

Community-Led and Youth-Led Initiatives

January – December 2023

2,390,396

Individuals benefited from community-led initiatives (CLIs)

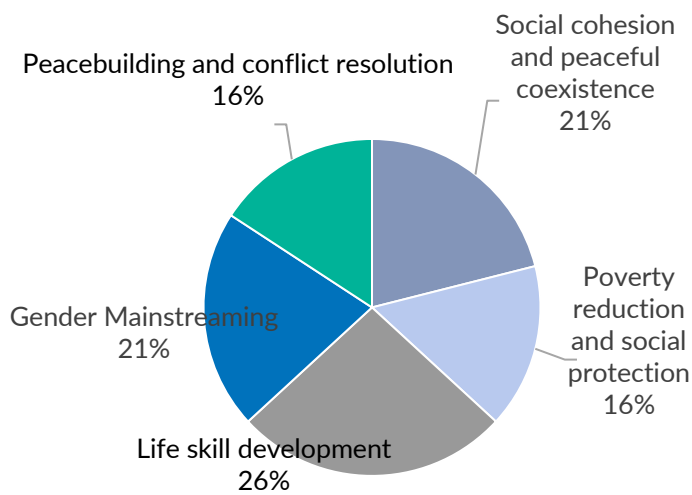
6,856

Self-managed group members led the CLIs and YLIs

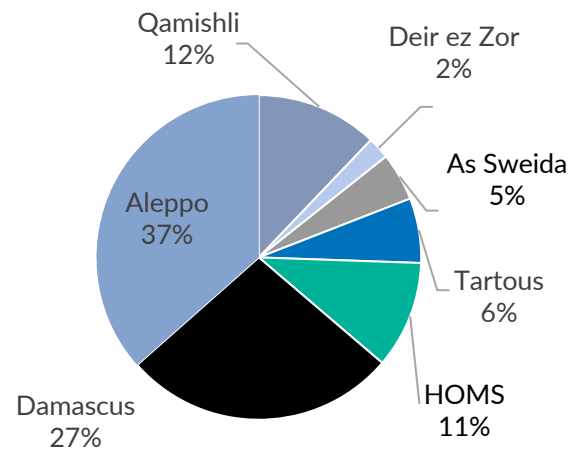
17

local partners coordinated the implementation of the CLIs and YLIs

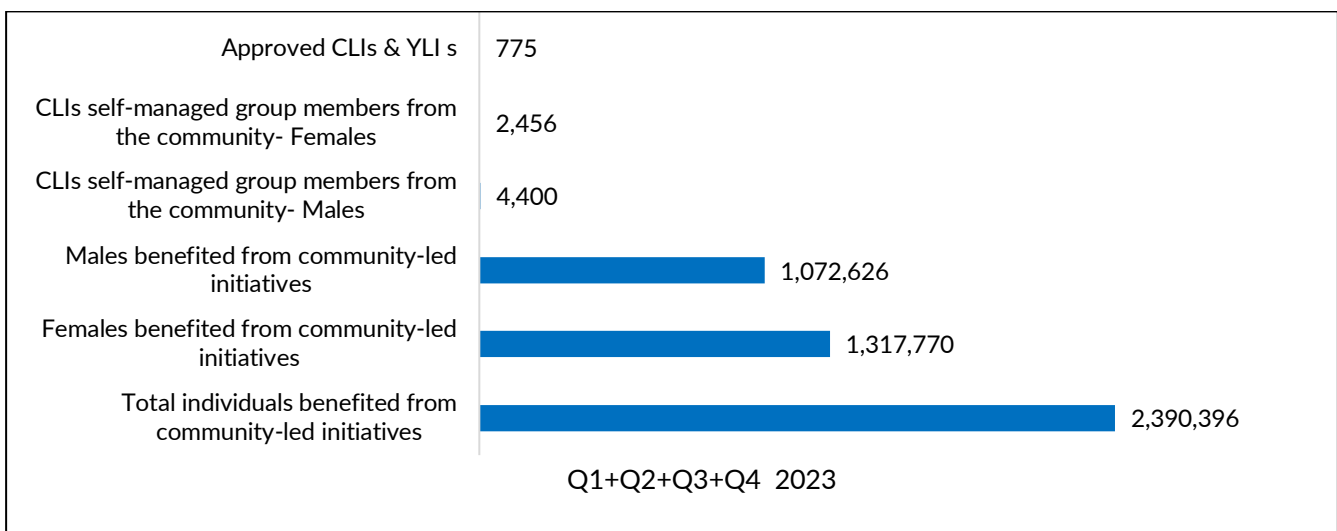
CLIs/YLIs by type



CLIs/YLIs by area



7 Governorates | **17 Partners**



Introduction

In Syria, UNHCR has developed Community-Led Initiatives (CLIs) and Youth-Led Initiatives (YLI), which reflect UNHCR's strategy of enhancing community mobilization and Community-Based approaches. These programmes aim to support solutions proposed by the communities to respond to their needs. They are designed to enhance community participation, solidarity and self-management and encourage initiatives to be designed, implemented, and owned by communities.

CLIs and YLIs typically aim to tackle various thematic areas, including but not limited to protection, community mobilization, self-reliance, education, health, and individuals with specific needs. UNHCR, in collaboration with its partners, mobilizes and assists communities in designing and spearheading their own initiatives, and supports these self-managed community groups by supplying the necessary materials and tools for their implementation.

