

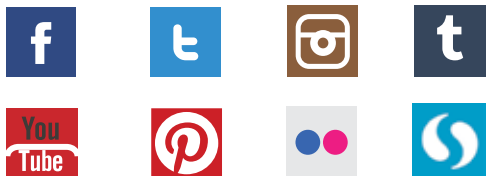
Syria In Focus

March 2017

Highlights

- Disability Services Expanded in Lattakia
- UNHCR Shelter Intervention in Bayn Al Hayteen, Homs
- Legal Assistance in Aleppo
- UNHCR Small Business Grants:
- UNHCR Concludes 2016/2017 Winterization Programme
- UNHCR Continues to Assist Refugees in Syria

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Disability Services Expanded with the Assistance of UNHCR in Lattakia



In February disability services for the blind and the deaf were expanded in Lattakia. As part of the UNHCR Community Based Organization (CBO) programme, in partnership with GOPA, an opening ceremony was held at Blind Care Association there. Funding was provided to enhance services including Vocational Training (VT) for blind people and training on use of computers. The CBO included rehabilitation works, provision of laptops with talking programs, provision of furniture and raw materials for VT on bamboo making. During the ceremony, UNHCR staff had the opportunity to observe ongoing courses in bamboo making and the use of laptops. The trainers are all blind people who wish to empower other blind people. All the beneficiaries expressed their pleasure at the courses as they opened new horizons for them.

After the opening ceremony the Blind Care Association participated in a local NGO forum where they showed the work of their trainees there to help promote their products which proved to be very popular.

Another opening ceremony was held in the Al Amal NGO centre in Lattakia to launch new services for persons with hearing difficulties, including the early identification of hearing impediments in newborns. UNHCR provided funding through implementing partner GOPA to Al Amal which was used to buy new equipment and the habilitation of a soundproof room. This free service now spares people the trouble and cost of going to Damascus for such assistance.



UNHCR Shelter Intervention in Homs Assisted by Livelihood Kit Beneficiaries



A recent assessment in the Bayn Al Hayteen neighborhood of Baba Amr in Homs city by UNHCR Outreach Volunteers (ORVs) found hundreds of displaced people living in burnt out apartments or storage areas, in miserable conditions, which lacked privacy, security and were exposed to bad weather conditions.

After further assessment by UNHCR a shelter intervention was planned. In February UNHCR and partner the Child Care Society (CCS) distributed and installed shelter kits for 135 families who were living together in crowded conditions. In addition to wooden partitions, windows or doors, the shelter kit also included solar lamps, carpentry tools, sealing foam, electricity materials and plastic sheets.

In addition, in a fantastic show of solidarity and appreciation, 14 carpenters who had previously received a UNHCR livelihood carpentry kit came and helped with the installation of the shelter kits in addition to the beneficiaries themselves.

One of the beneficiaries of the shelter kits in the Bayn Al Hayteen neighborhood was Abdul Sater Al Bdeewi who was displaced from Karm Al Zaytoon and is unable to return as his house is destroyed. He is renting a burnt apartment with two rooms for 13 family members including his elderly parents and has no fixed income and is forced to depend on assistance provided by charities.

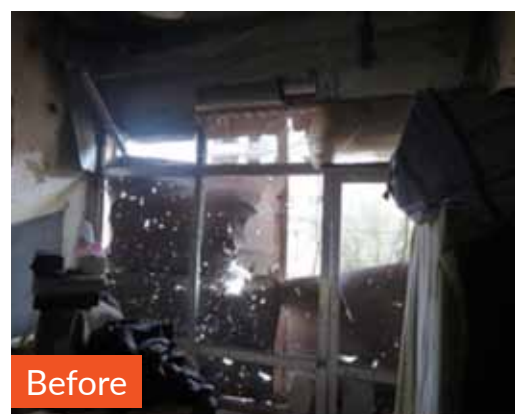
In addition to this he is tending to two medical cases within the family, his son who suffers from quadriplegia (severe mobility disability) which requires a lot of medical treatment, surgeries and physical treatment as well as his elderly father who recently fell and fractured his hip. UNHCR and partner CCS installed partitions and doors which will keep out the rain and the cold as well as providing private space for his parents. "This kit will make a huge difference to my family, thank you UNHCR and thank you Child Care Society" he says smiling.



