

Syria In Focus

July 2017

- World Refugee Day Celebrated throughout Syria
- UNHCR Scales Up Response in North East
- UNHCR-Supported Home-Based Rehabilitation Improves Lives
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- First UNHCR Test Convoy Reaches Qamishly from Damascus

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UNHCR Syria Celebrates World Refugee Day (WRD)



Today around the world more than 65 million people are forced to leave their homes due to conflicts and violence, natural disasters or the very real consequences of climate change. On World Refugee Day, held every year on 20 June, we commemorate the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees worldwide. World Refugee Day also marks a key moment for the public to show support for families forced to flee their homes and their countries. In Syria WRD was celebrated throughout the country. In Damascus on 18 June, UNHCR held an event at Al Nada Community Centre in Yaafour in Rural Damascus, targeting 54 children and adolescents aged between 10 and 16 years old. Activities included; theatre about the importance of education, role playing, challenging games and entertainment, dancing and handmade greeting cards for children. The activities ended with Iftar meals for all the attendees.

Also in Damascus city on 20 June, refugees living in Syria from over 35 different nationalities came together with UNHCR to celebrate with an open day showcasing handmade products made by refugees, drawings, art, musical performances and sketches. The event which was attended by Dr. Mekdad, deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the UNHCR Syria Representative and heads of a number of sister UN agencies, included a very colorful folkloric fashion show, with participants from Iraq, Sudan, Chad, DRC, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, enthusiastically cheered on by the audience. In addition, a wonderful Sudanese wedding sketch grabbed



the audience with its color, emotion and show of tradition and wedding practice. Painters drew people, calligraphers wrote visitors' names in beautiful Arabic letters, a live band from South Sudan rocked the place and after much singing and dancing everyone settled down to a nice Iftar meal. Other activities to mark WRD also were carried out at the Masaken Barzeh Arabic Cultural Centre in Damascus city, the GOPA community centre in Sahnaya in Rural Damascus, the Sudanese church in Dweila in Rural Damascus targeting children with entertainment, games and art as well as a large event which was arranged for 100 Iraqi refugee children in the Jaramana area.



In Aleppo, UNHCR celebrated World Refugee Day jointly with five partners; Namaa, The Syria Trust, SSSD, SARC and GOPA. 175 Refugees participated in this event which included a Bazaar in which refugees and IDPs' handmade items were sold, recreational activities for kids, a short play, singing and an Iftar meal for the invitees.



In Tartous, activities included a fair and a bazar at Tartous Cultural Centre and an Iftar with refugees. An opening ceremony took place on 20 June attended by local authorities, international agencies and local NGOs which included music from different Syrian governorates and countries, as well as sketches and songs performed by IDP children. The Fair included a section introducing UNHCR services, a section informing people about the WRD, booths for partners introducing their services, games and competitions, a section displaying items from different countries and governorates, as well as a bazar for IDP and host community handmade items and food. The same activities were conducted in Lattakia Governorate from 03 to 05 July.



In Hassakeh, celebrations took place over three days in various locations. On 19 June, in Hassakeh city an event took place which included singing, dancing and fashion shows celebrating Iraqi culture as well as the cultural heritage of different nationalities in the area. Also, on 20 June, in Al Hol camp, another celebration took place which included several contests, singing and dancing prepared by refugees in addition to a comedy play prepared by IRD volunteer team. In Qamishly on the same day, a celebration took place which included an Iftar meal for refugees and some IDPs, and entertainment in the form of four musical pieces performed by a local Children's Orchestra, folklore dancing showing different dances from the rich heritage of the area, a rap song talking about the plight of refugees and traditional Iraqi songs performed by an Iraqi refugee from the audience. On 21 June, a celebration took place in both Roj and Newroz camps in collaboration with a team from Malkiah Cultural Centre. The celebration included contests, songs and dances.



In Homs WRD was celebrated in the SARC community centre where UNHCR did a number of information sessions showcasing the services available to refugees in the Community Centres. In addition, there were games, drama, arts and craft as well as a number of sports events.



In Sweida, UNHCR and partner GOPA celebrated by hosting different activities aimed at integrating refugees with the IDP and host communities. These activities included a PSS awareness session on displacement targeting adults, a handicrafts session where the participants made lanterns for Ramadan, a Child Protection activity entitled 'From Saturn to Jupiter' which focused on respect and diversity and a Health and Hygiene awareness session that targeted adolescents which included recreational activities.



