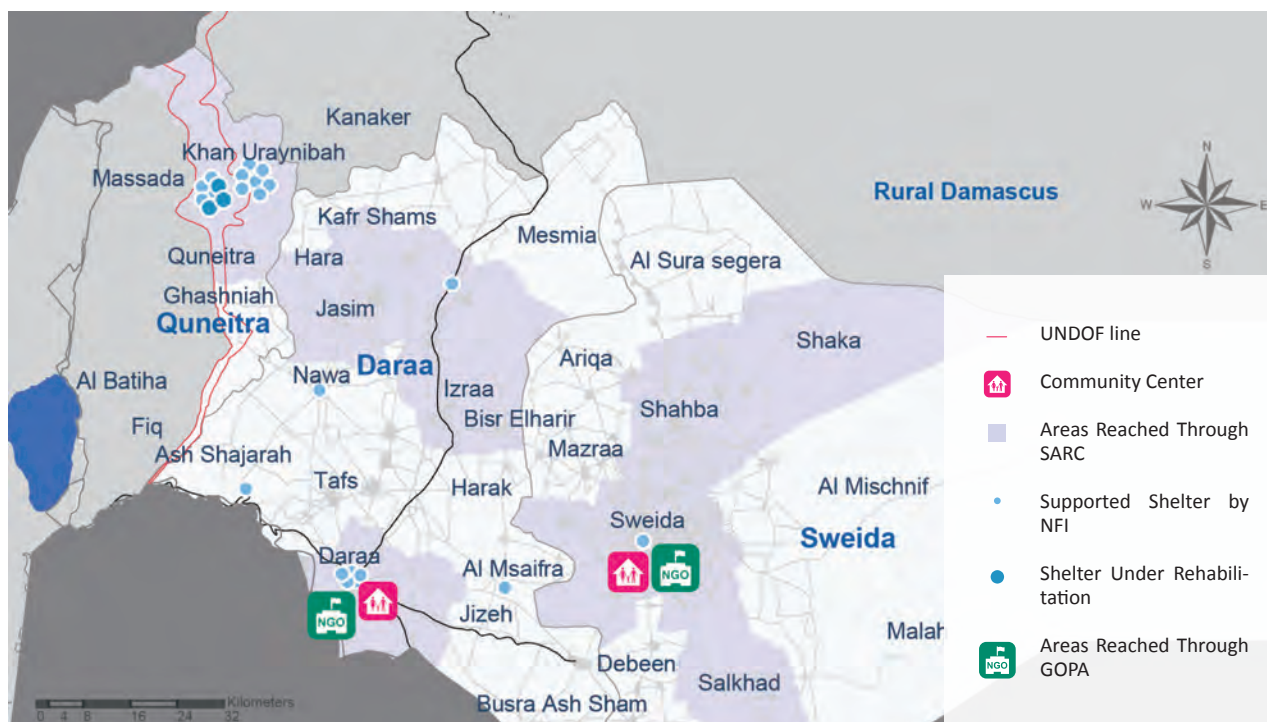
Manar was noted to interact with other kids during the activity without even wearing the hearing device.

\* Name has been changed



Painting over aggressive messaging near Daraa Community Center © UNHCR Daraa 2013

## Operations in 2013 Daraa, Sweida and Quneitra



## Background

Daraa Governorate was the first area affected by the crisis in Syria. Figures from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) indicate that there are 460,000 displaced people in Daraa, which represents 45% of its registered population.

In 2013, UNHCR planned to open an office in Daraa covering both Daraa and Sweida. However, permanent presence in Daraa has not yet been possible for security reasons. Nonetheless, UNHCR staff in the field were still able to provide necessary humanitarian assistance.

## The Response

UNHCR organised official missions to Daraa in February and August to identify needs and explore possibilities for assistance. A meeting with the Governor of Daraa, SARC, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Greek and Orthodox Patriarchy (GOPA) took place to coordinate the support.

The main needs identified were food, core relief items (CRIs) and cash assistance. Children were also noted to be in need of psychosocial support and educational activities. The necessity of medical assistance was also highlighted during the mis-

sions as many ambulances had been hijacked in the Governorate, in addition to the destruction of equipment in hospitals.