Before



After



Before



After

Legal Assistance Makes a Huge Difference to Hanadi in Aleppo

The ongoing conflict has taken its toll on the overall effectiveness of public administration, impacting legal remedies and civil registration services. As a result, many people are left without any recognized documentation, impacting on people's coping mechanisms by often compromising their freedom of movement within the country, limiting their access to safety, humanitarian assistance, basic services and livelihoods and increases the risk of statelessness.

On a recent field visit by legal ORVs in Aleppo, one such case was identified and referred to legal support. Hanadi was married informally with no any documentation, and now has two children. Due to fighting, she was forced to flee her home two years ago with the children. During the sudden displacement she lost contact with her husband and hasn't heard from him since. Her marriage and the births of her children were unregistered so she had huge problems accessing services or even enrolling the children in school. After examining the case UNHCR partner Al Taalouf, filed a suit to recognize the marriage and placed adverts to inform the husband through newspapers. After this a Shari'a Court decided to recognize the marriage which then lead to the marriage being registered in the Civil Registry. This enabled Hanadi to obtain a family booklet in which the children were legally registered. "You have no idea how happy and grateful I am for all the efforts that were made for me and my children, and the difference this will now make to our lives" she says joyfully.

UNHCR provides legal aid services to IDPs and affected populations on civil registration/ documentation, SGBV and child protection, through an expanded network of lawyers and legal outreach volunteers. UNHCR also support the national authorities through technical advice, supporting the rehabilitation of registry services and the identification of solutions to legal gaps and challenges faced by IDPs. In February, UNHCR provided legal assistance to 14,816 IDPs in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Daraa, Quneitra, Tartous, Lattakia, Hassakeh, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. This included legal counselling to 6,592 IDPs and 261 awareness sessions attended by 7,155 IDPs on various legal issues. Furthermore, 1,069 IDPs benefited from lawyers' direct intervention before courts and administrative bodies.



UNHCR Small Business Grants: Changing Lives in Hassakeh

UNHCR, through its partner SSSD, is providing small business grants to vulnerable individuals in Hassakeh governorate in order to encourage them to protect and strengthen their livelihood skills and options. By becoming self-reliant, refugees and IDPs lead active and productive lives and are able to weave strong social, economic and cultural ties with their host communities, rebuild hope and prepare the future. Here are just two of their stories:

Jamal and his Delicious Pies



Jamal, 58 years, lost two of his sons due to the crisis and was displaced with his family from Homs, first to Damascus and then to Hassakeh. Jamal has been making pies for over 40 years and is fiercely proud of his work. Even after displacement he never gave up on his work or considered changing his trade. However, when he came to Hassakeh to live with relatives, he could not afford to re-start his business again. "I was unemployed for six months and had to keep on borrowing money in order to provide for my family. We didn't even have heat in the house" he says. This all changed however when he heard about the UNHCR Small Startup Business Grants. Jamal was one of 26 vulnerable individuals who met the criteria of for the grant. After being accepted with his proposal to open a pie shop he attended the business management training provided by UNHCR partner SSSD where he learnt the basics of running a business. Despite being unable to read or write he has always been able to do mathematics and numbers for this work and passed with flying colors. Jamal then applied what he learnt in SSSD training and chose a strategic site for his shop. He chose a populated area that has four schools, so he can service the children and the people from the neighborhood.

Through its livelihoods programme UNHCR covered the rent of his shop for the first three months and provided all the tools and materials he needed in order to re-start his business, including an old traditional oven used widely in both Homs and Damascus, but not in Hassakeh. "I'm so happy to be the first one to introduce this type of baking to Hassakeh and I would love to train other people on its use as well" he says. Jamal now has his eyes on the future and with the first profits made, he bought a refrigerator and is working toward expanding the shop and offering more choices of food, such as pizza and chicken in order to accommodate a wider range of tastes.

