

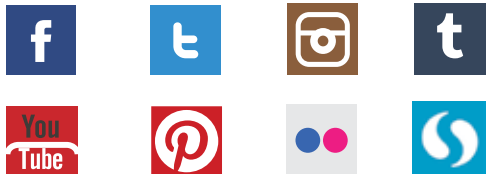
Syria In Focus

June 2017

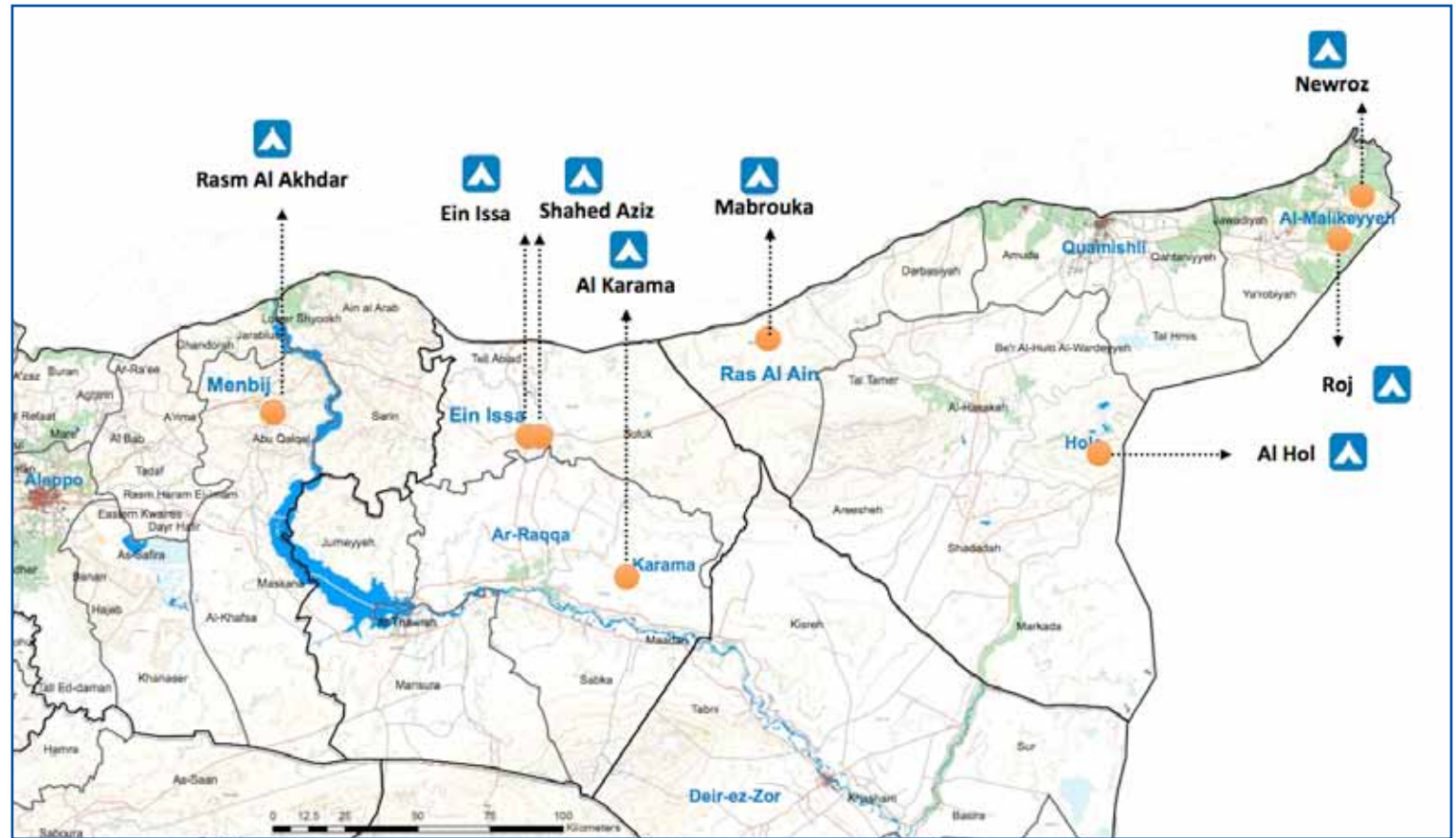


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UNHCR Scales Up Operations in Northeast of Syria



During May an escalation of fighting in the North East and North West of Raqqa caused the displacement of thousands of people to a number of different camps and informal settlements. Large numbers of people were displaced from the north western side of Raqqa which resulted in thousands of IDPs arriving in to Ein Issa, Maskana and Aleppo. In response, UNHCR scaled up its operations in the North of Syria as well as continuing its response to both refugees and IDPs in the Al Hol, Newroz, Mabrouka and Roj camps in the Hassakeh governorate.

