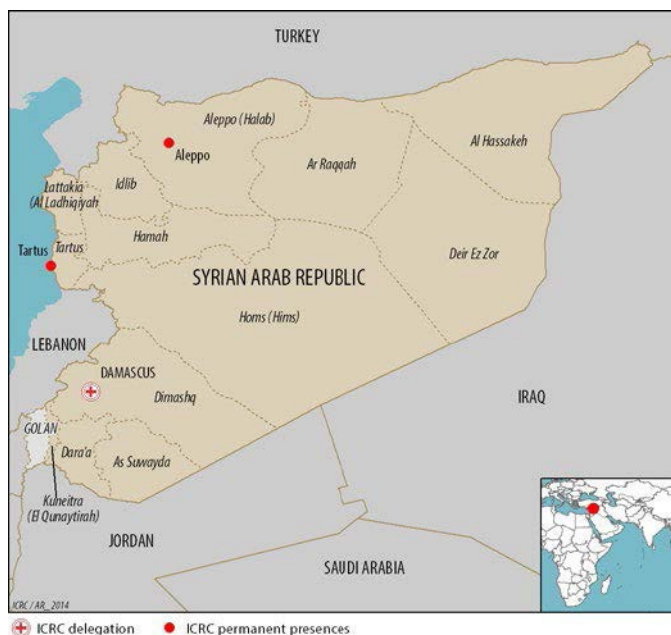


# SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC



The ICRC has been present in the Syrian Arab Republic since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It works with the National Society to help people affected by armed conflict receive emergency relief and access safe water and medical care. It aims to visit all people held in relation to the conflict and to foster respect for IHL by all parties, notably in relation to sick and wounded patients and medical services. It acts as a neutral intermediary for issues of humanitarian concern between the Israeli-occupied Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic. It helps separated relatives maintain contact.

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**MEDIUM**

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2014:

- ▶ some 15 million IDPs/residents had clean water, over 5.8 million received food and over 1.4 million received essential household items, including hygiene kits, through Syrian Arab Red Crescent/ICRC action
- ▶ owing to government restrictions and widespread insecurity, health activities were mostly confined to supporting 9 mobile health units and 1 polyclinic (total: 8,000 consultations/month) run by the National Society
- ▶ the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, as the ICRC's main partner, sustained its emergency-response capacities and overall operations with the help of extensive technical, financial and material support from the ICRC
- ▶ detainees held at 4 central prisons run by the Interior Ministry received visits, but the ICRC continued to seek regular access to all places of detention in the country, including those operated by armed groups
- ▶ some enquiries made on behalf of families received replies, but others about the fate of thousands of people allegedly arrested/detained by the Syrian government and armed groups remained unanswered
- ▶ government restrictions, general insecurity and lack of respect for humanitarian action continued to impede impartial humanitarian assistance to people in certain parts of the country

## EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

Protection	2,964
Assistance	100,186
Prevention	2,085
Cooperation with National Societies	3,689
General	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>108,924</b>

of which: Overheads 6,648

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>78%</b>
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## PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	46
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	199

PROTECTION	Total
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>	
Red Cross messages (RCMs)	
RCMs collected	10
RCMs distributed	35
Phone calls facilitated between family members	1
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	252
People reunited with their families	8
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	10,254
Detainees visited and monitored individually	111
Number of visits carried out	4
Number of places of detention visited	4
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	12
RCMs distributed	10
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	238

ASSISTANCE	2014 Targets (up to)	Achieved	
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>			
Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)			
Food commodities	Beneficiaries	8,160,000	5,827,591
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	2,580,000	1,427,113
Cash	Beneficiaries	50,000	
Work, services and training	Beneficiaries	50,000	
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	16,100,100	15,875,768
<b>Health</b>			
Health centres supported	Structures	13	9
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>			
Hospitals			
Hospitals supported	Structures		26
Water and habitat			
Water and habitat activities	Number of beds	600	4,456
<b>Physical rehabilitation</b>			
Patients receiving services	Patients	150	

## CONTEXT

In the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria), armed conflict opposing Syrian government forces and a multitude of armed groups, some of whom were also fighting among themselves, continued. Midyear, a coalition led by the United States of America launched air strikes periodically against an armed group operating across Iraqi and Syrian territories.

