

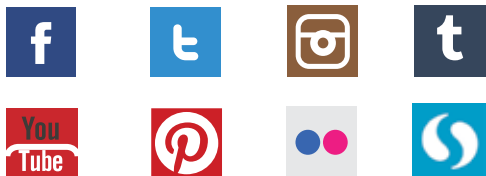
Syria

In Focus

September 2017

- UNHCR Expands Services throughout Syria
- Shelter Response for Returnees
- UNHCR Mission to Daraa
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- Response in Camps in Northeast
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UNHCR Expanding Services: New Community Centres Open in Aleppo, Hama, and Homs



In situations of forced displacement, the ties which hold a community together are often weakened or broken. Open and regular interaction between individuals and groups, their shared values and interests, and their means of minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization often needs to be supported during displacement. Maintaining the social fabric of displaced communities and promoting their peaceful coexistence with host communities can be highly challenging especially for vulnerable people as well as those with specific needs.



UNHCR believes that Community Centres and in a second layer, mobile units operating from the Community Centres, are a fundamental tool to reach out to these affected populations, assess protection risks and needs using a participatory age, gender and diversity approach, identify community resources and offer services and support. Some of the services include psycho-social support, services for persons with specific needs including medical and nonmedical material assistance, legal aid, in particular in relation to birth registration and documentation, education services for children who dropped out of school, SGBV prevention and response, child protection services, activities supporting livelihoods including vocational training with a view to improve skills and opportunities to generate income, and support to community-based initiatives as well as awareness raising around thematic issues and available services.

In August, UNHCR further expanded its Community Centre network, opening four more in Homs, Hama and Aleppo. In Hama city a new community centre was opened in the Tareek Halab area in cooperation with SSSD, raising the number of community centres in Hama to four. In Homs, a new community centre was opened in the Qattineh area in coordination with UNHCR partner GOPA. Finally, in Aleppo, two new community centres launched their activities, one in the Al Sukari area in cooperation with Namaa and the other in the Shaar area in cooperation with SSSD.

With these developments, the total number of functioning community centres supported by UNHCR in Syria reached 72 centres operating in 11 governorates and with this expansion the number of outreach volunteers increased to 1,588 volunteers, with more planned for the future.



UNHCR Shelter Response for Returnees

Reportedly, in 2016 there was 600,000 IDPs who returned to their areas of origin in Syria. In 2017 that trend has continued with spontaneous returns occurring in many areas which have returned to Government control. UNHCR is providing assistance with the humanitarian community upon the request of the Syrian Government to support the initial return and reintegration of IDPs who currently require comprehensive multi-sectoral assistance.

In Homs, for example UNHCR and partners rehabilitated 70 apartments for returnees in old Homs and the Al Qusoor neighbourhoods. Moreover, UNHCR with Al Aoun, Al Birr, CCS, SCS and SARC distributed 725 shelter kits to IDPs in Homs and Hama.





Also, in Aleppo, UNHCR is leading a coordinated Shelter sector response targeting nine neighborhoods to repair 3,000 apartments given the widespread damage to infrastructure as a direct consequence of the urban warfare and the interconnected rehabilitation interventions necessary to allow for sustainable return. UNHCR partner SIF has begun the rehabilitation of 100 apartments in Aleppo City, covering concrete works, internal and external WASH, electricity, painting as well as the maintenance of the doors and windows. The rehabilitation works which are expected to finish in December will serve 111 families.

Moreover, UNHCR partner GOPA is working on the installation of 40 shelter kits for 51 families in private apartments inhabited by IDP families and the owners who are living in informal neighborhoods such as Karm Al Qaser, Karm Al Tarab and Old city neighborhoods. Also UNHCR partner SARC is distributing 156 shelter kits for 120 families in private apartments inhabited by IDP families and the owners who are living in informal neighborhoods.

UNHCR's support is focusing on reducing vulnerabilities, restoring dignity, mitigating protection risks and making essential services available and accessible which includes basic NFI assistance and a primary form of shelter support, as most returnees have come back to looted homes lacking basic household items.