For example, tens of thousands displaced individuals from Raqqa and Tabqa arrived in the Ein Issa Cotton Factory Camp, some of whom were then transported to Manbij, Azaz, Hisha, Jerniyah, and to safe areas in rural Raqqa. However approximately 8,000 (as of the end of May) individuals stayed resulting in UNHCR increasing its assistance to Ein Issa and erecting 800 tents there, as well as deploying 15 volunteers to provide further assistance.



In addition, following a needs assessment in Manbij, UNHCR sent 300 tents and Core Relief Items (CRIs) to the new camp of Rasm Al Akhdar as an emergency response to the influx there. UNHCR also facilitated a WHO medicines shipment to the Hassakeh Directorate of Health in order to respond the medical needs of the IDPs and the local community there.

On 19 May the Hassakeh Governorate was hit by a strong sandstorm causing considerable damage throughout the various camps, particularly in Al Hol, Mabrouka and Roj. UNHCR and its partners responded to the needs in the camps and supported 300 families in repairing their tents and by replacing CRIs. In Al Hol, new arrivals continued to receive tents and CRIs, including solar lamps. A number of rapid needs assessments were also conducted jointly with partner GOPA and the subsequent protection interventions which included recreational activities aiming to strengthen teamwork, SGBV and Child Protection awareness sessions, individual counselling sessions and the setting up of a children's committee.

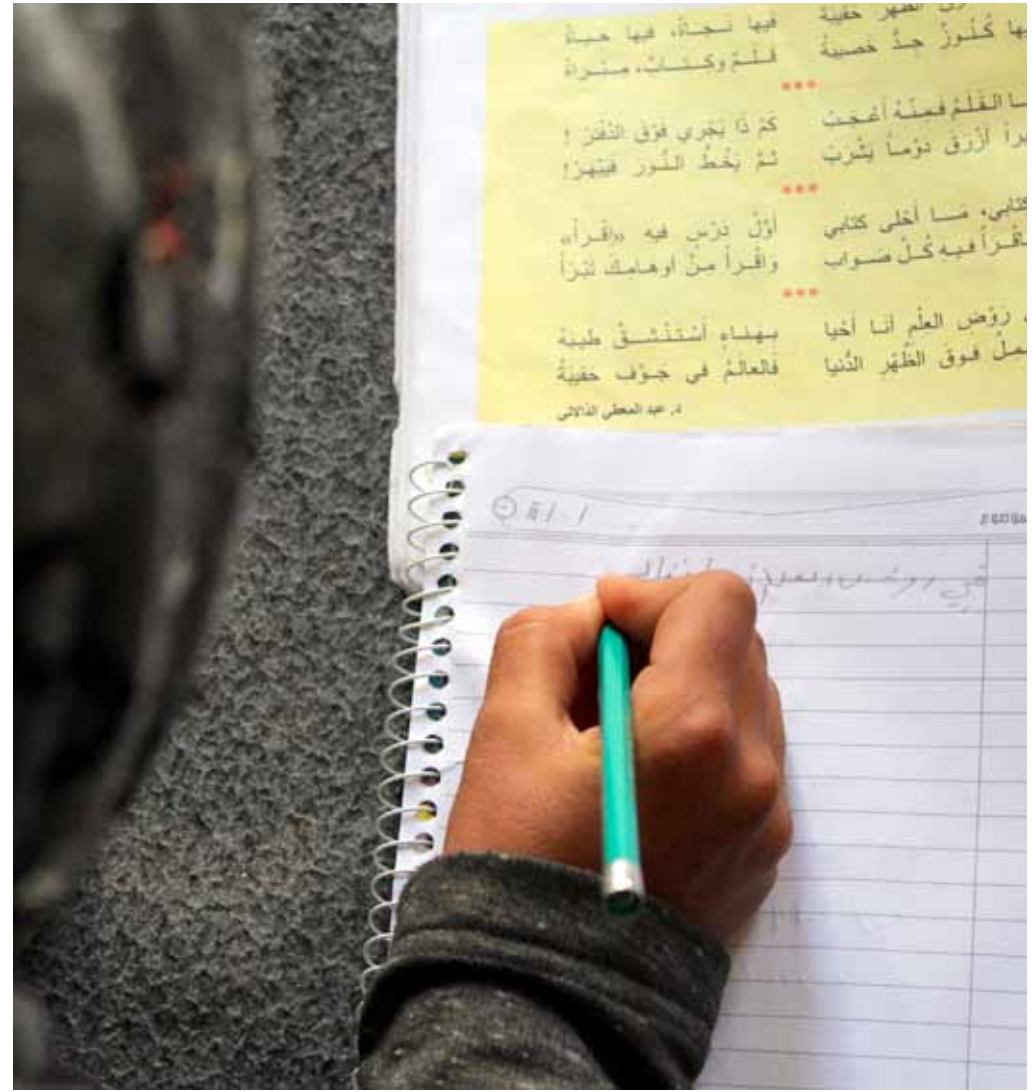
UNHCR and partners are currently providing assistance to over 20,000 refugees and IDPs in Newroz, Roj and Al Hol camps in addition to providing emergency response in the others.