Sustained fighting and lack of dialogue among the parties to the conflict stymied efforts, such as the Geneva II Conference on Syria, to find a political solution. In July, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on cross-border aid delivery without the Syrian government's consent.

Serious and repeated breaches of IHL aggravated the worsening humanitarian situation, with a reported 200,000 people killed since March 2011.

The conflict, and the economic sanctions imposed by other countries, seriously affected public infrastructure and services. More and more Syrians were driven into destitution by unemployment and progressively scarce or costly food, water, health services and fuel.

An estimated 10.8 million people required aid; 6.5 million people – nearly half of them children – were reportedly displaced, often repeatedly, within the country. UNHCR estimated that some 2.8 million people had registered, or were awaiting registration, as refugees.

Over 40,000 households were reportedly living in areas besieged by government forces or armed groups for over a year; some 4.7 million people remained in areas made difficult to reach by the systematic denial of humanitarian access by parties to the conflict. Localized truces occasionally allowed some assistance to reach people living in some of these areas.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

In partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, and in coordination with Movement partners and other organizations, the ICRC continued – in full transparency with the authorities – to develop its response to the growing humanitarian needs in Syria. The budget extension appeal launched in May sustained an increase in food assistance from July to December.

Contacts/coordination with Syrian authorities at all levels, community leaders and members of armed groups helped facilitate the National Society/ICRC's humanitarian activities. The limited dialogue that existed with the parties to the conflict, and the ICRC's public statements, emphasized all parties' obligations under IHL to respect and protect civilians/civilian objects, including people seeking/delivering health care. While the ICRC was able to discuss IHL with members of some armed groups, it only had minimal direct interaction with the Syrian armed/security forces.

Government consent, and the security situation, largely determined the ICRC's access to the field and to people in need. Impediments to impartial humanitarian action, particularly medical assistance, were most severe in areas held by armed groups and in besieged areas. Between March 2011 and December 2014, 40 Syrian Arab Red Crescent workers and 7 Palestine Red Crescent Society workers had been killed. The three ICRC staff abducted in Syria in October 2013 were still not released at year's end.

Despite the challenging and complex environment, National Society/ICRC teams managed to reach and assist millions of people. Distributions – mostly by the National Society, with the ICRC facilitating its access to conflict-affected areas – resulted in over 5.8 million people receiving food and over 1.4 million, household essentials. Over 15 million people benefited from clean water and improved sanitation through ICRC support for local water boards, facilitated by the Ministry of Water Resources and the National Society. This support included: emergency repairs, donations of spare parts/consumable chemicals, renovation of essential facilities in IDP hosting centres, water-trucking and bottled-water distribution. Over 3.7 million people benefited from a pest-control initiative, and 100,000 from a solid-waste management programme.

However, the imbalance between health needs and the health services available continued to grow. The ICRC's ability to deliver medical assistance across front lines – to people living in areas held by armed groups and besieged areas, where the needs were most acute – remained extremely limited, and, in terms of surgical aid, almost non-existent. ICRC health activities were confined mainly to supporting National Society-run facilities. Logistical constraints delayed other initiatives.

The ICRC visited detainees at four central prisons run by the Ministry of Interior; it continued to seek access to all places of detention in Syria, including those operated by armed groups. The fate of thousands of people allegedly arrested/detained, either by the Syrian authorities or by armed groups, remained unknown to their families.

Movement family-links services facilitated contact between dispersed family members, including people with relatives living/detained abroad. As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC facilitated travel between the Israeli-occupied Golan and Syria proper.