CBI in Lattakia Helping with 'Back to School'



The start of the school year is an expensive time of year for parents throughout the world with Syria being no different. The costs of schoolbags, books, notebooks and stationary all add up with the cost of a school uniform often being one of the most expensive items. For IDP families, some with three or more children, many of whom depend on humanitarian assistance; 'back to school time' can be a stressful and worrying time as well as a huge financial hurdle for them to overcome.

However, a Community Based Initiative called 'Thread and Needle' in Al-Qteilbieh, Lattakia was designed to address this. The CBI implemented by UNHCR and the Syria Trust saw 25 IDP women, who previously benefited from UNHCR supported vocational training, sewing school uniforms for vulnerable children. UNHCR provided the materials and the women provided the labor. The CBI was a great success and saw 185 children benefiting including 65 IDPs, 15 children with specific needs and 10 school dropouts referred from Child Protection. The children received the uniforms during a recreational activity organized at the community center.

UNHCR Syria recognizes the important role of CBIs to respond to some of the needs identified by the affected communities. The communities involved in these initiatives are in charge of designing, managing, implementing and monitoring their own initiatives. UNHCR supports these CBIs through the provision of materials, guidance and tools to facilitate the implementation of small projects designed by displaced communities themselves. Past CBIs included amongst other activities the creation of self-managed kindergartens, collective farming, home-based schooling, sewing school uniforms, renovating public gardens and sport activities.

UNHCR Missions in July and August

On 05 July, UNHCR through its partner SARC managed to reach Afra and Huraira villages in Wadi Barada in Damascus which have been unreachable for the past four years. Although several inter-agency convoys reached Wadi Barada, these particular villages which have been largely destroyed could not be visited. UNHCR was able to provide CRI assistance to 7,000 individuals/1,400 families which had returned to these villages.

On 06 July UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Yelda, Babeila, Beit Sahem and Al Tadamon, all in Rural Damascus and delivered core relief items to 25,000 individuals/ 5,000 families including blankets, kitchen sets and jerry cans.

On 15 July, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission delivering humanitarian assistance including food, CRIs (9,800 jerry cans), and health supplies to Al Houla and Horbenafsah in Homs which were last reached in April. The UN team seized the opportunity to undertake a rapid assessment in Al Houla to identify needs.

On 22 July, an inter-agency convoy comprising UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA and UNDSS delivered humanitarian assistance including food, NFIs, and health supplies to the families residing in Dar Al Kabiera, Homs Governorate. UNHCR's contribution was 1,500 mattresses, 1,500 blankets and 1,500 sleeping mats.

On 24 July, UNHCR through its partner SARC delivered high thermal blankets, solar lamps, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, hygiene kits and plastic sheeting for 1,500 individuals to Adra Al Balad in Rural Damascus.

On 24 July, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission in Hama Governorate to assess reported challenges that IDPs are facing in the areas of Taiba Alimam, Maardes and Soran. According to the government, 40% of the former residents of these areas have returned despite the significant destruction of schools, medical centres, homes and roads. UNHCR is designing its response based on the population needs including the rehabilitation of schools and the bakery in Soran which provided bread to the three areas.





On 29 July, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to Zakyeh and Derkhabyeh, Rural Damascus. The mission aimed to deliver humanitarian aid to these areas, and to conduct a simultaneous rapid assessment to identify humanitarian needs. WASH, electricity, and food were the main priority needs reported in Zakyeh area, while shelter, electricity and education were the main priorities in Derkhabyeh. During the mission, the UNHCR team visited two IDP collective shelters, and conducted semi-structured discussions with women resulting in the identification of child marriage as one of the main protection concerns.

On 30 July, UNHCR also participated in an inter-agency mission to Al Nashabiyeh, Rural Damascus where UNHCR provided CRIs to 12,500 individuals/2,500 families.