Maha: Preserving Old Customs and Food



Preparing food and storing it for winter has always been a custom of Arab women, Syrians in particular. However, in this modern and busy world it is often difficult to find the time and skills this type of work requires. Maha always had a great reputation for this skill in the community, who loved her work and the amazing pickles, jams, thymes and olives she makes. Maha has been the main breadwinner of her family for four years as her husband is unable to work and in the past she would work based on order by order basis. Whenever a customer wanted something, they would bring all the materials to Maha who would prepare whatever was asked of her. Although this brought some income it was not enough to pay all the bills. This was until she benefited from a Small Startup Business Grant.

UNHCR, through its partner SSSD, provided Maha with all the tools and materials she needed for her work, including the raw food materials. She now prepares her food and then sells it to the people. "I have become more independent now, and better able to provide for my family. I don't have to wait for people to come to me with their own orders and materials. I prepare everything in advance and sell it from home" she says smiling. Although still working from home, Maha is also looking to the future, using the profits to buy more and more materials and as the work expands, she plans to open up her own shop.

UNHCR Concludes 2016/2017 Winterization Programme Smashing Target by 24%

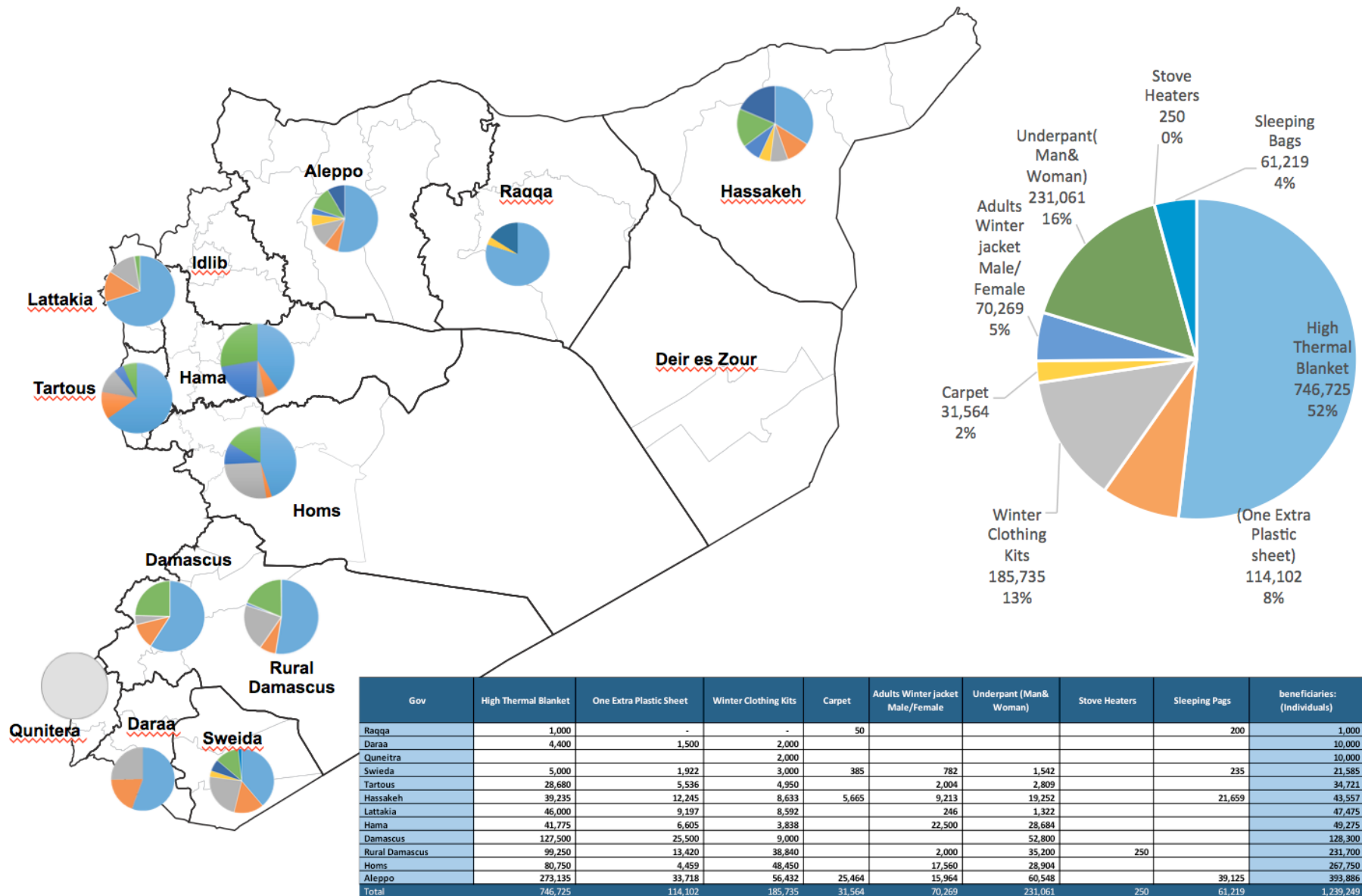


On 28 February UNHCR concluded its Winterization Programme. Since it started in September 2016, UNHCR supported 1,239,249 individuals, exceeding its target by 24%. Despite the fact that UNHCR initially reached its target of one million for the winterization programme, it continued providing humanitarian assistance for the winter season with the aim to reach out those who are still in urgent needs and affected by the crisis. Priority was given to the newly displaced, people in hard-to-reach areas and people with specific needs and vulnerabilities such as unaccompanied minors, the elderly, female headed households, persons with disabilities or mental health problems, and individuals suffering from serious health conditions and chronic diseases.

The composition of a standard winterization kit per family was five thermal blankets, one additional plastic sheet and one winter clothing kit. However, in addition to the standard kit, there were supplementary winter items distributed based on needs, targeting mainly IDPs in skeleton and unfinished buildings which only provide little protection from weather elements. Those items included sleeping bags, stoves carpets, rubber boots, winter jackets and other items as deemed necessary. While the winterization assistance programme covered the vulnerable in most parts of the country, the focus remained on the emergency response in Aleppo and Hassakeh, where degrading displacement circumstances have been combined with unhealthy living conditions.