CLIs and YLIs are both the outcomes of a tailored mobilization process designed especially for diverse population groups and communities. The initiatives encourage community members to come together, discuss their needs, set their priorities, and subsequently design and implement projects that address these priorities. Special emphasis is placed on youth groups, who receive specialized training on managing initiatives before they enter the proposal design phase. This approach ensures that the initiatives are not only responsive to the community's needs but also cultivate a sense of ownership and engagement among the participants.

Implementation

At the beginning of each year, UNHCR partners conduct active information dissemination to introduce the community-led initiatives programme to the communities and identify additional initiatives. Several channels were used such as Outreach Volunteers (ORVs), Information desks at Community Centres, NGOs, and voluntary groups to mobilize and motivate the communities to design and lead their own initiatives. Several initiatives were identified to address issues of various thematic areas including protection, community mobilization, self-reliance, education, and supporting persons with specific needs.

By the end of December 2023, **775** CLIs and YLIs in **seven** governorates (including Damascus and its suburbs, Deir-ez-Zor, Qamishli, Aleppo, Sweida and Tartous) were successfully implemented. The initiatives benefited **2,390,396** individuals (**1,072,626** males and **1,317,770** females) and were led by **6,856** self-managed group members¹ from the community (**4,400** males and **2,456** females). The implementation of CLIs and YLIs was achieved in coordination with **13** local partners².

The initiatives were designed and led by **6,856** community members, with the aim to identify and address community concerns to achieve various objectives such as social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, life skills development, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, poverty reduction, social protection, social inclusion and diversity, and gender mainstreaming.

¹ A self-managed group is a group from within the community that designs, implements, and manages a community-led initiative.

²Partners included: Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), Childcare, Social Care Society, Monastery of St. James the Mutilated (MSJM), Namaa, Al-Ihsan, Taalouf, St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (EPDC), Al-Yamama, and Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East (GOPA).

The initiatives are categorized under the following themes:

- **Community engagement and mobilization** refers to the process where leading community groups take the initiative to rally more members of the community. Their goal is to carry out initiatives that have been designed by the community itself, focusing on addressing the most urgent needs. 181 Community Mobilization CLIs majorly in Aleppo, Damascus, and Sweida led by 539 Self-managed group members were implemented in 2023, benefiting 597,599 persons. These CLIs included providing safe spaces for children, supporting students with remedial classes, improving public services facilities, empowering community members, equipping locations for persons with special needs, recycling, planting forests and public gardens, and creating recreational activities for children and elderly persons.
- **Awareness-raising and training:** The CLIs falling under this category are mainly designed and implemented by community members who have the needed skills and knowledge to carry out training and awareness-raising on specific areas they have proposed based on assessed needs. 59 Awareness-raising and training CLIs led by 433 self-managed group members were implemented in 2023 benefiting 83,100 persons. These include women and girls' awareness on reproductive and sexual health, and gender-based violence issues in Wa'er, Homs, and training on organizing interactive theatre activities to address topics related to the protection and integration of people with disabilities, women's rights awareness raising integrated with sports activities as well as providing nursing and hairdressing courses in As-Salamiyeh, Hama.
- **Production and distribution campaigns:** Campaigns this year included manufacturing and distributing women's shoes and children's clothes to the families of refugee returnees. These activities were initiated by community members with zero cost to UNHCR. A good example of this is the "Clothing Repair" initiative in Al HoL Camp, Al Hasakeh.
- **Self-reliance:** Two CLIs were led by persons with disabilities to target their specific vulnerable groups and improve the well-being of other people with disabilities in their areas. In cooperation with the Association for People with Disabilities in Qamishli, 100 beneficiaries (63% females) were able to benefit from equipping a centre for training and empowering people with disabilities in the village of Qana. Another CLI in Latakia was designed to train 40 deaf and mute females on manicure and pedicure techniques. An additional 18,511 (51% female) persons with disabilities were able to benefit from other CLI/YLIs designed and implemented in Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Rural Damascus.
- **Small-scale rehabilitation:** Rehabilitation of an educational room for women and adolescents who had not previously received an education, as well as for students, in Tawarij Elghaanah in Qamishli, which was equipped with a blackboard, chairs, paint, and heating in winter. Another example is the rehabilitation of facilities at the 17th Jasim School in Sweida. The CLI focused on the rehabilitation of the toilets and sinks in the elementary school.

Examples of Community-Led Initiatives:

“Your comfort is Our Responsibility”, Deir-ez-Zor.

This initiative was proposed by the parents of visually impaired children who attend the Institute for the Blind in Deir-ez-Zor. One of the primary objectives of this CLI was to foster relationships and cooperation between the parents and the management of the Institute. Activities carried out through this initiative included painting of hallways, cleaning campaign, distribution of fans across halls as well as lighting and audio devices.



Activities carried out through “Your comfort is Our Responsibility” initiative at the Institute for the Blind in Deir-ez-Zor. © SSSD

“We grew up and became”, Rural Latakia.

The current crisis in Syria coupled with the February earthquakes heavily affected all populations, particularly the elderly. In efforts to support this population, UNHCR and partner GOPA rehabilitated a room in the community cultural centre in Al Haffah, Rural Latakia. The culture centre regularly organizes recreational activities for around 500 elderly persons. Skilful elderly persons also contributed to providing learning opportunities to adolescents and youth at the centre.



The rehabilitated room in the community cultural centre in Al Haffah, Rural Latakia. ©GOPA

“Finally, we have a safe place where we can enjoy our time and have company like we used to before earthquakes”, said Noaman, an elderly man from the local community who benefitted from the initiative.