

Syrian Arab Republic

June 2023

The Syria crisis entered its thirteenth year in March 2023. The UN estimates that **15.3 million** people need humanitarian assistance across the country, a 5 per cent increase from 2022.

The February earthquakes further exacerbated the situation in Syria. An estimated **8.8 million** people in Syria were affected by the earthquakes, and UNHCR has been responding to this additional emergency.

UNHCR also continues to provide protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, returnees, stateless people, and host community members based on identified needs and vulnerabilities.

HIGHLIGHTS

1,740

Families affected by the earthquakes received emergency cash assistance as of end-June

2,744

Solar streetlights installed in vulnerable neighbourhoods so far in 2023, contributing to people's safety

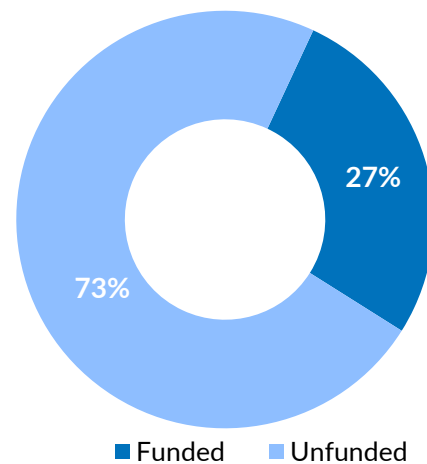
130,600

People received core relief items as part of UNHCR's regular programme as of end-June

FUNDING (AS OF 27 JUNE 2023)

USD 504.3 million

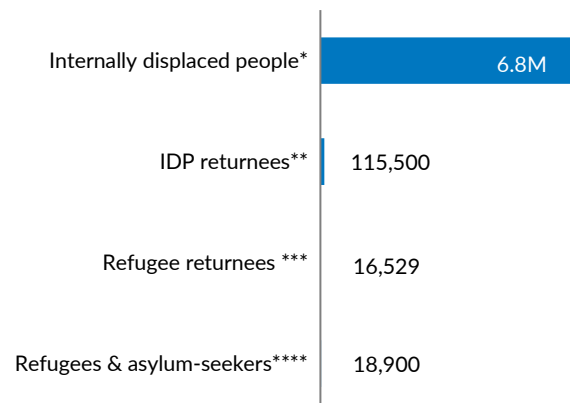
requested for the Syria Operation in 2023



PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT IN THE WHOLE OF SYRIA



Provision of legal support to students travelling to take their national exams in June. This legal assistance included support to access documentation such as ID cards, which are required for students to take their exams. ©UNHCR/H. Maarouf



* Source: 2023 HNO

** Source: OCHA, January-December 2022

***Source: UNHCR verified returns in 2023 as of 30 June

**** Source: UNHCR, June 2023

Operational Context

The [2023 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#) estimates that over 15.3 million people need humanitarian assistance in Syria. This is the highest number of people in need since the beginning of the crisis. Syria also has the largest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the world with 6.8 million people internally displaced. The 2023 HNO states that humanitarian and economic indicators in the country continue to deteriorate, and many basic services have collapsed. The February earthquakes have further compounded existing needs in a country exacerbated by over 12 years of crisis.

UNHCR supports refugees, IDPs and returnees (refugees and IDPs who have returned to their home areas) by providing assistance to those most in need using a [community-based](#) and [area-based approach](#). UNHCR's [community-based approach](#) focuses on community mobilization and building self-reliance. It aims to reduce vulnerabilities and protection risks by providing services through community-based structures and networks. UNHCR's [area-based approach](#) entails working with partners to enhance support in geographic areas where the needs are greatest.

In 2023, UNHCR is working with 29 partners including international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and national NGOs.

Operational Updates

Regular response

Inter-agency cross-line missions

- UNHCR [participated](#) in an inter-agency cross-line mission to north-west Syria ("Sarmada 11") on 23-24 June. This marked the first cross-line convoy since the February earthquakes. UNHCR contributed 300 core relief item kits. The mission took place in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2672.



Protection

- In line with its community-based protection approach, as of end-June, UNHCR was supporting 114 [community/satellite centres](#) and 108 mobile units across the country. UNHCR also engaged over 2,300 community outreach volunteers in all 14 Governorates.
- On 21 June, the Fardos community centres in Aleppo reopened in a new location after being closed due to damage sustained during the earthquakes. Thirty out of 31 UNHCR-supported community centres in

Aleppo Governorate are now active. A new location for the remaining closed centre is being identified.

- In collaboration with partners, UNHCR is in the process of relocating two community centres in Dar'a and As-Sweida Governorates to reach additional people in need of protection services, mainly IDP returnees in underserved areas. The new locations were selected following assessments of the areas, severity of needs and population concentration in the surrounding areas.



