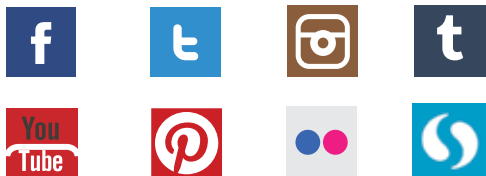


Syria In Focus

May 2017

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- UNHCR MENA Director Visit
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UNHCR Accessing the Vulnerable Throughout Syria



During April UNHCR continued accessing vulnerable people throughout Syria through missions, outreach activities and inter-agency convoys. Some areas reached include:

Aleppo

On 02 April, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency cross-line mission to assess the needs of the population in Shaikh Maqsood in Aleppo as well as monitor the partners' performance there. The mission concluded that there were huge needs to be covered including legal documentation, child protection, education, CRI distribution, house rehabilitation and support to the disabled and other protection interventions.

Daraa



From 03 to 04 April, UNHCR conducted a mission to Izraa in Daraa to assess the situation on the ground there. The mission included a meeting with the Governor of Daraa who shared a comprehensive list of needs for the governorate, was thankful for the assistance provided by UNHCR and stressed the importance of collaboration with other international agencies. During the mission UNHCR visited the national hospital in Izraa, Al Mahatta rural school, Izraa Vocational Training school Al Kayed private shelter and Abo Al Zoubi private shelter where it was informed of the urgent needs of people in each location. UNHCR also met with the Director of Social Affairs who informed that 52% of Izraa's sewage system is out of service and the garbage collection system is over-whelmed due the large increase in population and the subsequent pressure on infrastructure. The Director also emphasized the need to increase CRI distribution to address the needs of both the host community and the newly displaced. The team also visited the newly opened Community Centre and met with UNHCR partner GOPA's Izraa team including their Outreach Volunteers (ORVs). The discussion with ORVs highlighted the high levels of poverty in the host and IDP communities while GOPA management noted the challenges in recruiting staff and ORVs with Protection expertise and requested training support which UNHCR pledged to deliver.

On 05 April UNHCR conducted a mission to Al Sanamein, also in the Daraa Governorate. This was the first visit of any UN agency since the beginning of the crisis. The purpose of the mission was to look at the possibility of opening a Community Centre and carrying out rehabilitation work. UNHCR met with the Governor's Office representative, DoSA and DoE Directors, SARC representatives and the Head of the Municipality who informed that the city is coming out of a reconciliation process and some areas are still unstable. However, the official stressed the urgent need for UNHCR's intervention through a Community Centre strategically located to ensure the widest possible access, and run by a partner with a deep knowledge of the local conditions. The team also visited Al Masaken school, Al Sanamein Vocational Training school and UNHCR partner SARC's warehouse.

Homs/Hama



On 13 April UNHCR participated in a UN inter-agency convoy to the hard-to-reach Al Houla area of Homs where Core Relief Items (CRIs) such as mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and sleeping mats were delivered for the benefit of around 8,750 individuals/1,750 families. On the same day, 10,000 individuals/2,000 families in Hurr Banfseh, in Hama, benefitted from the delivery of CRIs such as mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and sleeping mats through another inter-agency convoy. On 20 April an inter-agency mission to Daralkbitah, Ghanto, Teir Makah, Snisel, Jwalek, Al Halmoz, and Hbob Al Rieh villages in northern rural of Homs. The convoy is composed of 30 trucks (17 UN trucks, 13 ICRC trucks) and carried multi sectoral assistance to support 6,700 families living there. The last humanitarian convoy to reach the area was on 20 October 2016.

On 26 April, UNHCR delivered CRIs, through SARC, to the Dormitory shelter in Deir Balaba in Homs, as an emergency response to the needs of 250 families who evacuated from Fouaa and Kafraya. The CRIs included 1,250 blankets, 1,250 sleeping mats, 250 kitchen sets, 250 jerry cans and 250 solar lamps.