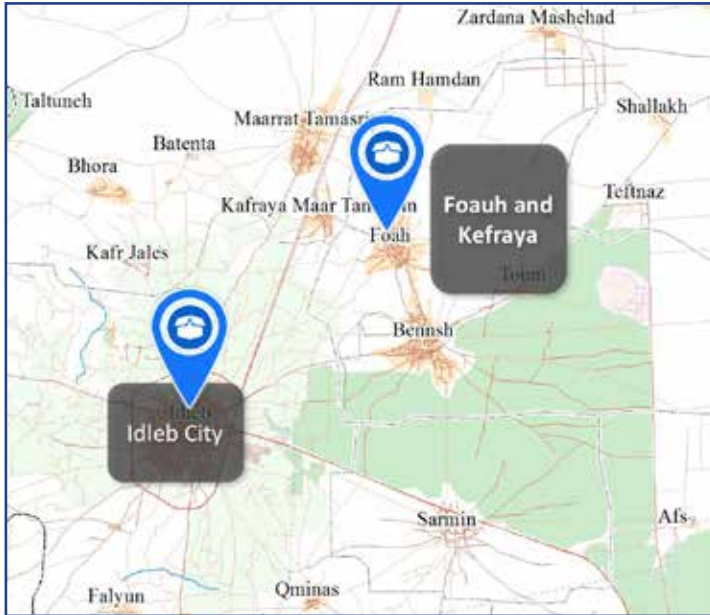
On 03 August, a shipment of 3,000 rechargeable fans from Lattakia Port directly to Qamishly took place for the first time, consolidating land transportation there. The fans will be distributed as part of the emergency response mainly in the camps in Hassakeh.

On 17 August, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Douma, East Ghouta. The delivered humanitarian assistance consisted of food, health and nutrition items. During the mission, UNHCR staff met with the local council members and visited clinics, schools, a women's center for Development and a family centre run by local NGOs.