## Protection and Community Services

Access to Daraa by humanitarian agencies has been limited due to the fighting in the Governorate, therefore, in order to identify and address the needs, UNHCR sought to develop partnerships with local NGOs. In 2013, UNHCR established two community centers in Daraa and Sweida, through GOPA, where a wide range of integrated protection services, including counseling, recreational activities, psychosocial support and vocational training, were provided to more than 9,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Through focus group discussions with IDPs located in Sweida, several protection concerns were identified, such as financial hardship, lack of proper health care and lack or loss of documentation affecting the registration of children in schools. The discussions allowed UNHCR to identify 12 volunteers for the Volunteer Outreach Programme, launched in Sweida in April 2013 in cooperation with GOPA.



Summer Camp ©UNHCR Daraa 2013

Although UNHCR does not have concrete presence in Daraa, **93,500 IDPs** benefitted from CRI distribution in 2013

Activities to ensure protection of women and children in Daraa need to be further developed in collaboration with partners and other UN agencies.

In addition, through UNHCR's implementing partner, the Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), an extended network of 14 lawyers in six governorates have been established leading to the recruitment of two lawyers in Daraa. The legal assistance provided by the lawyers includes legal counseling, legal intervention and awareness raising sessions for IDPs.

### Core Relief Items (CRIs)

As IDPs fled their hometowns with only few personal possessions and savings because of the clashes, the most basic domestic items were needed to adapt to life in the shelter.

UNHCR distributed CRIs to IDPs through its implementing partners, SARC and GOPA. In February, nine trucks of CRIs were delivered to Daraa through SARC and the SWU, for the benefit of 75,000 individuals, which were mainly women and children. Furthermore, an inter-agency convoy went to Daraa in June delivering CRIs to 200,000 individuals and health supplies for 108,000 vulnerable people. In 2013, UNHCR distributed CRIs to 93,500 internally displaced people in Daraa.

### Shelters

The UNHCR-funded shelter, Scout Club, in Sweida, was rehabilitated in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA) to benefit 1,104 IDPs in the area.



Cash Distribution Mission on the road back to Damascus ©UNHCR Tartous 2013

# Sector Approach

UNHCR is the sector lead of two sectors: the Protection/Community Services sector and the Shelter/Non-Food Item (NFI) sector. Both of these sectors hold meetings on a fortnightly basis where the coordination of all activities taking place in the Syria is done.

Although Shelter/Non-Food Item sector is often reported as one sector, on the ground Shelter and NFI operate in separate working groups. These working groups ensure inclusiveness with other agencies and expand partnerships, complementing the provision of goods and services with training and guidance.

The working groups have been central to the formulation of the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan (SHARP). UNHCR is also an active member of the Health and Education sectors.

## The Protection/Community Services Sector

The Protection/Community Services Sector included UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNMAS, DRC, IOM, IMC, SARC and SSSD in 2013. This group works together with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs. It was a great success, following much negotiation, that the concept of Protection

could be included in the 2013 SHARP, as it ensured that Protection was an integral part in the overall humanitarian response.

The sector aimed at supporting the affected population, including IDPs and the host community, in addition to reducing the adverse effects of the displacement through a diverse range of protection and community services activities such as social, legal and psychosocial counseling, recreational, educational and vocational activities provided in collective shelters and community centers as well as material and non-material assistance for persons with specific needs. The sector also aimed at monitoring and assessing needs. It then analysed all the available information to inform the protection strategy and advocacy.

In 2013, more than one million individuals benefited from Protection/Community Services sector activities aimed at providing sector essential protection or community empowerment. Protection of civilians in Syria, and access to humanitarian aid are among the main protection concerns expressed and addressed by the UNHCR team and the Protection/Community Services sector in Syria. UNHCR prepared and conducted a training programme for NGOs and partners on international humanitarian law, guiding principles for



IDPs, code of conduct for humanitarian workers and front-liners and needs assessment. Neutrality, impartiality, the principle of no-harm, confidentiality are among the principles that have been widely disseminated to all in the field.

Gender-based violence (GBV), in all its variations, remained one of the most preoccupying protection risks. Through the Sector's efforts, 80,000 survivors of GBV have been assisted with medical and psychological support, vocational skills programmes and awareness raising sessions.

The Protection sector also received reports of high rates of psychological distress were witnessed among displaced children from frontline staff. As a result, the Sector members provided psychosocial support (PSS) at least to 460,000 children. In 2013, the Sector also expanded the number of child friendly spaces, which provide an important space for children, families and communities to learn about child rights.