A UNHCR-supported community centre in Damascus organized environmental awareness activities on 5 June to mark International Environment Day. ©UNHCR/V. Toumeh.



Core relief items

- In June, UNHCR provided core relief items to 2,960 vulnerable Syrian IDP and returnee families (14,641 individuals) in Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqah, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama and Idleb Governorates (not including the support provided as part of the earthquake emergency response). In total this year, 26,170 families (almost 130,600 individuals) have received core relief items through UNHCR's regular programme.



Shelter

- So far this year, UNHCR has installed 2,744 solar streetlights in Latakia and Aleppo, including 216 installed during June, contributing to the safety of people in vulnerable communities.
- In Aleppo and Rural Damascus, 725 linear metres of sewage systems have been repaired so far this year as part of UNHCR's shelter programme. The interventions target vulnerable households and communities in areas where spontaneous returns of IDPs are taking place as well as areas that were highly affected by the February earthquakes.
- As of end-June, UNHCR and partners have supported the installation of 7,573 family-size tents in camps in north-east Syria. This includes the

replacement of old tents and provision of new tents to families arriving in camps.

Education

- UNHCR contributed to inter-agency efforts to support Syrian students traveling to take their **national exams** (for grades 9 and 12) which took place from 7 to 26 June. In coordination with partners in the Education Sector, UNHCR provided these students with remedial education sessions, stationery kits, psychosocial support and legal support services (mainly issuance of ID cards which are required to take exams). Additionally, UNHCR through a partner supported students with transportation from the Lebanese border and from cross-line borders to the accommodation centres which hosted these students during the exam period. Daily transportation between the accommodation and exam centres in Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Idleb Governorates was provided.
- In Aleppo Governorate alone, over 4,300 students received legal assistance through UNHCR partners and successfully obtained their personal IDs. In addition, 4,900 students received legal awareness sessions covering topics such as the importance of individual documentation and recording civil events. Over 4,600 students benefited from individual legal counselling on various legal matters, and 52 students received legal assistance to register their civil events at a civil registry. Based on the students' feedback, the support to obtain national IDs was considered the most useful and important as it enabled them to take their national exams.



Livelihoods

- UNHCR and partners continued providing entrepreneurship training through community centres to enhance people's financial management skills. In Tartous and Latakia Governorates, 89 people completed training courses in June. Out of this group, 68 small business projects were approved jointly by UNHCR and partners for implementation. The projects were selected based on vulnerability and capacity assessments (ensuring some level of business experience).
- UNHCR partners concluded assessments in 18 rural areas where spontaneous returns of IDPs are ongoing in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, As-Sweida, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama and Rural Damascus Governorates. The assessments inform the selection of vulnerable families that will receive agricultural support, including for example the provision of drip irrigation kits, agricultural inputs (such as seeds) and livestock. Community members/groups contribute to the assessment

process and help establish the assistance targeting criteria which may include, but is not limited to, those who have access to land, household size and composition, and number of family members with disabilities or other vulnerabilities.



Refugee Response

- **Registration:** As of end-June, some 18,900 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR. The majority of the registered refugees are from Iraq and reside primarily in urban areas in Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Homs, Tartous and Latakia Governorates. Meanwhile, in June, UNHCR renewed identification cards for some 1,200 refugees. The identification cards will protect against *refoulement*, ensure access to basic rights and services, and facilitate freedom of movement.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** In June, 11 asylum-seeking families comprising 22 individuals were interviewed to determine if they are refugees. During the same period, eight families comprising 14 individuals from Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan and Iraq were recognized as refugees, ensuring that they could be protected from *refoulement* and detention due to irregular stay and could access basic services. UNHCR also provided counselling on the RSD process and individual cases through its hotline. Inquiries received during June were primarily related to the status of individual cases and requests for cash assistance.
- **Resettlement:** In June, UNHCR facilitated departure arrangements for one individual for resettlement, while nine individuals departed under **complementary pathway** arrangements.
- **Cash Assistance:** UNHCR provided regular multi-purpose cash assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers for the months of May and June, supporting a total of 5,175 families (11,754 individuals).
- **World Refugee Day:** On World Refugee Day (20 June), UNHCR organized a variety of activities with refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan and other countries. In Damascus, UNHCR's team gathered with refugees, partners and staff in a community centre where several refugees participated in a talent show. In Aleppo, around 200 refugee children spent the day enjoying games, painting and sports. In Latakia, over 100 refugees enjoyed a play which highlighted the importance of co-existence and the meaning of asylum. In Homs, refugee children practiced their painting skills with the help of a refugee artist, while a group of refugee women learned how to cook a traditional Yemeni

dish. Meanwhile in Qamishli, young people united over sports and over 400 refugees and Syrians participated in athletic races and games.