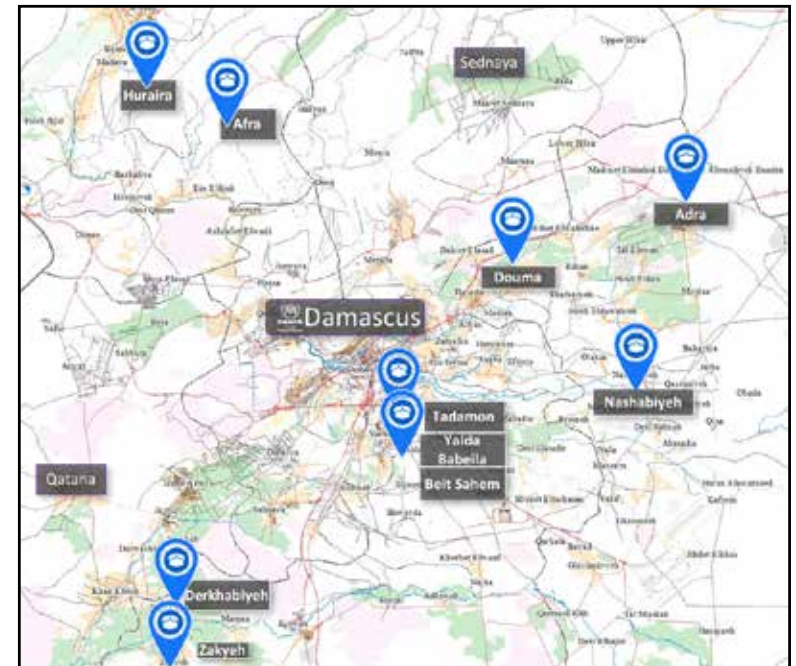
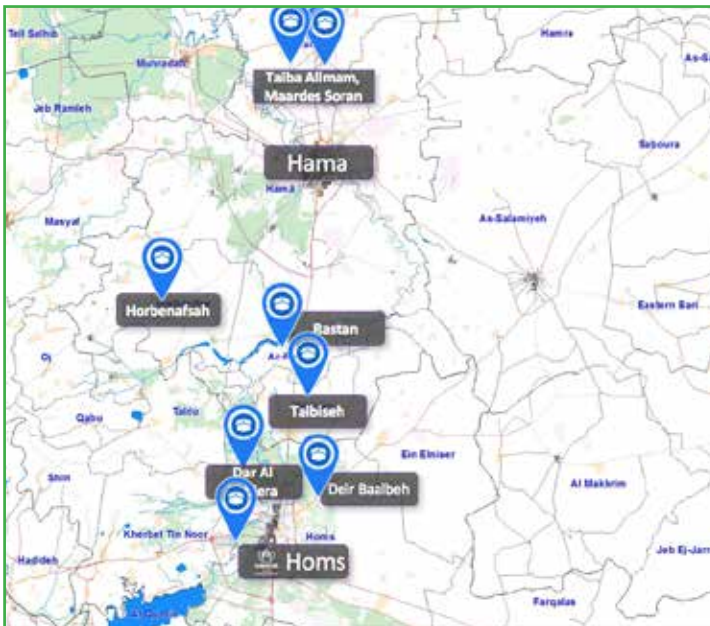
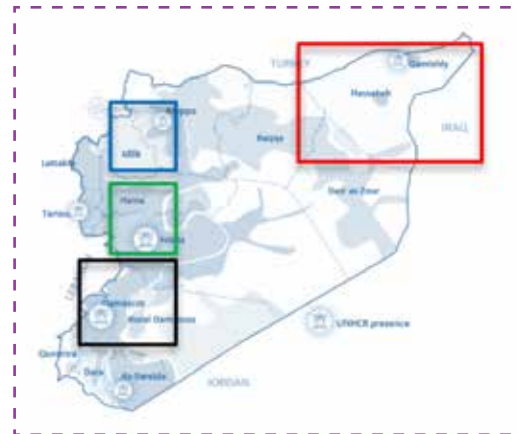
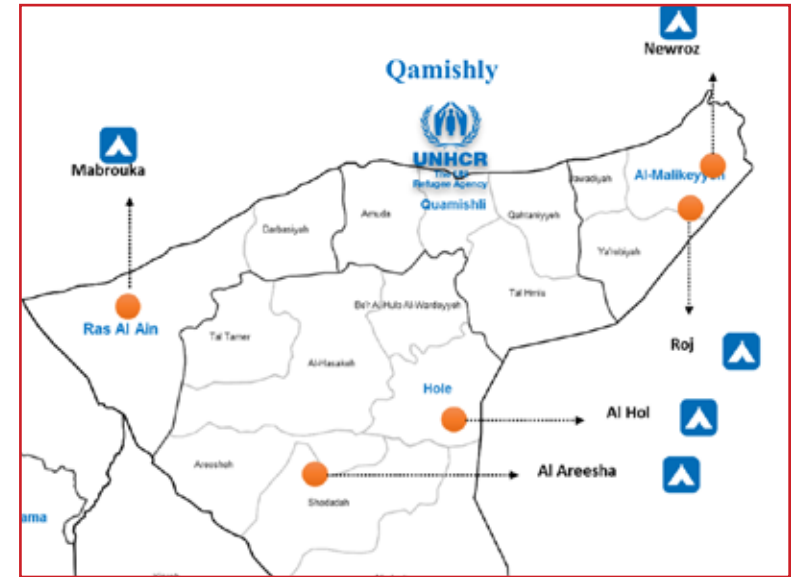
On 17 August, an inter-agency mission also reached Fouaa and Kafraya, Idlib, with UNHCR contributing solar lamps for 2,500 individuals/500 families in the area.

On 19 August, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Talbiseh, Homs. 1,402 rechargeable fans were distributed to 15 shelters in Al Tawzee Al Ijbare, Al Qousur and Deir Baalbeh. Moreover, despite shelling, UNHCR delivered 1,000 kits to its partner Al Aoun to be distributed to people of concern in Al Shammas, as well as 1,000 kits in Al Shababya and 800 kits in Al Idekhar.

On 26 August, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Arrastan north of Homs, however the convoy was delayed due to shelling on Zahra neighbourhood which resulted in tension and clashes between the Syrian army and AOGs. Nonetheless, the convoy proceeded in the late afternoon of the next day and reached its destination safely. UNHCR's contribution consisted of jerry cans for 10,000 individuals/2,000 families as well as sleeping mats for 1,000 individuals/200 families.