ICRC operational updates and multimedia releases enabled a wide array of actors in Syria and abroad to keep abreast of the humanitarian situation in Syria and about the Movement's response.

With extensive and diverse forms of support, the National Society developed its operational capacities at headquarters and branch levels.

## CIVILIANS

### **Impediments to principled humanitarian action remain**

The large number of active armed groups and the limited recognition/acceptance for the ICRC continued to challenge the security of field teams and networking efforts. The operational environment remained extremely difficult even when the parties to the conflict allowed the ICRC to cross front lines and enter conflict-affected areas. The government continued to push for local peace/reconciliation agreements and, on some occasions, permitted humanitarian actors to assist victims after the parties concerned had reached an agreement. Some local truces allowed for limited relief for people living in besieged or otherwise hard-to-reach areas. However, truces did not last and were often too fragile for principled/meaningful humanitarian action to take place safely.

### **Millions survive with the help of emergency relief, but others remain inaccessible to the ICRC**

Over 5.8 million vulnerable IDPs/residents (some 1.1 million households) enhanced their daily diet using ICRC food parcels; over 1.4 million (some 270,000 households) eased their living conditions with donated hygiene kits, mattresses, blankets, kitchen

sets and other household essentials. Distributed relief included food for 95,000 people, and household essentials for 46,000 people, in areas of Aleppo held by armed groups, and school kits for 14,000 displaced children in Homs and Rural Damascus. Additional donor support after a budget extension appeal in May sustained an increase in food distributions from July to December.

Distributions were carried out by Syrian Arab Red Crescent teams, with the ICRC facilitating their access to the field by obtaining the permits necessary and talking to the parties concerned. However, people in certain areas (e.g. Deir Ez Zor, Raqqa and besieged areas in Rural Damascus) were often inaccessible, mainly owing to lack of authorization.

Forty-eight National Society staff/volunteers were trained in post-distribution monitoring, which helped improve the quality of food distributed and the follow-up of relief activities.

Despite the insecurity, cash-based assistance and livelihood-support initiatives were being developed.

Palestinians received some assistance through the Palestine Red Crescent (see below, and *Wounded and sick*).

### **Over half of the population benefits from clean water despite widespread destruction**

Cooperation with the Ministry of Water Resources and its local water boards, and dialogue with all sides of the conflict, enabled National Society/ICRC teams to undertake diverse water/sanitation projects. Over 15 million people – almost 65% of Syria's pre-conflict population – benefited from large-scale emergency support for local water boards, which improved the drinking water supply and sanitation countrywide.

They included 6.3 million people who regained access to water following emergency repairs to damaged infrastructure. Activities carried out with National Society staff/volunteers benefited 697,993 IDPs: 372,166 received water delivered by trucks in Deir Ez Zor, Hama, Homs, Kuneitra and Rural Damascus; 163,376 IDPs at 225 hosting centres had housing and water/sanitation facilities rehabilitated/upgraded; and 162,451 IDPs received bottled water, distributed in different-sized containers, as an emergency measure.

In cities/towns with functional distribution systems, millions of IDPs/residents had potable water after the ICRC provided water treatment plants – amid import/transport restrictions – with spare parts and consumables, including 1,000 tonnes of aluminium sulphate and 500,000 litres of sodium hypochlorite. In fighting-affected Yarmouk (Damascus), Palestinian refugees had clean water (enough for 50,000 people for a month), following an emergency supply of purification tablets.

Sanitation programmes were implemented in eight governorates. Health risks for over 3.7 million IDPs/residents were mitigated by a pest-control campaign using ICRC-donated pesticides. In Idlib, 100,000 people benefited from a solid-waste management programme.

As part of ICRC capacity-building support, the National Society received water trucks and technical/financial support for operating them. Fifty-seven volunteers, from all branches, were trained in emergency water/sanitation activities, helping them prepare as focal points in areas not regularly accessible to the ICRC.