UNHCR Supported Home-Based Rehabilitation Improves Majed's Life



Majed is a 10-year old child with Down syndrome whose family was displaced to Tartous due to the conflict. When he arrived there he suffered from social exclusion which caused great upset to both him and his family. “Majed had no friends to play with and he was not accepted by children at school. His teachers barely included him in the class activities and he suffered bullying” his mother told UNHCR with tears in her eyes. This led to Majed’s reluctance to go to school, more isolation and sense of stigma.

When the team of UNHCR and SSSD met Majed, they assessed his strengths and weaknesses and referred him to the home-based rehabilitation programme. It was decided that Majed would benefit from a Portage Programme which is a system of well-structured learning procedures and an individualized curriculum developed to train the family members in the home (and community) of disabled children and adults. Portage learning activities stimulate the acquisition of developmental milestones that will lead to greater independence and continued parental involvement

A portage kit was therefore delivered to his mother who received training on how to utilize it and Majed was also incorporated in behavior modification sessions, friendship groups, recreational activities and exercises to improve his focus. After four months signs of development began to appear on his behavior. “Majed became more capable of communicating and playing with children, settling his problems and expressing his feelings. He showed good improvement in simple calculations, writing his name, and counting from 1 to 20”, said his mother while thanking UNHCR and SSSD for their effort.

June Snapshot



In June UNHCR Syria:

- Reached a total of 231,991 individuals with CRIs, including 52,500 in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, while 46,750 individuals were reached by cross-border deliveries pursuant to UNSC resolution 2332.
- Continued to support 67 community centres and 1,475 Outreach Volunteers in 11 governorates. Community centres are designed as one-stop-shop where a wide range of protection services as well as livelihood support, income generation, vocational training and life-skills development are provided to IDPs and host communities.
- Successfully completed 21 Community-Based Initiatives (CBIs) in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Tartous, Homs, Aleppo, Hama and Qamishly and 13 CBIs are in the implementation phase.
- Provided legal assistance to 11,565 IDPs in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Daraa, Quneitra, Tartous, Lattakia, Hassakeh, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. This included legal counselling to 4,083 IDPs and 207 awareness sessions attended by 4,861 IDPs on various legal issues. Furthermore, 2,621 IDPs benefited from lawyers' direct intervention before courts and administrative bodies.
- Led the first meeting of the Protection and Community Services Sector in Sweida. The participants were Baraem, GOPA, SSSD, SARC, Ein AL Zaman, SFPA and IOM in addition to the Department of Education and Department of Social Affairs.

Omar's Success Against Harrassment



Eight year old Omar* was exposed to repeated harassment and abuse attempts in the neighborhood in Aleppo where his family are residing as IDPs. However, after attending one of the SGBV sessions for children about sexual harassment organized by UNHCR partner Namaa, he began to better understand the risks to which he had been exposed. After a number of follow-up sessions with the case manager, Omar developed his own personal safety plan and began to feel more confident about himself and how to manage risks in his neighborhood. He eventually decided he wanted to share what he had been learning with his friends in the neighborhood, who faced similar risks, and began to organize them. He collected sweets from the sessions in the Community Centre that he previously attended and organized a session for his friends and neighbors in his garden and distributed the sweets to them. As Omar explained to the case manager, "Now I am strong and I am responsible for helping make all the children aware of how to protect themselves against harassment."

The case manager continued with Omar and encouraged him to do another awareness session inside the community centre and he was very excited. He prepared invitation cards and distributed them to his friends and neighbors, inviting 25 of them ages between five and nine to his session. Omar started the session by distributing balloons to the children and discussed simple examples and questions he prepared with the children using his own language about harassment and its risks. He then showed them a video about sexual harassment and led a discussion focused on their understanding of the video and sexual harassment itself. It was clear how much the children enjoyed the session and liked Omar's ideas and his manner.