Tartous/Lattakia

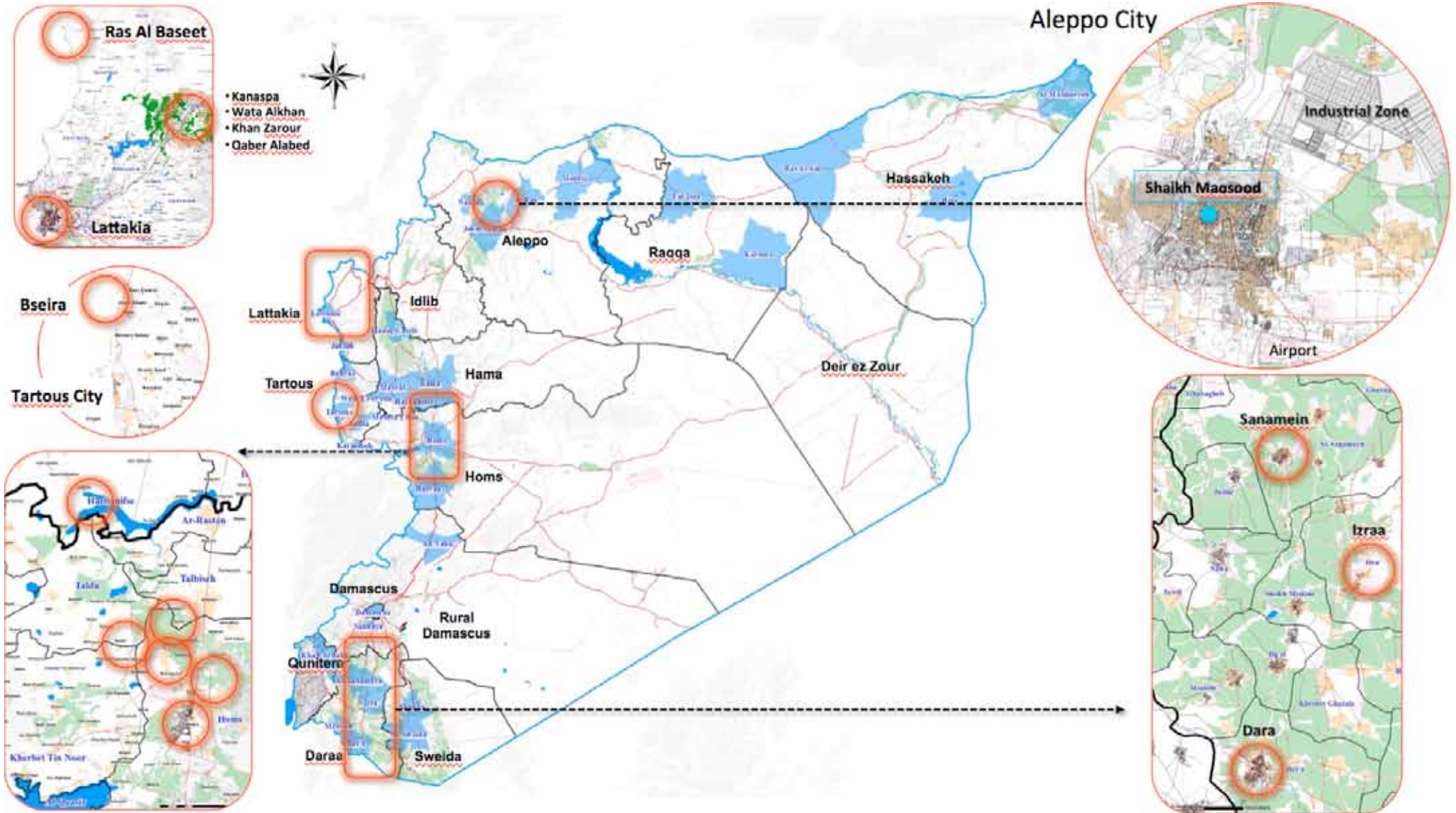


In April, UNHCR multifunctional team from Tartous conducted a mission to the northern rural in Lattakia to assess the situation of a sample of houses planned under the Owner Oriented Response with GOPA in Qaber Al Abed village and Khan Al Zaarour villages which are in Watta Khan Area in north east of Lattakia. UNHCR met with the head of community there (Al Muktar) who reported that there are many challenges affecting peoples return such as lack of transportation, lack of primary and secondary health services with the only Primary Health Clinic located in Watta Khan being out of service and the need for schools to be rehabilitated. After the assessment, a shelter intervention for a total of 55 damaged houses is now being planned (15 in Qaber Al Abed and 40 in Khan Zaarour).

On 26 April, an inter-agency mission was conducted to Bseireh, Tartous governorate to monitor the situation of the evacuees from Kafraya and Fouaa, in the Idlib governorate. The mission included UNHCR, OCHA, and the WASH Sector Coordinator. The evacuated families are hosted in rented chalets and have all received CRI kits.