The sector also sought to promote protection through livelihood interventions, with a number of goals, such as strengthening resilience, reducing exposure to GBV for women and girls, and providing alternatives to recruitment into armed groups. In May 2013, the community-based initiatives project commenced, providing grants to community groups in order to implement solutions that meet their own needs as well as to strengthen and expand community mobilisation.

In a bid to improve the capacity of local organisations to respond to the increasing protection concerns more than 600 professionals participated in various training activities, including on child recruitment, child exploitation, child labour, trafficking, domestic violence, PSS, and how to care for survivors.

Protection analysis stems from comprehensive needs assessments by respective agencies through a participatory and rights-based approach. Findings of over 300 shelter visits were shared in inter-agency meetings with the purpose of ensuring adequate referral mechanisms and suggest recommendations. Also, the Protection sector shared the results of a remote assessment on child protection trends in Syria, based on interviews with newly arriving refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. As part

of the sector's responsibility to mainstream protection, UNHCR, as sector lead, organised a series of related trainings and workshops on Protection Mainstreaming with participation of national and international NGOs as well as UN sector agencies.

### Non-Food Item (NFI) Working group

In 2013, the NFI Working Group included UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNRWA, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, IOM, DRC, PU and SIF, GOPA, TdH, Mercy Corps, Inter-sos, ACF. This group works together with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Local Administration and the General Authority for Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic to respond to new displacements. Humanitarian agencies prioritised the procurement and stockpiling of NFIs and winterised items to enable urgent distributions to the most affected populations in need.

NFI packages were standardised among sector agencies, and a similar approach was undertaken with regards to the winterised kits, where it was agreed that all such packages would include warm clothing, additional plastic sheets, high thermal blankets, and quilts. In 2013, the NFI working group covered the needs of almost 4.9 million IDPs, including 86,752 Palestine refugees.

This was achieved despite limited procurement in the local market, truck availability, lengthy bureaucratic processes, military checkpoints and truck retention/demurrage charges. The sector managed to employ flexible processes, including rapid assessments and secondary data review, to ensure coordinated and harmonised procedures despite the on-going challenges to obtain reliable primary assessment data to better inform the humanitarian response.

For those who could not be reached with NFIs, or alternatively, in order to supplement NFI distribution, financial assistance was provided, to 485,714 individuals.

## Shelter Working Group

In 2013, the Shelter Working Group included UNHCR, UNRWA, Première Urgence, UN Habitat, Secours Islamique – France and IOM, who all have projects under the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan 2013. This group works together with the Ministry of Local Administration and the General Authority for Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic to map the needs in the country and activate a comprehensive response.

At the beginning of 2013, the main focus was on the rehabilitation of collective shelters, the Shelter Working group then developed the concept of sealing-off-kits ('SOKs') to provide support to the displaced living in private shelter by sealing off open windows, fixing broken doors, installing partitions and providing insulation.

The Shelter working group agreed on minimum standards to which all shelter rehabilitation should reach. In consultation with the Protection/Community Services Sector, protection provision has been included such as collective spaces for women and children, locks on doors for private family space, lighting in private and collective areas, including in corridors, toilets and bathrooms. Please see the Shelter Section for further information.

## Inter-agency convoys

UNHCR participates fully in inter-agency missions that provide one way of accessing areas that are otherwise hard-to reach. In 2013, UNHCR participated in 39 inter-agency to hard-to-reach areas in Aleppo, Raqqa, Daraa, Deir es Zour, Hama, Homs and Idlib. While considerable progress has been made since the beginning of the year, there were areas that could not be reached but are on the plan of action for 2014.

## The special relationship: UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP

These three agencies have a special relationship that stems from natural cross overs in logistics with WFP and in Protection with UNICEF. In this fora, joint positions on issues such as participation in inter-agency convoys, child protection and multi-functional community centers are reached. The agencies are currently exploring the idea of doing joint third-party monitoring.





World Refugee Day in AlFayhaa Sports Center/B.Diab ©UNHCR Damascus 2013

## Refugees Protection and Assistance

Syria hosts various groups of refugees, mostly Iraqis, but also groups of Somalis, Afghans and Palestinians. The total number of refugees in Syria has decreased since the beginning of the Syrian crisis and it is expected to continue to decrease due to the volatile security situation in the country.

At the beginning of 2013, UNHCR reported that there were 71,465 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR. Currently there are approximately 42,246 refugees registered.