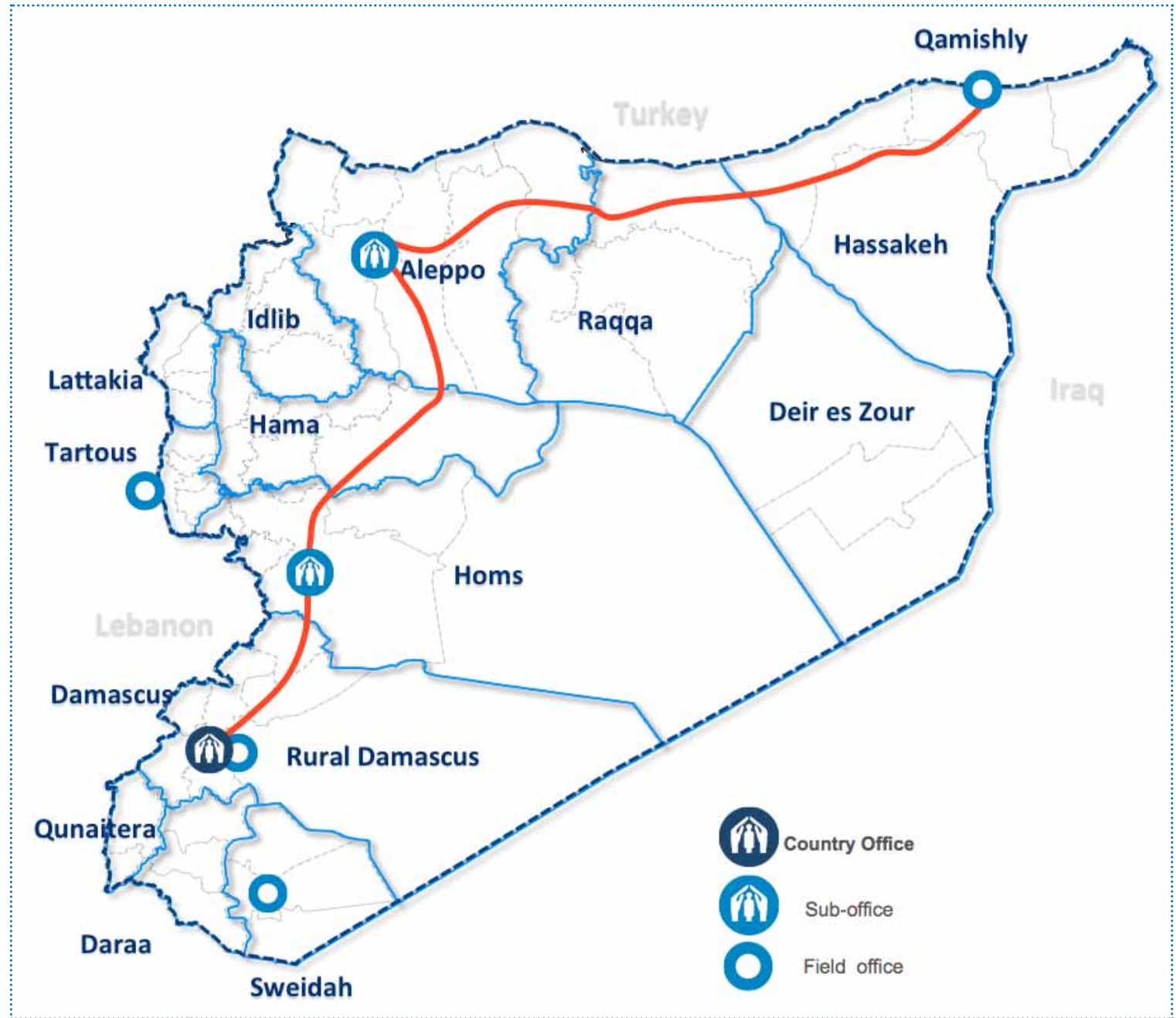
After the session UNHCR field staff sat with Omar and asked him about his idea. He was very happy and enthusiastic in explaining his wish to help children protect themselves against harassment as he did before. After the session, and because of everyone's enthusiasm, the first children's committee led by Omar was established in the community centre to raise the awareness of children in relation to harassment and encourage him to implement awareness sessions for children in the centre regularly.