Areas Accessed During July & August



UNHCR Mission to Daraa



On 13 August, a team from UNHCR conducted a mission to Izraa in Daraa governorate. During the mission, the team met with the Directorate of Social Affairs (DoSA), Directorate of Education (DoE), the municipality director and vocational school focal point of Izraa where several topics were discussed including children with disabilities, elderly people, possible interventions in As-Sanamayn and possible areas of return. In the vocational training school, UNHCR discussed a rehabilitation project to enhance the capacity of the school and bring it back to pre-crisis levels. Moreover, UNHCR visited four shelters in Izraa to observe recently implemented and ongoing projects implemented through SIF and to monitor the distribution of solar lamps in the shelters.

On 14 and 15 August, the team also conducted a two-day training for 39 GOPA Outreach Volunteers (ORVs) from Daraa city and Izraa. The training included orientation on protection, community centres concepts and services, the role and responsibilities of ORVs, legal services, community-based protection and community-based Initiatives, as well as Shelter, Livelihood and CRI/NFI orientation sessions including coordination and AGD mainstreaming.

The UNHCR team also visited the GOPA temporary warehouse in Basir to take part in a major distribution exercise involving 18 trucks and six dispatches that had started on June 6th benefitting 5,500 internally displaced and host community families from Al Sanamayn. Items distributed included: 15,000 blankets, 9,000 mattresses, 3,000 plastic sheets, 9,000 sleeping mats, 3,000 hygiene kits, 3,000 jerry cans, 3,000 kitchen sets and 3,000 solar lamps.

The team met with the representative from Daraa governor's office, DoSA manager and the GOPA team to discuss the distribution process, challenges and lessons learnt as well as some recommendations and future plans.

This response was based on the Multi-Functional Team assessment carried out during UNHCR's last mission to As-Sanamayn to respond to the urgent needs for NFIs by IDPs and host community, UNHCR has responded to these needs in partnership with GOPA who have established a temporary warehouse in Basir to be accessible to IDPs and affected populations in Al Sanamayn.

Juice Cart Changes Abeer's Life in Tartous



Abeer fled Jiser Al Sheghour to Tartous in 2012 with her husband and nine children, narrowly escaping massacre. After Abeer's husband passed away in 2016, in a car accident, she suddenly found herself in desperate situation alone with nine children and without any financial support.

During a UNHCR monitoring visit a few months ago, they noticed the small room she was living in with her nine children, as it was the only place she could afford. She told the team that she was forced to live on charity and the small amount she earns occasionally cleaning houses as she does not have any skills and she cannot leave her children for too long.

The team recommended Abeer for a Juice Cart under the UNHCR livelihoods programme as she could park it nearby her house, earn an income and stay close to her children. During a recent follow up visit it was found that Abeer had developed the cart further by adding tea and coffee to her services so she could secure more money and continue working during all seasons.

Abeer told UNHCR that their assistance donation has helped her to restore her dignity as she is now earning an income, thus improving the living conditions of the whole family as well as taking care of her children who were happily helping their mother in her new project.

The Little Inventor



Mohammad Naasani is an 11 year-old boy from Aleppo who is in the 6th grade. In summer, he kept visiting the UNHCR supported community centre run by Namaa in Martini, Aleppo and this is where the facilitators of the Child Friendly Space found out about his talent as an inventor. “I used recycled material to invent a small vacuum that could suction paper. I also made a machine to cut cork and still have other ideas in mind”, said Mohammad while showing proudly his invention to the UNHCR team.

UNHCR Rehabilitates Damaged Schools in Aleppo



In Syria, thousands of schools have been damaged or destroyed or are being used as shelters for displaced persons and many children are out of school. It is estimated that over 6 million children and adolescents are in need of education assistance, including 1.75 million children out of school.

Education activities remain high on UNHCR's protection agenda to promote access to education, the psycho-social well-being of children and to prevent children resorting to harmful coping mechanisms such as child labour, early marriage and recruitment into armed groups. The approach of UNHCR continues to be closely linked to the community participation and mobilization activities and education interventions were in line with the "No Lost Generation" initiative which was launched by a consortium of partners in 2013, placing education at the centre of the response in Syria and articulating concerns about the possible 'loss' of a whole generation of children, adolescents and youth as a result of the effects displacement. Some of UNHCR activities include, remedial education programs, catch-up classes and other accelerated learning programmes as well as in some cases the rehabilitation of schools.