### **Parties to the conflict urged to respect IHL**

The ICRC continued to develop its dialogue with the parties to the conflict. The existing, albeit limited, dialogue (see *Actors of influence*) emphasized all parties' obligations under IHL to: take constant care to spare people not/no longer participating in hostilities and protect them from abuse, including sexual violence; respect the prohibition against indiscriminate attacks on civilians/civilian objects, including the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas; ensure civilians' safe access to goods essential for their survival, and to medical/humanitarian assistance; respect wounded fighters' right to health care; and respect/protect medical/humanitarian workers and the red cross/red crescent emblems.

Contact with segments of armed groups in Syria and abroad continued (see *Actors of influence*).

### **Many remain unable to contact their relatives**

The whereabouts of thousands of people, including those allegedly arrested/detained, remained unknown to their families in Syria and elsewhere, as the parties to the conflict answered only a handful of enquiries about them (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

Through the Movement's tracing services, people in Syria and those who had sought refuge in neighbouring countries opened tracing requests for their relatives in Syria. Families in Syria sent oral messages/greetings, mainly to relatives detained abroad. With the ICRC facilitating their travel, two Syrian children rejoined their mother in Egypt. Thirty-nine people, mainly Palestinians, resettled abroad with ICRC-issued travel documents. The ICRC did not facilitate visits by people from Syria to their relatives detained abroad; repatriation of foreign nationals' remains was not undertaken.

Travel between the Israeli-occupied Golan and Syria proper remained restricted. The ICRC, as a neutral intermediary between the parties concerned, facilitated the crossing of 93 students across the demarcation line between Syria proper and the occupied Golan, and the exchange 39 official documents between Golan residents and their relatives in Syria proper. The ICRC also facilitated the transfer of money to Golanese detainees in Israel. The yearly support for transporting Golan apples to Syria proper was cancelled owing to a poor harvest.

The National Society received supplies (e.g. body bags) for family-links services and human remains management. Organizations involved in establishing lists of missing persons or gravesite information received guidelines.

Over 200 National Society volunteers from Hassakeh trained in disaster management and relief, to boost National Society response in the north-east. Planned training in family-links services, needs assessment and emergency response did not materialize owing to logistical/operational constraints.

### **Initial steps taken to build capacities for addressing the issue of missing persons**

Twenty-five forensic professionals from the Health Ministry attended an ICRC-organized round-table, where their technical/material needs were discussed. At a workshop, 16 high-level staff from the State Ministry for National Reconciliation learnt best practices on dealing with the issue of missing persons.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Only detainees held at four central prisons, under the authority of the Interior Ministry, received ICRC visits. With the exception of one prison, which was also visited in 2012, no repeat visits were carried out. The ICRC continued to seek regular access to all places of detention in Syria, including those under the authority of the Defence Ministry and National Security bodies.

At the four central prisons, 111 detainees were followed up individually. Detainees and their families exchanged news through RCMs and oral messages/greetings. Nine foreign detainees notified their embassies of their imprisonment.

Visits to people held by armed groups had not yet taken place.

### **Detainees trapped by fighting receive emergency aid**

Detainees in Aleppo prison – besieged by armed groups for over a year until May, when government forces regained control of it – benefited from cooked meals, drinking water, clothing and medicines provided by the ICRC and delivered by the National Society. The ICRC, acting as a neutral intermediary, facilitated the movement of released detainees who had completed their sentences, and the transport of human remains.

### **Families await information on relatives allegedly arrested/detained**

Enquiries about 1,762 people allegedly arrested/detained were submitted to the authorities on behalf of the families concerned. Since the beginning of the conflict, 3,216 such queries remained unanswered or only partially answered, despite reminders to the authorities.

The ICRC forwarded requests for information on the fate of 76 people reportedly held by armed groups. Of these requests, 73 remained unanswered.