** not real name*



UNHCR Breakthrough: First Test Convoy Reaches Qamishly from Damascus

On 29 June, despite the Eid holiday and a delay of five days in Manbij, UNHCR's first test convoy of three trucks arrived by road to Qamishly from Damascus through Aleppo with tents, jerry cans, sleeping mats and blankets. This comes as part of the UNHCR response to the thousands recently displaced from Raqqa governorate. Despite many challenges and delays, UNHCR reached Qamishly in the Hassakeh governorate by road that had been inaccessible for years due to the fierce conflict. The only way to deliver humanitarian assistance previously to Hassakeh was through airlifts through Qamishly airport. The convoy delivered family tents, sleeping mats, high thermal blankets and jerry cans for the thousands of families fleeing the conflict in and around Ar-Raqqa city as fighting intensified in the area. Because of the success of this mission, a second convoy was arranged on 30 June consisting of seven trucks loaded with over 2,000 tents. Two trucks were sent



from Homs and five trucks from Damascus. On 02 July, five trucks out of the seven arrived in Qamishly, while the remaining two trucks arrived on 04 July.

A third convoy was arranged on 03 July consisting of seven trucks loaded with livelihood kits, including 100 sewing toolkits, 80 electrician toolkits, 110 carpentry toolkits, 100 plumbing kits, as well as 1,895 family tents. UNHCR and WFP are the only agencies who have been able to send cargo by this route so far and this breakthrough will be followed by several humanitarian convoys to scale up the response to the displaced families, as the delivery by road is expected to improve and increase humanitarian reach to the people in need.



Mohammed Realizes His Dream



Mohammed is an 11-year old child from Aleppo who grew up with the dream of going to school and carrying a bag on his shoulders. “The school in our area was destroyed when I was seven years old. We remained there for three years and now I have forgotten what I learnt”, said Mohammed. Mohammed’s family fled Aleppo to the Al Shibani area in Rural Damascus and through the Mazzeh Community Centre of Al Nada, Mohammed’s mother learned about the Psychosocial Support (PSS) services available there and registered her son in a number of these sessions. Mohammed was interviewed individually by the PSS case manager and together with his mother set out a care plan for him. The first step was coordinating with the Directorate of Education to enrol him in school and then Mohammed was registered in an educational course and summer club to be integrated with other children. “Mohammed reached currently the same level of his peers in reading, writing and arithmetic. He is also a participant in the Psychological Support Library. Thank you so much UNHCR for making my son’s dream come true”, said Mohammed’s mother with a smile on her face.



Ein Issa

The turnover in Ein Issa Cotton Factory Camp in Raqqa Governorate continued to be high in June as the fighting intensified in areas around Raqqa. Thousands of IDPs from Raqqa arrived in the camp during the reporting period, with many then leaving the camp for Manbij, Azaz, Hisha, Jerniyah and safe areas in rural Raqqa Governorate. The current camp population is 6,481 individuals/1,159 families. UNHCR increased the presence in the camp with a facilitator and a team of volunteers, who are already assisting UNHCR and organized the camp into sectors, supported the formation of blocks/sectors representation, numbered the tents, did the individual level identification, and updated age breakdown figures which will be used by distribution partners. In addition, UNHCR through these teams is working on sorting identity documents and ensuring that all IDPs leaving the camp receive their IDs.