### Reception and Registration Facilities

The first point of access for assistance from UNHCR facilities is through reception. In 2013, 86,785 people of concern approached UNHCR offices in Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh, which are the three offices where reception facilities are available for refugees. The office in Damascus receives the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers with approximately 1,500 people of concern approaching the office each week.

Upon reception, dedicated staff assesses the individual needs of each person and, amongst other

things, appointments are issued, documents are collected, registration and renewal forms are provided and referrals to specific units are made.

In 2013, the sheer volume of people approaching the office in Damascus required continuous assessment of the security and crowd control measures in place. Some of the measures put in place included additional security checks both in the inner and outer area of the reception, special measures were put in place for vulnerable people so that they could be easily identified and fast tracked, canopy shading was installed to protect waiting applicants from the summer heat and winter rain and more seats were installed.

**Approximately 1,500 people of concern approach the UNHCR office in Damascus every week**

Despite these developments UNHCR received reports that many refugees found it difficult to access UNHCR offices. Undocumented refugees face

particular problems relating to movement around the country as there are now checkpoints on all main roads and entries to sub districts. Refugees have reported that they refrain from approaching the office as they fear harassment on checkpoints as well as the rising transportation costs that have made commuting difficult. Foreign nationals are required to attend the telephone provider each month with a copy of their residency.

Many areas are completely out of coverage and reach for most of the time. UNHCR responded to these issues through going to Refugees homes using Outreach Volunteers and operating Hotlines for Refugees that could not make it to the office. However, it is important to note that as the number of Outreach Volunteers reduces, and the number of areas out of coverage increase, UNHCRs capacity to reach out is increasingly limited. In addition, mobile and support registration missions are organized when needed to other governorates to reach the population unable to approach UNHCR Damascus for registration purposes. Besides, renewal activities are taking place at least once a month at DRC Masaken Barzeh for mainly Somali refugees who fear to approach our main center for security related reasons.

### Who is a refugee? - Refugee Status Determination

In spite of the current crisis in Syria, UNHCR has continued to receive asylum seekers predominantly from Iraq with others originating from Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia. Despite this, it is clear that the overall number of asylum seekers registering with the office has fallen dramatically as a result of the deteriorating security situation. In 2013, 498 individuals were recognized as refugees.

#### New asylum seekers are still registering in Syria

New Sudanese cases registered as asylum seekers with the office as a result of the changing and deteriorating circumstances in South Kordofan, Abyei and the Blue Nile states of Sudan. This new situation is also grounds to reconsider decisions relating to persons hailing from these areas. Given the recent clashes and violence occurring in Juba, Bor

and other towns in South Sudan, a decision was taken in December 2013, to suspend rejection of asylum seekers from South Sudan until further guidance is provided.

Given the situation in Syria it is perhaps understandable that a high number of people who are clearly not refugees have approached the office seeking assistance. These individuals are provided with comprehensive counseling to explain the definition of refugees and what assistance is available for IDPs.

### Assessing the protection needs - Counseling

Refugees who approach the offices in Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh are referred by reception to different specialized services for advice and potentially assistance. This includes protection, community services and education. From these visits to the office certain trends were observed.

The largest Protection concern reported to the office was that refugees were receiving threats from various armed groups, as the sectarian nature of the crisis gradually impacts the refugees. In addition, refugees also reported a rise in criminality including being affected by kidnapping, physical harm or robberies. Practical advice was generally provided such as, amongst other things, moving away from a certain area, reporting a robbery and if necessary a referral for urgent cash assistance would be provided. Many refugees also had documentation concerns and were further referred to in-house lawyers for advice.

Almost 6,000 refugees were referred to Community Services for advice; their most urgent need was financial assistance. What is clear that refugees who previously relied on the informal labour market before the crisis are now struggling to cope.

#### The sectarian nature of the crisis has affected the refugees

UNHCR lawyers provide legal counselling to refugees and asylum seekers on legal issues related to Syrian laws and regulations, mainly related to

## Refugees who relied on the informal labour market before the crisis are now struggling to cope

personal status law, with an average of ten cases per week. Extremely vulnerable cases, for example where it seems likely that the person of concern is a victim of gender-based violence, are also referred to a specialist time. UNHCR also provides advice to refugees on education. This includes advice enrolment to those who have dropped out, information on how to take a placement test or on how to obtain certification or enroll to other educational programmes.