Abu Ali: Breaking Tradition for his Daughters Education



Twelve year old Asmaa fled with her family from ISIS controlled Babiri village in Rural Aleppo to the UNHCR supported Jibreen collective shelter a few months ago. While living in Babiri under ISIS rule, Asmaa, spent nearly five years of her childhood dressing in black, not being allowed to attend school or not even being allowed to play and enjoy a normal childhood.

After she reached the Jibreen collective shelter, the first thing that Asmaa wanted was to go back to school. With the support of her family and UNHCR she returned and despite the fact she is older than others in her class, feels so happy, enthusiastic and optimistic. "I will continue my learning at school and will go to university" Asmaa tells a UNHCR monitoring team with a beautiful smile on her face. Her father, Abu Ali, tells the team that he left all his belongings behind in the village, but this was a small price to pay to ensure his family's safety. His eight-year old son Ali, is now attending school with Asmaa, and cannot stop smiling whenever school is mentioned.



Abu Ali however hasn't lost hope that he and his family will return to their village and his work in breeding wheat, which he was not allowed to do when ISIS occupied the area. He also is very supportive of the education of his children 'I will not follow the traditions, I will let Asmaa complete her study before she get married. We appreciate all the assistance that UNHCR and partners have provided but Jibreen cannot be a home for us and when we return to our village we will start over again for a normal life', Abu Ali says



Community Centres in Hassakeh: A lifeline for the Most Vulnerable

In Hassakeh city, UNHCR supports two community centres which provide a wide range of services for IDPs, refugees, asylum seekers and people from the local community. Each community centre has a network of outreach volunteers (ORVs) selected from the community itself in order to connect people from the community to the services they need. During outreach activities, one of those volunteers identified the five-year old Rami who suffers from cerebral palsy and was in need of a wheelchair that his family could not afford to provide and referred him to the community centre run by UNHCR's partner SSSD. Rami is the youngest of three brothers and four sisters and lives with his widowed mother in the Ghwiran neighborhood in Hassakeh. The following day, Rami's mother came to the community centre and met with specialized volunteers. They recommended that Rami be assigned a program in the community centre for physical therapy, mental development and other activities. In addition, he received a wheelchair.

At the beginning, Rami's condition was difficult. He could not speak, he had difficulty moving his legs and he could not open his left hand or flex his fingers, and therefore he could not attend school. After several physical therapy sessions, Rami became capable of spreading his legs, moving them and standing leaning on the wall. He started to flex his hands and hold a few things, like a small ball or a chocolate bar. When his mother first saw him, she got emotional and cried "I'm so happy to see him like this", she said. Through the mental development sessions and other activities, little by little, improvements started showing on Rami's speech and pronunciation.

After several weeks of physical therapy there was a significant improvement. "Rami can now crawl around the house and go to his siblings whenever they call for him. They can communicate better now and can understand him when he asks for his ball" she tells the UNHCR team smiling. Rami's relationships with neighbors also improved as he is now able to go out and play with the neighbors' children. Life has also become easier for his mother as well. Feeding Rami is easier as he is now able to hold a spoon and he needs less help in going to the bathroom and maintaining his personal hygiene. In addition her psychological state improved in parallel with her son's improvement, particularly after visiting the doctor who reassured her about Rami's improvement and gave her hope for further developments in the future. She also gained more self-confidence



through the mothers' session held in the community centre under the 'Hear my Heart' programme, where she received the love and support of other women. She did not stop there, however, she is now attending education classes for adults. "I am now determined to be able to help my children with their homework and am more hopeful for my family's future. Thank you UNHCR and thank you SSSD" she says.

