

Cash-Based Interventions in Syria

January – August 2023

The crisis in Syria has severely impacted the livelihoods of most of the population, including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and IDP returnees. UNHCR provides cash assistance to these vulnerable people to meet their basic needs.

Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) are interventions in which cash or vouchers for goods or services are provided to forcibly displaced persons on an individual or community basis. Most forcibly displaced populations have access to markets and services, and can thereby benefit from CBI.

UNHCR provides cash assistance to vulnerable people affected by the crisis and the February earthquakes. CBI enables them to prioritize and fulfil their needs in a dignified manner and contributes to the local economy. CBI also increases protection outcomes, and facilitates inclusion and solutions.

15.3 million
people in Syria need humanitarian assistance*

85%
of households in Syria unable to meet the basic needs of all family members*

70%
of households in Syria rely on credit for purchases
56%
borrow to cover their basic needs*

Background

UNHCR cash-based interventions (CBI) have been ongoing for refugees since 2007. UNHCR has expanded this programme to include IDPs and returnees since 2021. UNHCR received approval from relevant authorities to implement a pilot project to IDPs and returnees, monetizing the existing in-kind assistance on a limited scale. The earthquakes in February 2023 accelerated UNHCR's efforts to provide CBI to vulnerable Syrians, through different CBI modalities, such as multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) and cash for minor repairs.

The socioeconomic situation in the country has been deteriorated further due to a deepening economic crisis, sanctions, depreciation of the Syrian currency, rampant inflation, cuts on gasoline subsidies, ongoing displacement, recurring hostilities, and the February earthquakes. Sanctions have also exacerbated the economic situation in Syria, resulting in The socioeconomic situation has had a negative impact on all Syrians. Refugees and asylum-seekers are among the worst affected, not least because they do not have a legal right to work. Additionally, multiple displacements increase physical and financial vulnerabilities.



Despite the cracks that appeared on the walls of his house in rural As-Suqalabieh (Hama Governorate.) after the earthquake on 6 February, Ismail and his son had no choice but to stay. Leaving their only shelter was not an option, as they had nowhere else to go. © UNHCR/Saad Sawas

* Humanitarian Needs Overview, Syrian Arab Republic 2023

Selected key achievements**

** Figures cover the period [1 January - 31 August 2023](#) unless stated otherwise



Cash assistance for refugees & asylum-seekers

Unconditional monthly multipurpose cash grant to cover basic needs of most vulnerable refugee and asylum-seeker households.

In 2023, UNHCR provided a monthly multi-purpose cash grant to **5,411 households (15,674 individuals)** with total amount of **US\$ 2.4 million**.

Education grant: a onetime grant to cover educational expenses for refugee and asylum-seeker students between the ages of 6 to 17 years, aiming at providing financial support and encouraging families to send and keep their children in school.

961 households (2,019 students) have received the education grant in 2023 with total amount of **US\$ 110,000**.

Scholarships: onetime assistance provided to university students to cover registration fees and other related expenses.

A total of **83 students** have benefited from these grants and **28 students** received the registration fees with total amount of **US\$ 40,000**.



CBI for earthquake response

Emergency unconditional multipurpose cash grant (MPCG) to cover basic needs for families affected by the earthquakes whose houses are assessed as uninhabitable. MPCG has been implemented in Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous, and Ham Governorates with total target of **12,300 families**.

Over 3,400 households received cash assistance by end of August.

- **1,242** households have received the MPCG in Aleppo.
- **1,432** households have received MPCG in Latakia and Tartous combined.
- **759** households have received MPCG in Hama.

The initial post distribution monitoring results conducted in June 2023 showed that the recipients were using the assistance to meet basic needs such as food and health expenditures, debt repayment, and minor shelter repair.

Cash for minor repairs: to provide onetime cash assistance to families whose houses experienced minor damage with total target of **4,500 families (3,500 in Aleppo city and 1,000 in Latakia city)**. The first batch of beneficiaries are expected to receive cash assistance in September 2023.

Pilot project: Cash for Non-Food Items (NFIs), general in-kind assistance (GIKA), and medical in-kind assistance (MIKA). This project provides cash assistance, instead of in-kind assistance, in the GIKA/MIKA and NFI programmes. The pilot aims at testing whether CBI is an effective and efficient delivery modality and finding out how to improve CBI programming. The project will be implemented in Tartous, Latakia and Aleppo with total target of **2,500 families**.

The selection of beneficiaries has started, and the first distribution will start by October 2023.

UNHCR's support and advocacy with the Central Bank of Syria (CBS) for a less restrictive documentation requirement for customer identity verification is a key protection intervention for refugees to have access to financial institutions. Following the temporary waiver from the CBS to use UNHCR-issued ID as a replacement of required documents, CBS has added residency permits as the main document for refugees to have access to financial institutions and humanitarian assistance.

With the waiver, UNHCR has intensified its efforts to increase the possession rate of residency permits. UNHCR continues to advocate with CBS and the Government to obtain long-term approval of the UNHCR-issued ID as a replacement document and to include asylum-seekers in the waiver.

Post distribution monitoring for refugees and asylum-seekers takes place once a year for different types of CBI to assess the cash programme and its impact on recipients, as well as their feedback on the cash delivery.

In total, UNHCR has disbursed
\$ 4.1 million
for CBI in 2023 through the financial service provider.



CBI expansion plan

Cash for Livelihoods, which provides cash for start-up grants replacing in-kind distribution of tools and materials, is expected to improve time and cost efficiency and contribute to the local markets and communities while enhancing resilience and empowering communities. UNHCR is planning to pilot this modality of the livelihood programmes, if the approval is granted, in four governorates with **total target of 154 people**.

DONORS – As of 31 August 2023

Special thanks to our donors including major donors of unearmarked contributions to UNHCR: Belgium | Canada | CERF | Colombia | Cyprus | Denmark | European Union | Finland | Fondazione Cav. Lav. Carlo Pesenti | France | Germany | Hani Rustom | Ireland | Japan | Kuwait | Luxembourg | Malta | Netherlands | Norway | Private donors | Royal Humanitarian Foundation Bahrain | Russian Federation | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | Syria Humanitarian Fund | The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom | United States of America | World Assembly of Muslim Youth

FURTHER INFORMATION

[UNHCR Global Focus – Syrian Arab Republic](#)
[Operational Data Portal – Syrian Arab Republic](#)
[UNHCR Syria website](#)
[UNHCR Syria Twitter \(@UNHCRinSYRIA\)](#)
[UNHCR Syria Facebook](#)