For example, on the 20 August, two schools in Al Ansari neighbourhood in East Aleppo; Abou Ayoub Al Ansari and Al Founoon which were completely rehabilitated by Première Urgence (PU) in partnership with UNHCR were finally reopened. The two schools are now serving more than 1,500 students from four surrounding neighbourhoods. In East Aleppo, UNHCR with its partners are repairing 19 schools and installing 25 pre-fabricated classrooms to strengthen access to education for both displaced and returnee children. In addition, UNHCR with another partner Secours Islamique France (SIF), began the rehabilitation works in six schools in East Aleppo and Rural Aleppo (Fadel Al Hout, Jameet Al Kahraba, Shukri Al Quatly, Nazek Al Malaeka, Abdulazeez Duba and Saad Bin Alwaqqas). The rehabilitation covers concrete works, WASH, electricity, painting and maintenance for the doors and windows. These schools will serve around 6,000 students. In addition, UNHCR and partner ADRA initiated the rehabilitation of six schools; Ahmad Ghabbash, Al Marjeh, Muhammad Addoura, Salaheddin, Maliqa Balqees and Seif Addowleh in East Aleppo city, which will benefit 3,000 students.

Abou Mohammad's: Grandsons, Back to their School

Abou Mohammad is a displaced man in his sixties who used to live with his family in Al Ansari in Aleppo city. When the conflict started in Aleppo, Abou Mohammad had to flee several times until he was settled with his family in Al Hamadanieh. "My grandsons suffered a lot during our multiple displacements because of the instability. They changed their schools whenever we left an area, thus they lost friends each time we moved", said Abou Mohammad.

UNHCR together with its partner PU started the rehabilitation of the destroyed Al Ansari School after the area became safe and its population started to return gradually. The school is covering 800 students from three areas Seif Al Dawla, Al Zedyeh and Al Ansari.

"I was born here and I am so attached to the place. We have returned to our house despite the destruction, but it is being rehabilitated now. I'm so happy that my grandsons will be back to their original school, thanks to UNHCR and PU", said Abou Mohammad with an exhausted look, yet full of optimism.



July/August Snapshot



In June UNHCR Syria:

- Provided legal assistance to 32,127 IDPs in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Dara'a, Quneitra, Tartous, Lattakia, Hassakeh, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. This included legal counselling to 13,043 IDPs and 254 awareness sessions attended by 12,614 IDPs on various legal issues. Furthermore, 6,470 IDPs benefited from lawyers' direct interventions before courts and administrative bodies to resolve civil registration/ documentation issues
- Assisted a total of 222,322 individuals with CRIs, including 73,500 in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, while 97,005 individuals were reached by cross-border deliveries pursuant to UNSC resolution 2332
- Increased the number of functioning community centres to 72 operating in 11 governorates
- Expanded the number of outreach volunteers to 1,588 volunteers.
- Transported for the first time, 3,000 rechargeable fans from Lattakia Port directly to Qamishly, consolidating land transportation there.

UNHCR Response in the North East of Syria



The ongoing conflict continues to result in large and numerous displacements taking place throughout the North East of Syria, with an estimated 100,000 people displaced over the past few months in the context of the Raqqa offensive alone. UNHCR's operation in this region is both complex and challenging as it responds to both IDP and refugee displacements in a number of camps spread throughout the Northeast. UNHCR's response included:

Mabrouka Camp

In August, the massive displacement from the Der Ez Zour Governorate toward the Mabrouka Camp continued. Subsequently, the active population number increased dramatically from 6,781 individuals to 13,961 individuals, with the number of active tents occupied by IDPs increasing to around 1,300. UNHCR in coordination with partner the Al Birr association continued the identification process and distributed CRIs such as mattresses, high thermal blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, sleeping mats, plastic sheets and solar lamps.

Areesha Camp

In August the population in Areesha camp (formerly called Bahra Camp), located near Basel Dam in the Al-Hassakeh Governorate, around 30 km south of Al-Hassakeh City increased to over 4,000. However, movements in and out of the camp continued with movement onwards to Tebqa in the Raqqa Governorate, Sfira in the Aleppo Governorate as well as Damascus. The sorting of IDs and other documents continued with over 90 % of IDs verified. Over 1,050 tents were erected and construction works in the camp continued with the reception area fully completed. In addition, UNHCR provided the camp with 40 metal bases for water tanks in order to replace the old ones. As well as distributing CRIs to the new arrivals, ready-to-eat (RTE) meals were distributed by partners.