### Reaching Out

In 2013, refugees increasingly faced difficulties approaching the office however they were able to access through hotlines. UNHCR has 26 hotlines, four of them operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

During 2013, 21,917 calls were received and recorded through the hotline. The majority of calls were related to cash for food and financial assistance for most vulnerable, while others were related to different counseling services provided by UNHCR. Refugee Scholarship Students are also contacted with information about education through Facebook.

UNHCR also has a network of 43 Outreach Volunteers that are trained and living in the community. They monitor the situation up close and provide the most vulnerable refugees with assistance in the community.

26 hotlines: four of them operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week

### Assistance – Financial, Legal, Educational, Vocational and Health

**Financial Assistance:** With the deterioration of the economic situation in Syria it was inevitable that refugees would be disproportionately affected. UNHCR has responded by scaling up on cash as-

sistance for this group. All refugees became entitled to financial assistance. Particularly vulnerable refugees are also provided with assistance. In 2013, 46,325 refugees received cash for food at least once.

Cash was also urgently provided to the many refugees who suddenly needed a bit extra on account of the situation. This was usually to pay for the cost of a further displacement, a death in the family, an extra medical bill, or to compensate someone who had been a victim of a robbery. What was clear from these sessions is that refugees are becoming increasingly vulnerable.

Refugees are also provided financial assistance for education. In 2013, each family received approximately 10,000 Syrian pounds per child at primary level and 15,000 Syrian pounds per child at secondary level. In 2013, a total of 9,164 children benefitted from UNHCR Education grants. Cash assistance is also provided to scholarship students; in the academic year 2012-13 UNHCR supported 198 refugee university students in and will continue to support 92 students for the year 2013-14. The programme covers the academic fees and pocket money.

**Educational Assistance:** In 2013, more than 13,000 beneficiaries benefitted from remedial classes for primary education in all subjects thought in public schools and for preparatory lessons to obtain secondary education certificates. Remedial Classes took place in public school, private institutes, community centers and collective shelters hosting refugees in Damascus and Rural Damascus. UNHCR implemented its remedial classes through PU, GOPA, DRC and Al Nada in a total of 35 schools and institutes. Moreover, 166 children with special learning difficulties benefitted from a specific education support programme implemented in UNHCR centers in Damascus. Finally, 1,410 children participated in summer camps, in which catch up lessons were provided.

**Vocational Training:** In 2013, a total of 6,842 individuals participated in Vocational Training courses offered by UNHCR through six implementing partners (GOPA, Al Nada, PU, SARC, SWU and DRC). Vocational Training Courses included sewing, electricity, knitting, mobile maintenance, computer maintenance, hairdressing, plumber,

cosmetics among other subjects. All vocational training courses, that historically have targeted refugees, were opened to Syrian affected populations. Approximately 60% of beneficiaries of the vocational training in Damascus were Syrians.

**Legal Assistance:** UNHCR also provides legal assistance to refugees requiring assistance in matters relating to documentation and detention.

- i. Detention: UNHCR has sent more than 90 note verbales to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conducted 81 visits to the Immigration Department to follow up on cases of people in detention and to counsel persons of concern. On occasion, refugees have also been provided with legal representation before the courts. Despite the fact that the majority of cases are detained in Security branches where UNHCR has no access, 52 cases were released upon UNHCR's intervention in 2013.
- ii. Assistance with Documentation: In 2013, UNHCR provided residency counselling for 828 PoCs. About 80% of PoCs, who sought assistance with residency counselling successfully ended up obtaining it either through UNHCR's direct intervention or through giving proper advice on procedures required to obtain residency.

In addition to the above, UNHCR was able to, through intervention with relevant authorities, get approval for residency for 802 Palestinian refugees who had come through Iraq. Also, through UNHCR assistance, 191 Somali refugees were able to obtain passports and 76 Somalis and Sudanese refugees were provided with residency statements.

**Health Services:** In addition a total of 22,000 refugees received health services through SARC polyclinics in Damascus and rural Damascus.

**Protection for Victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:** More than 100 refugees and asylum seekers have approached the office after being a victim of such violence in 2013. These individuals receive a myriad of services which includes legal counseling, legal representation, medical assistance, and psychosocial support, potential access to a safe house and at a later date access to vocational training.