A talent show was held at a UNHCR-supported community centre in Damascus on 20 June, World Refugee Day. See more stories and photos from World Refugee Day in Syria [here](#). ©UNHCR/O. Kabalan

Return

- In June, UNHCR verified or monitored the return to Syria of 3,421 individual refugees from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.¹ This brought the total number of refugee returnees verified or monitored by UNHCR in 2023 to 16,529 individuals. The long-term impact of the February earthquakes on the overall return trend in 2023 remains to be seen. In total between 2016 and June 2023, UNHCR verified or monitored the return to Syria of some 370,300 individual refugees.²

UNHCR co-led inter-agency sector updates

- UNHCR leads the inter-agency **Protection and Shelter and Non-Food Item (SNFI)** Sectors as part of the Syria and Whole of Syria inter-agency response.
- Last year, the Protection Sector developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for an inter-agency referral mechanism. The objective was to ensure better coverage of protection services and geographic locations, and to avoid duplication of activities between agencies. On 18 June, a pilot for this inter-agency referral mechanism was rolled out in north-east Syria following trainings by the Qamishli Sub-national Protection Sector led by UNHCR. The pilot mechanism will be rolled out over a six-week period. In August, partners in north-east Syria will have the opportunity to share their feedback on the process with the Protection Sector. The SOPs will be updated based on this feedback and partners across the country will be trained so that the mechanism can be

rolled out at the national level between September and November 2023.

Earthquake emergency response

The UN estimates that around **8.8 million** people in Syria were affected by the February 2023 earthquakes. The most affected Governorates are Aleppo, Hama, Idleb, Latakia and Tartous. UNHCR continues to transition to a longer-term response to address the needs of affected populations and is gradually integrating earthquake-response activities into its regular programme.

As of early July, there were eight active collective shelters in Aleppo hosting around 400 families (over 1,900 people) and 10 collective shelters in Latakia hosting around 670 families (2,600 individuals). UNHCR and partners continue providing support to the affected population in mid-term collective shelters and in the host community, while aiming at ensuring a safe, voluntary and dignified relocation as collective shelters are gradually closed.

To support earthquake-affected families, UNHCR continues to deliver protection services including child protection, gender-based violence response and psychosocial support, among others. In Aleppo Governorate, 80 additional outreach volunteers were recently recruited to enhance the response to people affected by the earthquakes. The outreach volunteers help provide information to affected communities and referrals to services.

In response to the increased mental health and psychosocial support needs in the aftermath of the earthquakes, UNHCR organized a three-day training in June for partner staff focusing on grief counselling, post-traumatic stress disorder and self-care mechanisms. The training targeted 30 case managers and activity facilitators from Latakia, Homs, Hama and Idleb Governorates.

As part of the shelter response in the coming months, UNHCR and partners will be supporting earthquake-affected families with cash for minor repairs to homes that have sustained minor damages. Among other support, UNHCR and partners also started conducting minor repairs of affected sewage systems in Aleppo and Latakia. In Aleppo this month, UNHCR and its partner completed minor repairs to a sewage system in Al-Fardous, which was one of the neighbourhoods most affected by the earthquakes. At least 3,000 people from the community are expected to directly benefit from this project. In June, UNHCR also provided 20 family tents in coordination

¹ Provisional figures pending further verification.

² The numbers reported are only those verified or monitored by UNHCR and do not reflect the entire number of returns, which may be significantly higher.

with UNICEF to be used as classrooms from June to August in villages in Latakia and Tartous Governorates where school buildings were damaged by the earthquakes.

UNHCR continued to provide [multi-purpose cash assistance](#) to people affected by the earthquakes in Aleppo, Latakia and Hama Governorates in line with the recommendations of the Cash Working Group. In June, 243 households (1,012 individuals) in Hama, 358 households (1,620 individuals) Latakia, and 573 households (3,017 individuals) in Aleppo received cash assistance. In total, 1,741 families have received multi-purpose cash assistance as part of earthquake emergency response as of end-June.

In June, 12 earthquake-affected families in Hama Governorate also received assistance to re-establish their small businesses damaged by the earthquakes. They received additional in-kind support (items provided varied depending on the business) through the small start-up business programme. Some of the supported businesses included for example grocery stores, sewing workshops and a motorcycle maintenance shop.



Abd Al-Aziz's grocery store was affected by the February earthquakes. He received training and support from UNHCR to re-establish his business. Learn more about his story [here](#). ©UNHCR/S.Sawas

For more information on UNHCR's response, see the [Whole of Syria Earthquake Emergency Response Final Report](#).

RECENTLY PUBLISHED:

- [Whole of Syria Earthquake Emergency Response – Final Report](#) (June 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet](#) (June 2023)
- [Eighth Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions & Intentions on Return to Syria](#) (May 2023)

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