UNHCR continues to respond to the needs of persons with specific needs through its network of 67 community centres and 1,583 Outreach Volunteers, operating in 11 governorates. This is done through accessing the concerned populations, providing social and protection services to meet their needs and promoting their participation in the community. 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.

Rami represents an important, yet sometimes neglected, group in society. During crisis, it is always the most vulnerable who get the worst of the damages. "It's our role as a community and as humanitarian workers to build a support network for people like Rami and his family" says a SSSD volunteer.



UNHCR Assists Students from Hard to Reach Areas at Exam Time



In May around 4,400 students from Raqqa, Idlib and rural Hama arrived to Hama city to participate in the final exams of the 9th and 12th grades for the school year 2016-2017. The Hama Education Department prepared 10 schools in Hama city to be used as shelters to host these students. UNHCR responded urgently by dispatching CRIs to these students including 4,000 sleeping mats, 8,000 blankets, 800 hygiene kits, 1,350 solar lamps and 2,000 jerry cans.

Similarly, UNHCR, in coordination with partners, provided 500 blankets and 500 mattresses to students who came from Raqqa to sit for their 9th grade exam in Hassakeh city.

In addition, UNHCR, on request from the Directorate of Education (DoE) in Aleppo, provided CRI support for 2,000 students coming from Rural Aleppo, Idlib and Raqqa to sit the 9th grade exam. As well as this, UNHCR has implemented some upgrades to the shower facilities, and made arrangements for the lawyers of its partner, the Syria Trust, that visited the students and assessed and responded to any potential documentation-related problems.