On 30 April, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to Ras Al Baseet, Lattakia governorate, also to monitor the situation of the evacuees from Kafraya and Fouaa. The mission was composed of UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA, DSS, and IOM. All these families have received food and it was found that 143 chalets hosting around 160 families were reported to have been rented, out of which 40 chalets did not have access to running water. In both locations (Bsereih and Ras Al Baseet) a number of serious medical cases needing regular hospital check-ups and others, needing PSS support were identified.

Areas Accessed During April



UNHCR MENA Director Visits Syria



Mr Amin Awad, the Director of UNHCR Middle East and North Africa (MENA) bureau and the Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Syria crisis visited Syria recently to review the needs on the ground and UNHCR's response but also to see how people are demonstrating resilience despite all challenges they face.

During his mission, in Damascus, Mr Awad met with UNHCR national and international staff, the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Local Administration and Environment, Social Affairs and Labour as well as the UN Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator in Syria. In addition, he visited Homs and Aleppo to see at first-hand not only the scale of the challenges ahead, but how people are coping and struggling to resume normal life. In Homs he met the deputy governor of Homs, head of international cooperation and the director of the civil affairs department. The meeting reflected on the current evacuation of Al Waer, the Fouaa and Kafraya population in Homs as well as the Governorate's overall plans and rehabilitation efforts to enable people to return to Homs.

While in Aleppo, and witnessing first-hand the scale of destruction there, Mr Awad remarked that “I know this city well and had visited it several times before the crisis, I feel so sad at the scale of devastation” However he then added “People are restarting life against all odds and amidst immense challenges. A demonstration of their admirable resilience”. In Aleppo’s Seif Al Dawala district, Mr Awad visited two schools UNHCR that is rehabilitating so that they will be ready for the start of the school year in September. In Jibreen, the industrial zone where tens of thousands of displaced Syrians now live, rehabilitation work continues to help improve housing conditions, including recently-installed UNHCR solar-powered street lights which the residents expressed great appreciation for because they have enhanced the quality of life and made people feel more secure. He also visited the Old City to see the widespread destruction in the eastern neighbourhoods where there is catastrophic damage to infrastructure, homes and shops that questions over how those returning to their former lives can earn a living. It was there that he met 83 year old Um Kinan, a resident of Bab Al Hadid which is one of the seven historical entry gates to the old city of Aleppo. Throughout the crisis, Um Kinan never left her home, even during the most difficult of times. She expressed her thanks to UNHCR and its partners for the daily hot meals and relief she receives. “I will never leave my home. Life is better now, I can’t complain, but I need better health care” she said to Mr Awad smiling.



Um Kinan meets Amin Awad

UNHCR Celebrates World Autism Day in Syria



On 02 April every year World Autism Awareness Day is celebrated internationally and encourages Member States of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about people with autism throughout the world. It brings individual autism organizations together all around the world to provide support in research, diagnoses, treatment, and overall awareness for people with autism.

In Syria, UNHCR with its partners organized many activities marking the occasion. For example in Tartous, Banyas and Latakia UNHCR partners, SSSD, the Syria Trust, GOPA and SARC conducted activities aimed at raising awareness of communities on the integration of persons with autism, early identification and the way to deal with them. More than 50 awareness sessions and recreational activities were conducted targeting 1,000 people. The activities used theatre, video and success stories to deliver the messages. In addition, UNHCR partners the Syria Trust and SSSD initiated a campaign entitled 'Disability and How to Deal with the Disabled' to face the challenges of integrating people with disabilities including autism in schools by targeting them with awareness sessions and recreational activities in order to create a suitable environment for disabled children and equal chances for them to learn.

In Misyaf, Hama, UNHCR with its partner SSSD launched a festival in this city titled 'Be my Friend' in participation with local communities and people working closely with disabilities. Also in Al Helm, Hama, UNHCR partner Hama Social Care carried out an event in three community centres. The event aimed at spreading the awareness among the communities on the symptoms, causes and autism early detection and intervention with an inclusion and recreational activities for autistic children.

UNHCR Launches SSAFE Training in Syria



In April, UNHCR Syria Field Safety Unit launched, for the first time, UN mandatory SSAFE (Safety and Security Approach in Field Environment) training for Syria. The training is run entirely by UNHCR Syria in close coordination with United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) Syria and the UNDSS training Unit. The objectives of SSAFE is to raise staff awareness safety in their field operational environments and equip them with pertinent knowledge and skills required to prevent and respond to various incidents that they might encounter in the field.

It was a four-day high-intensity interactive training facilitated by UNHCR security professionals and SARC paramedics with extensive experience in field humanitarian operations. It combined theoretical lessons, demonstrations, group work, practical exercises and simulations. The curriculum is based on the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) standard modules, jointly developed by the UN System Staff College.