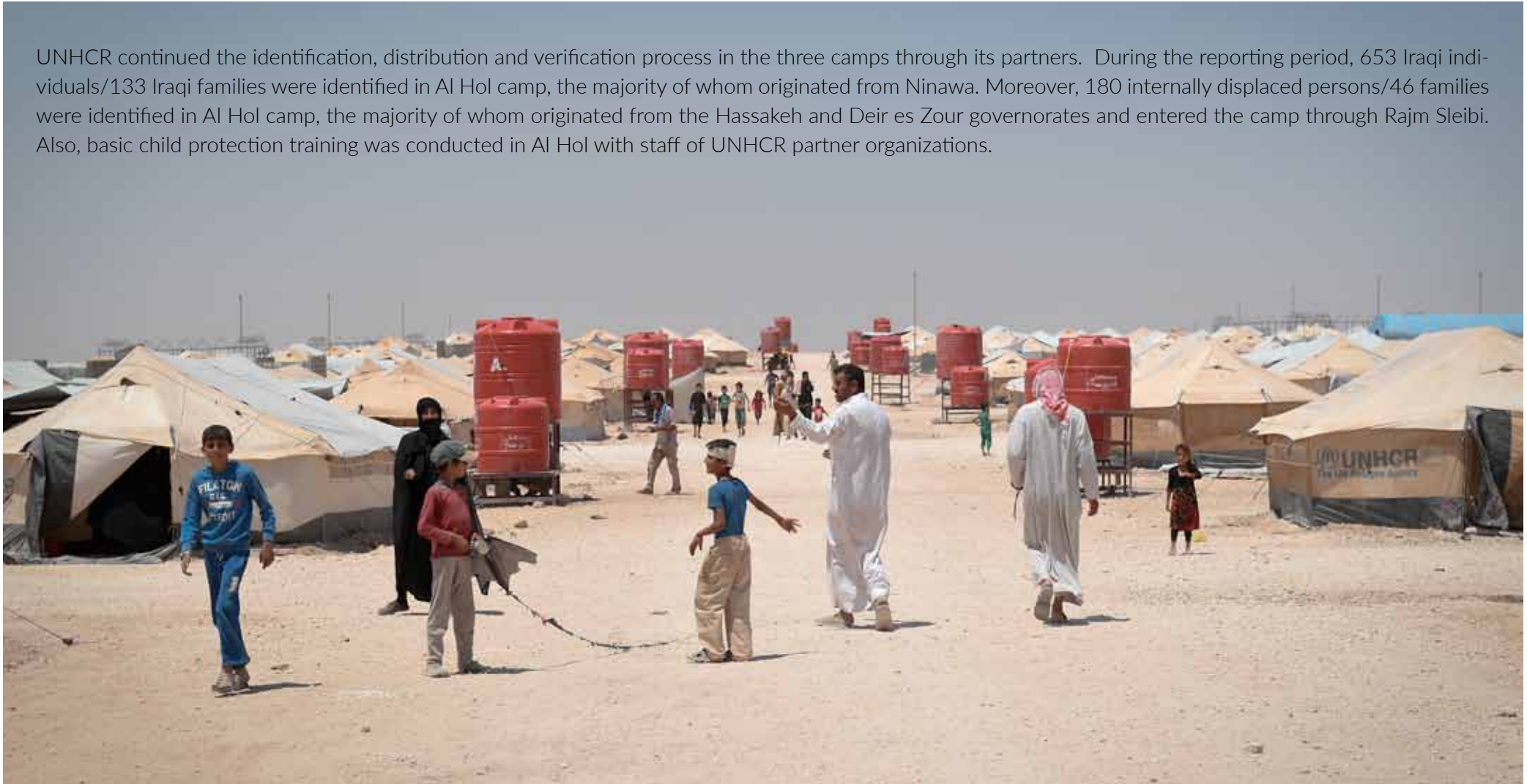


Mabrouka

The influx of IDPs continued in and out of Mabrouka Camp in the Hassakeh Governorate. As of the end of June, the camp population was approximately 2,800 IDPs/500 families. UNHCR through its partner AI Birr distributed CRIs to all new arrivals.

Al Hol, Newroz and Roj Camps

UNHCR continued the identification, distribution and verification process in the three camps through its partners. During the reporting period, 653 Iraqi individuals/133 Iraqi families were identified in Al Hol camp, the majority of whom originated from Ninawa. Moreover, 180 internally displaced persons/46 families were identified in Al Hol camp, the majority of whom originated from the Hassakeh and Deir es Zour governorates and entered the camp through Rajm Sleibi. Also, basic child protection training was conducted in Al Hol with staff of UNHCR partner organizations.



Al Areesha Camp

In June, a new IDP camp called Al Areesha Camp (formerly called Bahra Camp) was set up, located near Basel Dam in the Hassakeh Governorate, around 30 km south of Hassakeh City. Its current camp population is approximately 1,400 individuals, most of whom are from Deir es Zour Governorate. UNHCR dispatched 164 family size tents, 480 mattresses and 300 blankets as well as three big size tents to be used as a reception area. 250 boxes of ready-to-eat meals and 200 jerry cans were distributed by partners. In addition, UNHCR started the identification process in the camp and coordinated with UNICEF to provide water.