## WOUNDED AND SICK

### **Disregard for the safety of medical services persists**

Attacks on patients and health workers/facilities recurred. Between March 2011 and December 2014, 40 staff members/volunteers, including first-aiders, from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, and 7 from the Palestine Red Crescent had been killed. The three ICRC staff abducted in Syria in October 2013 were still not released by year's end.

In line with the Health Care in Danger project, the ICRC took stock of violations – including outright attacks and targeted obstructions (e.g. blocking the delivery of medicines to facilities outside government-controlled areas) – with a view to sharing its findings with the authorities. The ICRC took every possible opportunity to remind the parties to the conflict of their obligations under IHL with regard to protecting all wounded and sick people, be they civilians or combatants, or in detention.

### **People continue to suffer from restrictions imposed on impartial medical care**

Health needs continued to outweigh available health services. This imbalance was particularly severe in areas controlled by armed groups and in besieged areas, where the entry of medical supplies, and access for humanitarian organizations, was restricted. To help remedy this, the ICRC reduced its assistance to government health facilities already receiving support from other donors.

With ICRC deliveries across front lines rarely allowed, people living in areas held by armed groups received basic health care or surgical

supplies on a few occasions only. In December, for example, 13 hospitals in different areas in Aleppo, controlled by either government forces or armed groups, received 29 sets of surgical instruments. Medical supplies were also distributed, to 4 hospitals (for 600 people) in June and 3 hospital (for 150 people) in July.

In besieged areas, delivery of medical supplies – excluding surgical materials – was possible on four occasions only: in October, 5,000 chronically ill patients in Al-Waer in Homs, and another 5,000 in Yarmouk, benefited from a three-month supply of medicines; 700 others in Al-Waer benefited from dialysis consumables delivered to Al-Bir Hospital in November; and 3,000 people in Rural Damascus benefited from a delivery of paediatric/obstetric materials in December.

Similar restrictions applied to places where a truce was in effect. In Barzeh (Damascus) for example, a clinic was being renovated, as other forms of assistance had been prohibited. Rehabilitation of other health facilities could not be carried out owing to difficulties in securing permits and materials.

### **IDPs/residents receive basic health care**

Vulnerable people in Hama, Homs, Idlib, Rural Damascus, Sweida and Tartous received health services at nine Syrian Arab Red Crescent mobile health units serving millions of people on average. ICRC support for these clinics helped ensure curative/preventive care for some 7,000 IDPs/residents monthly. People also received services at a National Society polyclinic (1,000 consultations monthly) in Hama.

Disabled people benefited from 400 pairs of crutches, 50 wheelchairs and bandages distributed to four physical rehabilitation centres in Aleppo.

Representatives from all mobile health units attended a workshop on primary health care, the Safer Access Framework, Health Care in Danger and stress management. Fifteen members of Syrian armed groups attended a first-aid training course abroad (see *Jordan*). Thirteen doctors benefited from a war-surgery seminar abroad (see *Jordan*); other planned training sessions could not be held.

Preparations – delayed by staffing constraints and visa processing – for further support in the fields of primary health care, first aid, biomedical engineering, haemodialysis and physical rehabilitation were in progress.

## ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

### **Working with direct participants in the hostilities remains a challenge**

Contact/coordination with the Syrian authorities at central and local levels, and with community leaders and armed groups in the areas visited, helped facilitate the assistance activities of Syrian Arab Red Crescent/ICRC teams. Meetings with government officials, including during the ICRC president's visits, focused on the distinction between civilians and combatants, and on the right of the wounded to receive medical care and humanitarian assistance. However, a broader, systematic and productive dialogue on protection issues had yet to develop. Still, officials from the Foreign Affairs Ministry learnt more about IHL at a seminar conducted in April at the government's request. An agreement was also reached with the Syrian authorities to reactivate the national IHL committee.

The ICRC so far failed to establish a direct dialogue, on respect for IHL during military operations, with the armed/security forces. In Syria and abroad, networking and IHL-focused interaction (see *Jordan*) with members of armed groups continued.