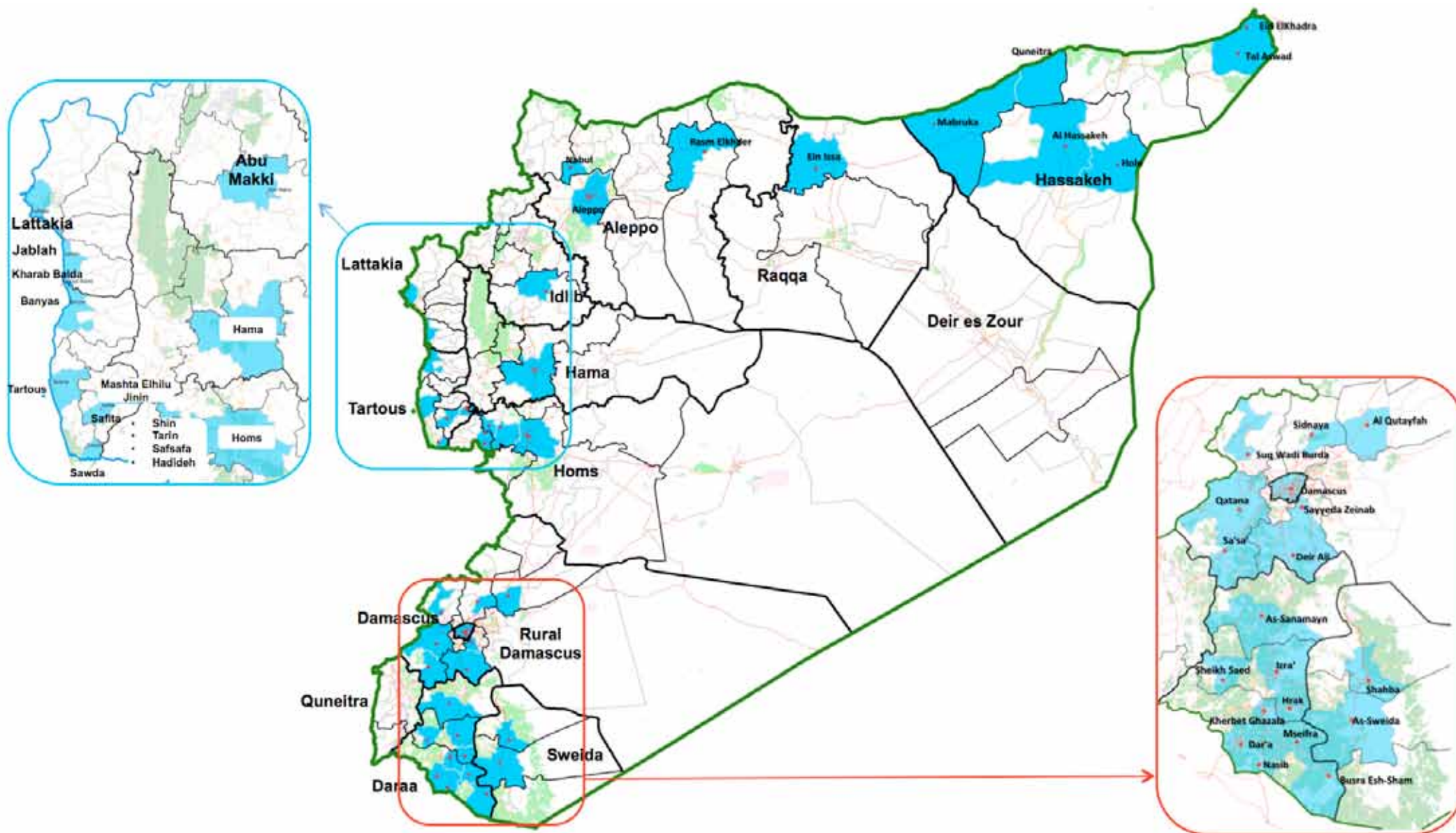


UNHCR Continues to Deliver Assistance throughout Syria during May 2017

- On May 02, an inter-agency convoy delivered humanitarian assistance for 35,000 people in need in besieged Douma, in eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus. UNHCR participated in the convoy and carried out protection monitoring activities. The area had last been reached on 19 October 2016.
- On 06 May, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Wadi Barada in Rural Damascus. The mission carried health/nutrition materials and urgent core relief items. UNHCR assistance included 9,100 blankets, 6,000 jerry cans and 6,000 solar lamps and covered the needs of the host community and the IDPs residing in the nine villages of the district.
- On 19 May, the Hassakeh Governorate was hit by a strong sandstorm causing considerable damage throughout the various camps, particularly in Al Hol and Roj. UNHCR and its partners responded to the needs in the two camps and supported 300 families in repairing their tents and other facilities.
- On 21 May, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to Al Nasriyeh in Rural Damascus contributing 4,125 blankets and 1,650 kitchen sets to the mission.
- Also on 21 May, UNHCR reached Jirud in Rural Damascus through an inter-agency convoy with 4,000 blankets and 3,800 kitchen sets.



Areas Accessed During May



UNHCR Livelihood Assistance: Making a Huge Difference in the South

In a context where more than 3.7 million Syrians are unemployed, of whom 2.9 million lost their jobs during the conflict, the need for livelihoods support are huge among both skilled and unskilled IDPs. At the same time, many skilled people have either left the country, were killed or were compelled to engage in other professions as a source of income. UNHCR's livelihoods and self-reliance activities were aimed at increasing the level of people's self-reliance and reducing their dependency on assistance by developing their capacity to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, social support and most importantly provide a sufficient source of income. UNHCR livelihood activities include training, small startup business grants and livelihood kits.

Abu Bara Resumes Profession as Carpenter



Abu Bara, fled to Sweida due to the conflict a number of years ago and has constantly been worried about providing for his family since. Recently, he was one of the beneficiaries to receive a UNHCR livelihood kit and finally managed to resume his profession as a carpenter. Since he received the kit Abu Bara has been busy installing doors and windows for new apartments as well as the maintenance of old ones. He explained "I was able to increase my income significantly through this work which has greatly contributed to improving my family's living conditions, particularly in helping my three children pursue their study at school".

In 2016, during the initial distribution of livelihood kits, it became clear that more of this type of practical assistance was needed as it makes a huge difference to people's lives. As a result in 2017 UNHCR expanded the types of kits being distributed to include Plumbing Kits, Carpenter Kits, Electrician kits, Sewing kits, Hairdressing Kits for females, Hairdressing Kits for males, Painting Kits, Blacksmith Kits, Air-conditioning maintenance Kits, electronic maintenance Kits for computers and electronic maintenance for mobiles for repairing using spare parts.

Abu Muhammad Doubles His Income



Abu Muhammad, was displaced with his family from their home in Rural Damascus to Qanawat in the Sweida governorate. Abu Muhammad, who suffers from polio in his right hand, eventually found a casual job in Sweida, but his income was too low to support the family. He was determined to start a small business to improve his living conditions and when he heard about the start-up small grant from UNHCR he applied immediately.

After his business plan was assessed by a panel he was successful and he established a small Falafel restaurant in Qanawat. He expressed his delight to UNHCR staff on a recent follow up visit saying "I lost everything due to the crisis, but after establishing my own business, I have managed to double my monthly income. My family situation has improved and I am now able to pay for the education needs of my children".