Tent Repair in Al Hol: A Practical Solution

In a practical response to the problem of tents being continuously damaged due to storms in the desert, UNHCR has opened a “tents and clothing repair” workshop in Al Hol camp in the Hassakeh governorate, in order to create opportunities for female headed households to earn an income and support their families by fixing the damaged tents. Women working on the project receive 1,000 Syrian Pounds for repairing a tent, a small income that supplements their daily needs.

In total, 20,000 Iraqi refugees mainly from Baaj district in Iraq and 881 internally displaced people mainly from the Deir es Zour and Hassakeh governorates are seeking safety in Al Hol camp. UNHCR provides CRIs and Shelter as well as actively coordinating with sister UN sister agencies and the humanitarian community in Hassakeh to ensure a comprehensive response to their needs.



UNHCR Continues to Deliver Assistance throughout Syria during June 2017

On 15 June, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Talbiseh, Homs, with UNICEF, WFP, WHO and IOM. The mission aimed to deliver humanitarian assistance, including food and non-food items, meet with SARC and local community leaders, identify protection concerns and assess the population's shelter needs. Thirteen trucks were loaded with UNHCR CRIs, including 5,500 plastic sheets, 11,000 jerry cans, 9,500 sleeping mats, 15,500 blankets, 9,500 mattresses and 4,500 kitchen sets. A total of 17,497 families, including 4,251 IDP families, benefited from this assistance. In addition to recording the population's priority protection concerns, such as registration and civil documentation, the mission noted the existence in the area of five medical facilities and 36 shelters accommodating 65 per cent of the 4,251 IDP families.

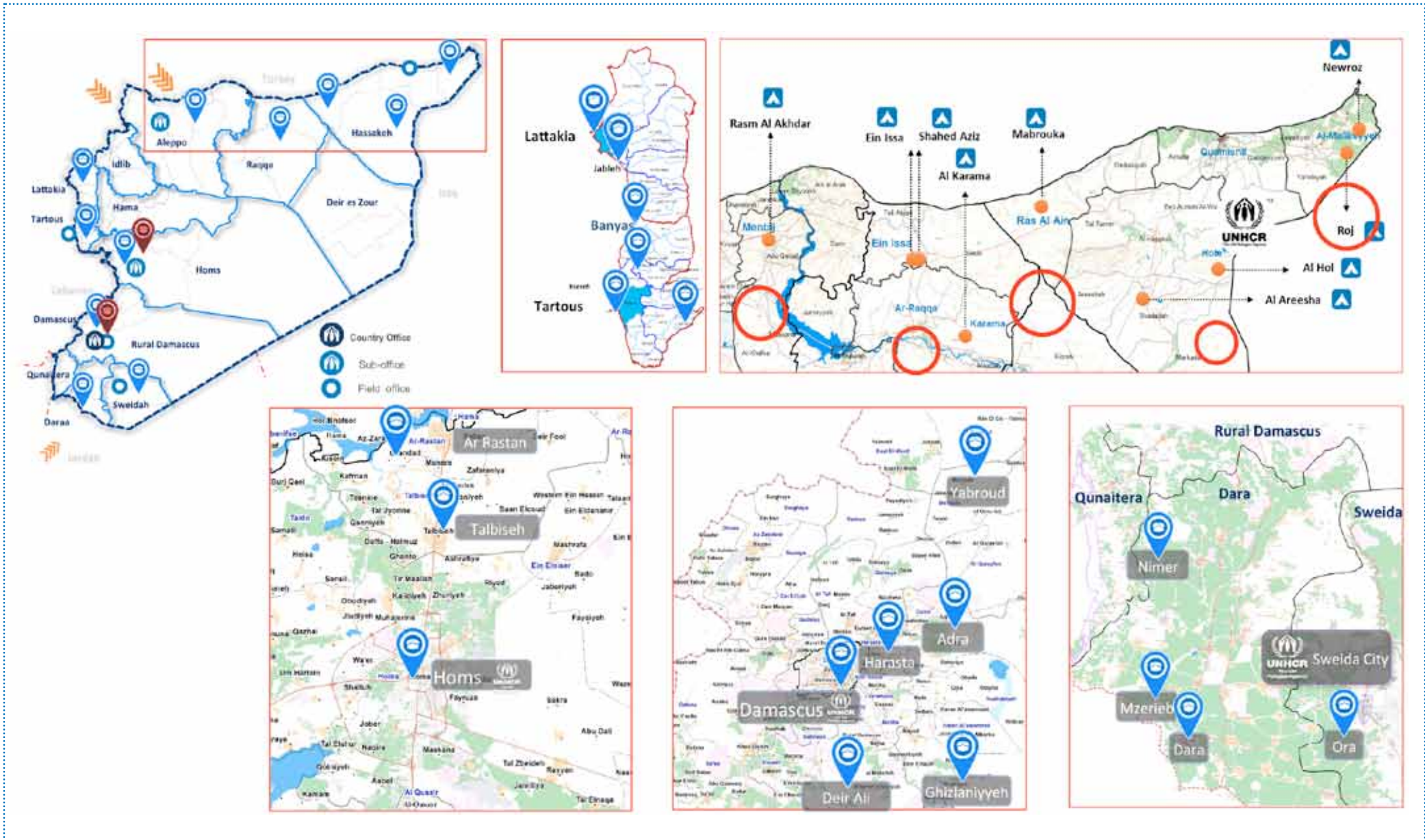
UNHCR participated in an inter-agency assessment mission to Al-Waer neighbourhood in Homs and visited the Islamic Charity Orphanage to monitor the ongoing rapid needs assessment process being carried out by Aoun Outreach Volunteers in the orphanage. It was observed that persons of concern could move freely in and out and most community centres are functioning. Post-traumatic stress disorder cases were reported, in addition to a significant number of children with mental and physical disabilities. A number of school drop-out cases were recorded as some children feared going to school due to previous clashes. Some child labour cases were also identified due to poverty during the besiegement. UNHCR is currently following up on these concerns.