### **Media coverage fosters support for neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action**

Communication efforts focused on enlisting support for ICRC field operations among civil society and the wider public, including actors with direct influence on the parties to the conflict. During a question-and-answer session with the ICRC president, Damascus-based journalists were briefed on ICRC operations, IHL and the Health Care in Danger project, and on the organization's call for broader humanitarian access.

Through ICRC operational updates and social media releases, a wide array of actors in Syria and abroad kept abreast of humanitarian developments in Syria. Networking with key media actors, regardless of their affiliations in the conflict, continued, enabling the ICRC to share its humanitarian concerns and distribute multimedia informational materials. By covering ICRC activities, local/international media helped increase people's awareness of the organization's principled humanitarian action. ICRC social networking platforms launched IHL-themed animated clips; an audio recording on IHL was produced, for distribution to armed groups in Syria and neighbouring countries.

Events targeting other sectors of civil society could not be organized owing to the insecurity and lack of permission and human resources.

### **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent sustained its humanitarian response to growing needs, with ICRC financial, material and technical support – which also helped it cover operating/administrative costs at its headquarters, 12 branches and 6 response centres, including a new centre in Homs built through ICRC funding. It boosted its logistical capacities with ICRC-donated vehicles, and upgraded its radio communication system, thereby increasing staff security in the field.

With ICRC support covering staff salaries and equipment needs, the National Society worked on enhancing its communication capacities, and developed a communication policy and organizational tools. Through an ICRC legal adviser working with its communication team, it also received technical support for maintaining its neutrality, independence and accountability, particularly in relation to organizations outside the Movement. Communication focal points from all National Society branches attended three ICRC-organized workshops; volunteers from the Homs branch trained in basic IHL principles.

Through regular meetings, Movement components coordinated their activities – capitalizing on their complementary capacities – thereby increasing the impact of the Movement's response and strengthening its positioning. Joint statements consolidated the Movement's position on pressing humanitarian issues. In December, the collaborative website "[redforsyria.org](http://redforsyria.org)" began its all-inclusive reporting on Movement activities in Syria.

Coordination with the Palestine Red Crescent facilitated the delivery of assistance in Yarmouk (see *Civilians* and *Wounded and sick*).

Lack of either human resources or authorization forestalled training in first aid and mine action. Some National Society staff/volunteers were trained in emergency response (see *Civilians*); others attended courses abroad, their travelling expenses covered by the ICRC. Work on emblem legislation and the National Society statutes was set aside in favour of emergency/operational priorities.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>					
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			UAMs/SCs*		
RCMs collected		10			
RCMs distributed		35			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		1			
<b>Reunifications, transfers and repatriations</b>					
People reunited with their families		8			
	<i>including people registered by another delegation</i>	1			
People transferred/repatriated		60			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		2,184	185	104	178
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	1,505			
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		252			
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	125			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		4,108	285	178	278
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	2,695			
<b>Documents</b>					
People to whom travel documents were issued		39			
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		16			
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>					
ICRC visits			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		10,254	602	209	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		111	32	1	10
Detainees newly registered		105	32	1	10
Number of visits carried out		4			
Number of places of detention visited		4			
<b>Restoring family links</b>					
RCMs collected		12			
RCMs distributed		10			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		238			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		6			

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>				
Food commodities	Beneficiaries	5,827,591	30%	40%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	5,827,591		
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	1,427,113	30%	40%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	1,427,113		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	15,875,768	30%	40%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	5,558,000		
<b>Health</b>				
Health centres supported	Structures	9		
Consultations	Patients	55,315		
	<i>of which curative</i>		15,317	23,672
Immunizations	Doses	9		
	<i>of which for children aged five or under</i>	9		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection programme)</b>				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	3,316		
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>				
<b>Hospitals</b>				
Hospitals supported	Structures	26		
<b>Water and habitat</b>				
Water and habitat activities	Number of beds	4,456		