Small Grant Leads to Great Success for Nizar

Despite his displacement, Nizar insisted on improving his living conditions and applied to get a grant from UNHCR and partner GOPA in Sweida. His auto maintenance workshop proposal was approved and he finally received a grant to launch his project. In less than one year, Nizar had built a reputation as one of the best auto maintenance experts in the area. During a recent follow up visit UNHCR staff observed many cars parked outside his workshop awaiting maintenance. Nizar told the team proudly "Through this project, I have succeeded not only in generating income for myself and my family, but also in employing three displaced people in the area to be able to meet the needs of the growing number of customers".



UNHCR Emphasizes the Importance of Education to Refugees

During May, UNHCR, in cooperation with partner Al Nada organized two awareness raising sessions at the Al Nada Community Centre in Yaffour area in Rural Damascus. The activity titled 'My Dream' focused on the importance of education for both boys and girls as well as protection against all types of harassment. It specifically targeted firstly, children between nine and twelve, and secondly between thirteen and sixteen.

The sessions contained different types of interactive activities including drawing, theater and role playing children. The session was attended by 60 Sudanese boys and girls who were enthusiastic, eager to learn more and expressed a hope that more of these activities will take place in the future.



May Snapshot



During the month of May UNHCR:

- Reached a total of 297,046 individuals with CRIs, including 57,250 in hard to reach and besieged areas, while 34,425 individuals were reached by cross border deliveries pursuant to UNSC resolution 2332.
- Continued to support 67 community centres and 1,583 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 23 Community Based Initiatives (CBIs) in nine governorates with a further 48 CBIs under the implementation phase
- Provided legal assistance to 22,477 IDPs in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Daraa, Quneitra, Tartous, Lattakia, Hassakeh, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo governorates. This included legal counselling to 8,149 IDPs and 321 awareness sessions attended by 8,622 IDPs on various legal issues as well as 5,706 IDPs benefiting from lawyers' direct intervention before the courts and administrative bodies.
- Facilitated a WHO medicines shipment to the Hassakeh Directorate of Health in order to respond to the medical needs of the IDPs and the local community.

Fatima Hopeful for the Future

Fatima is a 56 year old widow from Aleppo and a mother of two daughters, one of whom died tragically four years ago. After her house was destroyed, she and her family, including her five year old granddaughter were displaced from the Al-Salhin area to the Al-Ezaa area where she rented a house.

Fatima has always supported her family and had previously worked for ten years as a hospital laundry worker and then as a night cook at an orphanage at Al-Nil Street for four years. Unfortunately due to the deteriorating security situation in the area, the orphanage was forced to move and this led to the dismissal of many staff members including Fatima. Refusing to give up, she decided to upgrade her skills and applied to the UNHCR supported production unit and was accepted. The production unit was established after rehabilitating an abandoned warehouse and equipping it with 67 sewing machines. This unit helps 60 people every six months to master the art of sewing and helps them enter the job market by linking them to job opportunities or assists them start their own business through the small business grant programme or supporting them with the needed sewing toolkits.



Since she start work in the unit Fatima is much happier. "The working environment at the production unit is comfortable as most of us are women and I am confident that I will soon be able to support my family's needs" she says. Fatima is very grateful to UNHCR for the training and is now looking towards opening her own business and is hopeful for the future.

Rawa Making a Change in Sweida

Five years ago, Rawa fled Rural Damascus to Sweida city due to the conflict where she now lives with parents. Recently she noticed that her child was having problems integrating socially so she approached the psychosocial support unit at UNHCR partner GOPA's community centre seeking assistance.

While the child's case was being taken care of, the mother was observed by the PSS case to be suffering from a severe degree of depression. When the PSS talked to Rawa she told them that 'My husband went missing four years ago and living at my parents' house with my two children who are having problems is really stressful'.

Rawa received eight individual PSS sessions focusing on promoting self-confidence, coping with stress and improving decision-making skills. During a recent monitoring visit by UNHCR she tells the team "I really feel better now and I have started to approach life positively". In addition she brings her two children to the community centre every day to attend kindergarten activity which is resulting in less stress at home and the children mixing with other children. In addition Rawa enrolled in a recycling training course at the centre. "This is my first attempt to make a change in my life".



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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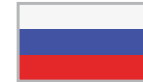
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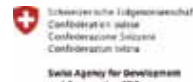
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