**Protection for Refugee Children:** Refugee children are also assessed on a case by case basis where the focus is on the identification of children at risk including unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), assessing the best interests of these children (with the assistance of a panel) the provision of targeted cash assistance to families hosting UASC, recreational activities and emergency awareness activities. In addition in 2013, UNHCR with SARC provided recreational activities and individual counseling for 1,955 refugee children. SARC is running a Child protection Center in Central Damascus which provides a space for children to play and learn.

### One Durable Solution - Resettlement

Resettlement processing out of Damascus is considered by UNHCR as one of the few remaining possibilities for providing physical protection for refugees in need of a durable solution in Syria. However, the processing is vulnerable and much depending on developments on the security side in Damascus for refugees. Resettlement country access to refugees was also limited to video conferencing and dossier processing. In 2013, the resettlement faced many challenges such as high refugee mobility, less interest among resettlement countries, and technical and logistical challenges. The resettlement countries in 2013 included New Zealand, The Netherlands, The United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Australia, and the USA.

UNHCR gives priority to cases eligible for resettlement such as people with medical needs, Woman-at-risk, Unaccompanied minors, and people having legal and physical protection needs. Cases are prioritised for resettlement submission according to serious vulnerabilities and/or are at serious protection risk. In 2013, 5,605 vulnerable refugees have been successfully resettled into other countries.

**One Durable Solution**  
**5,605 vulnerable refugees have been successfully resettled into other countries**  
 [This includes family reunion and sponsorship cases]



Ahmad and his Violin ©UNHCR Aleppo 2013

## Violin in times of violence

Under the bright side of the remarkable talent of Ahmad hides a gloomy side of suffering. Ahmad, the 19 year old young musician was forced to flee with his family from Iraq to Syria in 2006 escaping homicide based on religion. Ahmad had been living peacefully for many years in Al Myassar, until one day he was displaced with his family and the whole neighbourhood to various areas because of the drastic fighting in Aleppo before ending up in a public shelter in Al Muhafaza district in Aleppo.

Ahmad said “It was a miracle not to be kidnapped nor arrested. I really need to stay in a place where I can finally survive with my family and get rid of the surrounding horror”.

Ahmad has been playing violin since he was four years old. He is seeking now for one of UNHCR durable solutions to heal his broken dreams. UNHCR supports his musical talent by providing him with musical instruments and opening the opportunity for him to participate in many relevant occasions.

Ahmad said with a smile: “My violin is the language which can tell the world about our suffering”.



## Future Outlook

The rate of deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Syria has been staggering. At the beginning of 2013 nearly 3.5 million were said to be displaced now we talk of 6.5 million displaced. Without a political solution in sight further internal displacement is anticipated as populations try to find safe locations. UNHCR has every intention to continue to be present and delivering in Syria but there are significant challenges ahead.

Violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of human rights continue to be widespread. The consequences for civilians' protection and their access to assistance are overwhelming. More than 100,000 civilians have been killed as result of the crisis, while many more have suffered injuries and even disability due to the violence. UNHCR has committed to strengthening its advocacy for the protection of civilians in its humanitarian response, in order to ensure that protection is mainstreamed across all its activities and protection capacity is strengthened.

In 2013, UNHCR built on systems already put in place such as the Project Tracking Database which allows information about distributions of items to be mapped from anywhere in the country. Other systems are also in place including third party monitoring of UNHCR shelter rehabilitation through a global agreement with the international organization 'Baltic Control. In 2014, to address the im-

portance of reliable information in order to direct assistance where it is needed, UNHCR will work to strengthen its assessments, monitoring and information management system so as to present reliable information on population movements, the root causes of displacement, immediate humanitarian needs and the options for solutions.

However, with limited safe options in Syria, there is the possibility of a sizeable outflow to Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey. In addition, it is possible that further internal displacement will occur, for example from rural Damascus to Damascus, from the villages of Lattakia to Lattakia city, from Homs to Damascus or from Deir es Zour to Hasakeh. In order to respond to the considerable and growing needs UNHCR has a strategy to scale up assistance in 2014. This will include further decentralization by opening up new offices in Daraa and Sweida. UNHCR will also continue to conduct missions to hard-to-reach areas, to build more capacity amongst NGOs and further expand the Community Based Approach initiated in 2013. Through this approach and others UNHCR will continue to mainstream protection in all sectors, increase material assistance to especially vulnerable groups and to increase the response to gender based violence. All of this will be done with one goal in mind: to reach the most vulnerable in Syria wherever they may be.