On 22 June UNHCR participated in a cross-line inter agency convoy to Al Rastan in the Homs governorate, contributing jerry cans and sleeping mats for 5,000 beneficiaries.

In June, as part of UNHCR's emergency response in the newly accessible Al San-amayn area in Daraa Governorate, six trucks of CRIs for 5,000 individuals/1,000 families were dispatched to the GOPA warehouse in Basir, Daraa. The dispatch included full CRI kits and solar lamps.



Areas Accessed During June



UNHCR Mission to Assess Needs of Returnees in Esal Al Ward, Rural Damascus



Following received information regarding the self-organized return from Arsal city in Lebanon towards Esal Al ward, Rural Damascus, UNHCR conducted a field visit to the city in order to meet the returnees, monitor the situation on the ground and assess the best way forward in order to respond to their needs. During the visit, the team learnt that 54 families comprised of 129 individuals, have returned to Syria from Lebanon through unofficial border crossing points. The returnees also spoke about the harsh living conditions and challenges such as discrimination while in Lebanon. In addition to distributing hygiene kits through partner SARC, UNHCR also assessed the protection issues of the returnees, where it turned out that all of the families have legalized their documents and identification as well as registering their births and deaths certificates.

With more and more areas in Syria becoming stable and people starting to return, UNHCR, in order to respond to the initial needs of returning IDPs and refugees, will maintain its robust humanitarian and protection response, through the Protection, NFI and Shelter Sectors, and expand it with a strong emphasis on rehabilitation of infrastructure and services essential to the rehabilitation and the restoration of communities, including communities of return. As part of the overall humanitarian response, also including resilience and early recovery interventions, UNHCR will step-up and expand its current response to address the needs of returnees and support their initial reintegration, including through community-based initiatives, shelter programmes, infrastructure rehabilitation and livelihoods support, in partnership with other humanitarian and recovery actors and in coordination with local authorities.



UNHCR Syria End of Year Report 2016 entitled
'Working Towards a Better Future'
in both English and Arabic which provides an overview
of UNHCR Syria's operations and achievements during 2016.

It can now be accessed and downloaded from ReliefWeb at the following link:

<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/working-towards-better-future-unhcr-syria-end-year-report-2016-enar>

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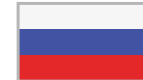
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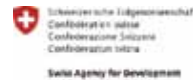
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For more information , please contact: The Reporting Unit at UNHCR Syria
Damien Mc Sweeney, Reporting Officer
#syrdareporting@unhcr.org