The modules included: mission planning and convoy security, access negotiation in high risk environment, stress management and resilience in high risk environment, emergency communications and equipment, UN Security Management System, hostage incident survival, active shooter response, personal security and weapon awareness as well as first aid and cultural awareness. The final day put the theory into practice through a Syria specific field-day exercise, conducted by professional security personnel which simulated real situations that staff may encounter while fulfilling their duties and missions in the field.

Since it was launched, 40 UNHCR Syria staff members have completed the training.



Muhammad Baking Again in Aleppo



Muhammad 32, is a father of two children as well as being a care giver to his elderly mother and his little brother and sister. Before the conflict Muhammad, a baker by trade was well known for the high quality of his pastries. After being previously displaced, Muhammad and his family recently returned home in the Bab Al Hadid neighbourhood in Aleppo, only to find his damaged house and empty bakery shop.

However, Muhammad did not give up and applied for the small business grants programme in partnership with Namaa and UNHCR. After his business plan was assessed his application was deemed successful and he received new tools which enabled him to reopen the bakery in Bab Al Hadid where many of his old costumers remained. Within ten days from receiving his grant, he had outfitted the bakery and was managing to sell quantities of his products. “UNHCR and Namaa have helped restore hope and dignity to me and my family” Muhammad proudly says. In addition because of this he also returned to his original house and is now very hopeful for the future.

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

In celebration of International Day of Sport for Development and Peace on 06 April, UNHCR and partner SSSD organized a sports day which included a football tournament in Damascus. The event in which adolescents from different areas participated, addressed the importance of sports in improving the wellbeing of people, in particular that of young people.

The sports event targeted teenagers from the Khaled Ibn Al Waleed Juvenile Centre in Qudsaya as well as youths from both the IDP and host communities of Al Hameh, Jaramanah and al Zahira areas. The aim of the event was to boost the children's self-confidence, build family relations with parents also participating in different teams as well as strengthening integration, acceptance and cooperation between the different communities. The event was a great success and a fun day was had by all.



Snapshot: In April UNHCR:



- Reached a total of 297,046 individuals with CRIs, including 45,000 in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, while 38,400 individuals were reached by cross border deliveries pursuant to UNSC resolution 2332.



- UNHCR and its partner SARC completed the installation of 1,750 shelter kits in the Mahalej shelter in Aleppo benefiting 8,000 individuals.



- Continued to support 75 community centres and 1,748 Outreach Volunteers in 11 governorates. Community centers 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.



- Provided legal assistance to 16,721 IDPs in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Daraa, Quneitra, Tartous, Lattakia, Hassakeh, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. This included legal counselling to 5,835 IDPs and 216 awareness sessions attended by 6,680 IDPs on various legal issues. Furthermore, 4,206 IDPs benefited from lawyers' direct intervention before courts and administrative bodies.

Street Light Brings Hope in Aleppo



In east Aleppo, six months on from gaining access there, UNHCR-backed programmes have brought street lights to dozens of streets. For example, in the Karm Al-Sabbgh neighbourhood in east Aleppo where the scale of destruction is massive, street lights are changing the quality of life for the 560 displaced people who returned recently to their homes there.



Street lights initiatives are implemented by a group of five people, assisted by outreach volunteers from UNHCR partner Namaa, who fix lights in suitable places and connect them to the local electricity generators running in the neighbourhood. UNHCR provided LEDs, wires, and all the needed fastening materials, while electricity was provided by the owners of generators for free. “The running cost of the lights is very small as they consume very little and I am glad to provide those lights with electricity from my generator”, said Muhammad, the owner of an electricity generator residing the neighbourhood. Another initiative named ‘Hand in hand let’s turn on the light’ was implemented at the Jibreen collective shelter by UNHCR partner the Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) to light a street of 50 meters at the shelter.

On a recent visit to Aleppo, UNHCR Representative in Syria, Mr. Sajjad Malik praised these initiatives and called for more schemes to improve life for communities in east Aleppo saying “Street lights can make a huge difference, enhance the quality of life, provide protection and even encourage returns”. UNHCR and its partners plan to continue such initiatives, bringing light to neighborhoods of eastern Aleppo and in the process of preparing a similar initiative which depends only on solar energy for areas without electricity generators. With electricity shortages still a problem in Aleppo this solar power initiative will make a massive difference to those who endured months of living in darkness.



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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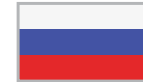
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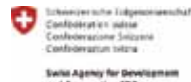
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