The successful implementation is attributed to various factors where UNHCR built on last years' experience, utilizing the lessons learnt from the analysis carried out after completion of the programme. Planning is already ongoing for the 2017/2018.

Winterization Programme 2016/2017 Concluded on 28 February with 1,239,249 Beneficiaries Assisted



UNHCR Syria Marks World Cancer Day



On 04 February every year World Cancer Day is marked across the world in an effort to unite people in the fight against cancer. It aims to save millions of preventable deaths each year by raising awareness and education about the disease and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action.

In Syria, UNHCR and partners SSSD, Al Batoul and SARC organized campaigns marking World Cancer Day. The activities targeted 800 beneficiaries in three locations, Tartous, Banyas and Lattakia. The activities were to raise awareness in the community about cancer and the importance of supporting patients and survivors. The activities included awareness sessions, recreational activities and a march in support of survivors in Banyas. One of the most touching activities of the campaign was the exchange of support messages from healthy children to children in the cancer hospital which was extremely successful and brought many smiles.

UNHCR Continues to Deliver Assistance throughout Syria during February 2017

In February, UNHCR Syria reached a total of 333,444 individuals with CRIs, including 6,000 in hard-to-reach areas, while 35,000 individuals were reached by cross border deliveries pursuant to UNSC resolution 2332.

Some Highlights included:

- UNHCR leading an inter-agency mission on 04 February to the hard-to-reach Talbiseh in Homs governorate, an area last reached on 26 July 2016. UNHCR's assistance included core relief items, including high thermal blankets for 6,000 individuals/1,200 families and warm underwear for 2,500 individuals. To avoid exposure to unnecessary security risks entailed in night travel, the inter-agency team spent the night in Talbiseh.
- Participating in a UN inter agency convoy which provided food, flour nutrition and medicines to the hard-to-reach Arrastan, in the Homs Governorate. UNHCR participated in the mission and observed the general situation in the area, in addition to conducting assessment of the protection and shelter needs, inter alia, through meetings with the local community and SARC.
- Accessing, with partners, the newly opened Moadamiyah area and distributing 1,000 shelter kits to the local population. These kits are a first response to address the partially damaged houses of the city.