Al Hol, Newroz and Roj Camps

UNHCR continued the identification, distribution and verification process in the three camps through its partners, distributing jerry cans, kitchens sets, mattresses, plastic sheets, solar lamps, high thermal blankets, sleeping mats and 205 tents to new arrivals. UNHCR also distributed food and Hygiene kits in coordination with UNICEF and WFP. During the reporting period, 201 Iraqi families/732 individuals were identified in Al Hol camp, originating from Ninawa, Salah Aldin, Baghdad, Erbil, Diala and Tameen. The new arrivals made their way through Rajm Slebi, or Abu Khashab entry points. Also in Al Hol, 196 IDP families/666 individuals, mainly from Deir Ez Zour were identified. However, the total number of IDPs there decreased to 1,310 individuals/310 families after the departure of 1,477 IDPs to Izaz and Damascus, through the Manbej road. As of the end of August the total population in the three camps was 24,882 individuals/5,845 families with 21,198 in Al Hol, 2,362 in Roj and 1,322 in Newroz.

Ein Issa

The turnover in Ein Issa Cotton Factory Camp in Ar-Raqqa Governorate continued in August with IDPs from Ar-Raqqa arriving in the camp and others then leaving the camp for Jarneh, Tabqa, Mayslon and Galta and safe areas in the rural Ar-Raqqa Governorate. The camp population was 9,098 individuals/1,731 families. UNHCR through its volunteer team continued the identification and verification process and through partner the Al Furat Association, distributed CRIs for all new arrivals.

Rasm Al Akhdar Camp

The camp population in Rasm Al Akhdar Camp was approximately 1,471 individuals/247 families. UNHCR partner, the Manbij organization distributed CRIs to 412 individuals/247 families.

Fahid Comes out of his Shell in Roj Camp, Hassakeh

Fahid is a 12 year old Iraqi boy who fled with his family of seven from the Shikhan area in Iraq to Syria finding refuge in Roj Camp, in the Hassakeh governorate, where UNHCR and partners provide all the necessary service of shelter, food, health, non-food items and others. Fahid has never been able to walk as he suffered from paraplegia since birth and has spent his life confined to a wheelchair, which has put a lot of pressure on both him and his family. Fahid's medical condition had left him feeling lonely as he never played with the other children in the camp, or participated in activities organized by UNHCR's partner in the camp. He just spent his days sitting in his wheelchair by his family tent, until his case was identified by one of the community volunteers who referred it to the Protection team.



The team immediately responded and went to talk to Fahid, who was a bit hesitant to attend the activities at first, as he was afraid he would not be able to keep up with the other children and they would make fun of him. The team, however, managed to convince him to attend one of their activities and see how he would feel about it. When Fahid showed up to the activity, the team made sure he felt included. The other children welcomed him and he started playing with them. Little by little, Fahid started participating more and more in the activities. He was enjoying the company of the other children who made him feel 'part of the gang'. They were all having fun together, but none more so than Fahid who started attending all the children's activities in the camp. "This is the first time that I feel included with children my own age. It's such a great feeling," Fahid said.

The social worker team, however, did not stop there. They also took Fahid to watch a football match held in the camp. Fahid could not contain his excitement as he shouted and cheered for the players. After the game was over, Fahid told the social worker: "I have never attended such an event before. From now on, I will be attending every game." Fahid's progress and happiness reflected on the social workers team who helped him. One of them said: "hearing the joy in Fahid's voice as he spoke made me feel proud of the work we have accomplished. I could not be happier knowing that Fahid's disability no longer defined him."

Roj camp has a population of over 2,300 refugees with UNHCR assisting them with tents, Core Relief Items such as mattresses, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, solar lamps, hygiene kits, diapers as well as legal assistance and Psycho Social Support.

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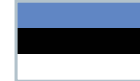
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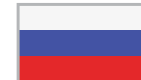
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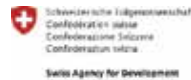
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