## Partners in 2013



**Al Bassel Institute**  
Areas of work: Damascus.



**Al Batoul Charity**  
Areas of work: Tartous.



**Al Nada**  
Areas of work: Damascus



**Al Taalouf Charity Association**  
Areas of work: Aleppo, Idlib



**Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**  
Areas of work: Rural Damascus, Homs, Daraa Aleppo.



**General Assembly of Damascus Hospital**  
Areas of work: Damascus



**Governorate of Hassakeh**  
Areas of work: Hassakeh.



**Greek Orthodox Patriarchate for Antioch and All the East (GOPA)**  
Areas of work: Homs, Rural Damascus, Daraa, Rural Damascus, Tartous, Aleppo, Sweida, Lattakia.



**International Medical Corps**  
Areas of work: Damascus.



**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
Areas of work: All Governorates.

**Ministry of Local Administration**  
Areas of work: All Governorates.

**Ministry of Social Affairs**  
Areas of work: All Governorates.



**Ministry of Higher Education**  
Areas of work: Damascus, Aleppo, Lattakia, Homs



**Patriarchate of Roman Catholic**  
Areas of work: Damascus, Rural Damascus



**Première Urgence (PU)**  
Areas of work: Damascus, Tartous, Homs, Hama.



**Secours Islamique France (SIF)**  
Areas of work: Rural Damascus



**Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)**  
Areas of work: 14 Governorates



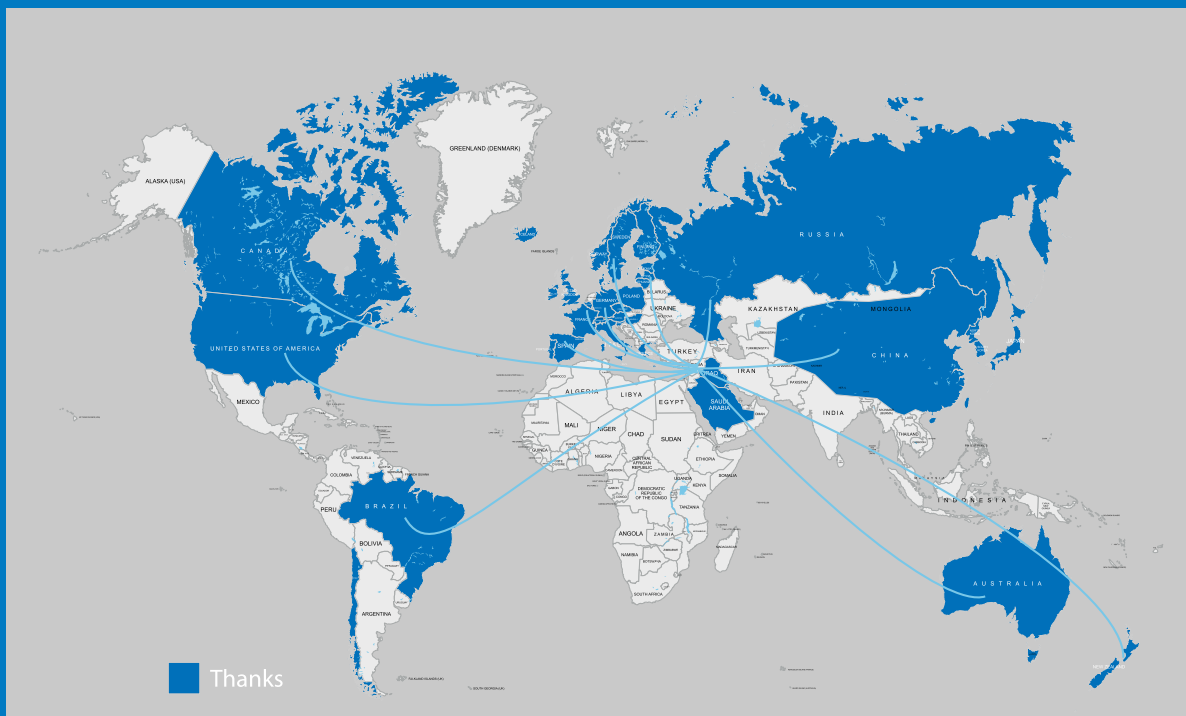
**الأمانة السورية للتنمية**  
**The Syria Trust for Development**  
Areas of work: Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo.



**Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD)**  
Areas of work: Hassakeh, Hama, Homs, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Aleppo.

## Thanks to our donors

UNHCR thanks donors for their support to its work in Syria in 2013



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