Hassakeh



Rural Damascus / Damascus



Tartous / Lattakia



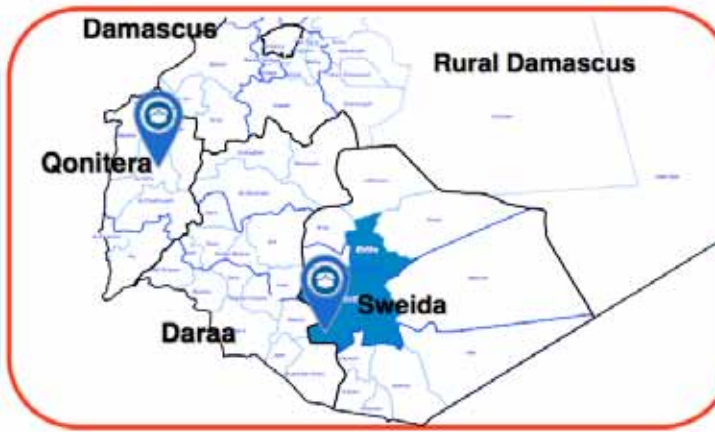
Homs



Aleppo - City



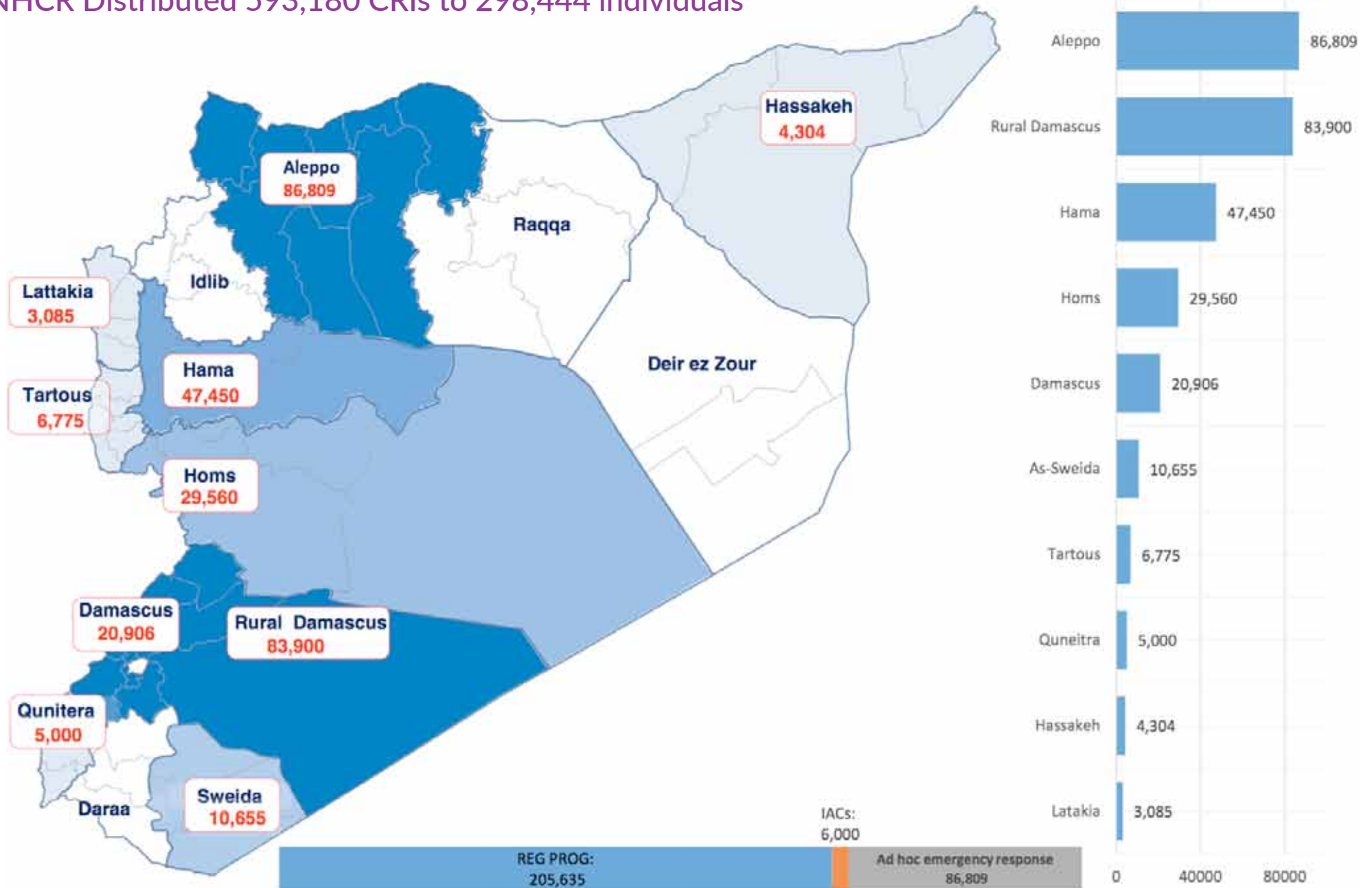
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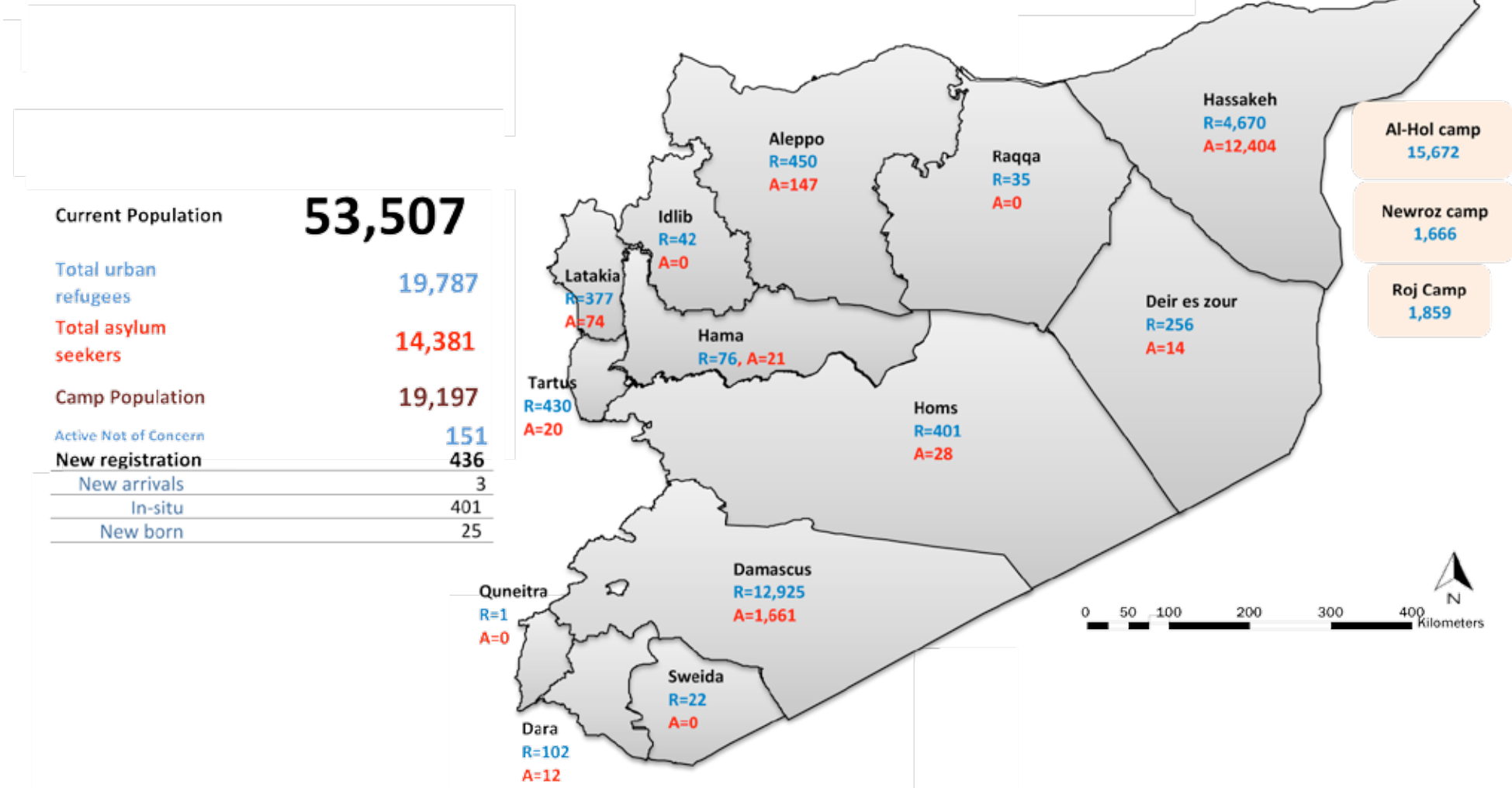
Hama City



UNHCR Distributed 593,180 CRIs to 298,444 individuals



UNHCR Continues to Assist Refugees in Syria



Before the crisis, Syria used to host large numbers of refugees which at one stage accounted for 12% of the Syrian population. These numbers have decreased dramatically to approximately 54,000 after the crisis due to insecurity and limited resources in the country. After several years of continuously diminishing new asylum requests, 2016 and so far in 2017 has seen a sharp increase in registrations from Iraq as a result of violence and conflict linked to the territorial take-over of by the ISIS and the counterinsurgency launched by the Government of Iraq and its allied forces. In Syria, despite the huge numbers of IDPs, UNHCR also continues to provide Protection, resettlement services, legal assistance, and access to healthcare, education grants, food and financial assistance to refugees.

Fatima from Iraq and Her Hope for the Future

Fatima is an Iraqi woman who was living with her husband and son in the Al Baaj District before being forced to flee her country and turn to Syria for safety in 2009. The Iraqi war forced the displacement of millions of Iraqis and forced others to flee Iraq and seek refuge in other countries. Before coming to Syria, Fatima's neighbourhood was under daily attack and the security situation very bad. Then to make matters worse Fatima's husband who was working as a taxi driver went missing leaving her alone with one son, while pregnant with another.

Finally, in 2009 she fled and came to Syria seeking safety for both her and her children. She went immediately and got registered with UNHCR. She was grateful to start receiving the food and financial assistance provided by UNHCR, as she no longer had to worry about providing for her children. Later that year, Fatima was

reunited with her husband after he managed to come to Syria and join his family. "Having UNHCR Refugee certificate changed everything for us. We benefitted from the protection offered to us by UNHCR," Fatima mentioned. "Thanks to UNHCR healthcare assistance, I don't have to worry about my children getting sick," she adds.

Fatima is an extremely smart and educated woman. After getting her high school diploma, she got accepted in the IT and Communication University. Unfortunately, due to family pressures she could not attend it but that never stopped her from working on improving herself and understands the importance of education for her children who, like thousands of children around the country, are benefitting from UNHCR's education assistance. "I'm proud to see my children attending school and receiving their education. It's their ticket for the future," she said while pushing her son on the swing in the park recently rehabilitated by UNHCR next to its office in Qamishly. Fatima now has her eyes on the future, which she sees in the eyes of her young boys.



Homework Cafés: Making a big Difference to Children in Aleppo

Many children throughout Syria find it difficult to do homework for many reasons such as lack of electricity, lack of privacy and lack of facilities. Recognizing this problem UNHCR in Aleppo in partnership with Namaa and Al Taalouf established a homework café project in Community Centres which gave children the opportunity to do their homework in a comfortable and quiet, study friendly environment. The Cafés are a great success and have reached over 12,500 students so far.



Ibtihal is 'Over the Moon' thanks to UNHCR

Ibtihal has been living in Banyas, Tartous for the last five years after she was displaced from Al Qseir in Homs. Things were very tough for her as she had to try support her elderly parents, her disabled brother and a number of other relatives. Ibtihal had begun to lose all hope when she heard from a UNHCR outreach volunteer about the start-up small business grant. Full of determination she immediately approached the UNHCR funded SSSD community centre in Banyas to enroll in business training. When the training was over she submitted a feasibility study for her proposal to open up a clothing shop and was successful. The shop is now doing well and during a follow up visit when asked about her situation now by UNHCR staff she replied cheerfully "I am over the moon!"

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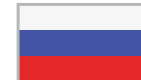
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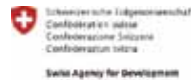
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