UN launches Overview of Global Humanitarian Response for 2014

On 16 December, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, launched, in Geneva, the Overview of Global Humanitarian Response for 2014. The global response aims to reach at least 52 million people with essential life-saving assistance in 17 affected countries. More than 500 aid organizations, mostly national and international NGOs, have contributed to the plans that make up the response, which total US$12.9 billion. This is the largest appeal that has ever been requested at the start of the year, with $6.5 billion of this alone going to support humanitarian efforts in Syria and neighbouring countries. The Syria response is the largest-ever appeal for a single crisis.

Strategic Response Plans in the Middle East and North Africa Region

In the Middle East and North Africa region, there are four Strategic Response Plans (SRPs), which cover Afghanistan, occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Syria and Yemen. The plans are part of the consolidated appeals process, which brings aid organizations together to jointly plan, coordinate, implement and monitor their responses to emergencies.
As the conflict in Syria enters its fourth year, the humanitarian crisis in Syria and in neighbouring countries has continued to deepen. An increasing number of internally displaced people and refugees have generated greater needs across all sectors and are straining the capacities of neighbouring countries. 16 million people in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are expected to require humanitarian assistance in 2014. To meet these needs, the Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6) will require US$6.5 billion combined, with US$2.3 billion for activities inside Syria and US$4.2 billion to support refugees in neighbouring countries.

The funds for the SHARP will be used to support 9.3 million people in need inside Syria, including 6.12 million IDPs and the RRP6 will seek to support 4.1 million refugees and persons of concerns.

Yemen: more than half the population will need humanitarian aid in 2014

In Yemen, the collapse of basic services in 2011-2012, endemic food insecurity, destroyed livelihoods, along with displacement have combined to create a protracted crisis.
Increasing conflict has led to a rise in civilian deaths and injuries, with the number of people treated for weapon wounds rising by 60% in 2013 and deaths and injuries amongst women and children rising by 38%.

25,000 returnees in need of assistance and 240,000 refugees, mostly from Somalia. Overall, 14.7 million people are in need of assistance, which is more than half the population.

The Yemen humanitarian strategy, which covers the period 2014-2015, priorities life-saving interventions for the most vulnerable groups, with a second strand designed to promote the transition to recovery. During 2014, the SRP requires US$591 million and aims to provide assistance to 7.6 million people.

Afghanistan: humanitarian situation is likely to deteriorate in 2014

Afghanistan is undergoing a security, political and economic transition impacting the humanitarian situation in negative ways. Increasing conflict has led to a rise in civilian deaths and injuries, with the number of people treated for weapon wounds rising by 60% in 2013 and deaths and injuries amongst women and children rising by 38%.

It is anticipated that there will be a steady deterioration in the humanitarian situation in 2014 with 9 million people in need of assistance. Violence and attacks against humanitarian workers will negatively impact the scope for safe implementation of humanitarian programmes; however, aid organizations are committed to continue operating and will focus on the most acute needs. The SRP requires US$406 million and will aim to provide assistance to 5 million people.

Occupied Palestinian Territory: continuing protection crisis in 2014

The lack of progress in the peace process, the compound effect of policies linked to the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, recurrent hostilities and internal
Palestinians in oPt continue to face serious protection threats to life, liberty, and security, destruction or damage to homes and other property and forced displacement.

Palestinian political divisions continue to result in humanitarian needs and fuel a protracted protection crisis. Palestinians in oPt continue to face serious protection threats to life, liberty, and security, destruction or damage to homes and other property, forced displacement, restrictions on freedom of movement and access to livelihoods and a lack of accountability and effective remedy.

In 2014, about half the population in the oPt is likely to be affected with the most fundamental humanitarian needs around access to basic services, rising food insecurity, threats to physical protection and forced displacement. The SRP requires US$390 million to provide assistance to 1.9 million people in need.

**Humanitarian funding in 2013**

Global humanitarian funding in 2013 is reported at US$13.6 billion, which is higher than any year except 2010. Funding for consolidated and flash appeals reached an unprecedented US$8 billion; however, funding with respect to requirements, as expressed in coordinated plans and appeals, is only 60 percent. Thus, whilst the level of resources has increased, they have not kept pace with the increasing level of need, which was been severely affected by the extra-ordinary requirements of the Syria crisis. For the Middle East and North Africa region, the Afghanistan appeal was funded at 75 percent, oPt by 66 percent, Syria by 70 percent and Yemen by 52 percent.

**Humanitarian funding and gaps (percentage) in 2013**

![Diagram showing humanitarian funding and gaps in 2013 for Afghanistan, Palestine, Yemen, Syria Sharp, and Syria RRP.](http://www.unocha.org/romena)
It is estimated that during the past 30 years the region was affected by more than 330 disasters, resulting in more than 160,000 deaths and affecting approximately 60 million people.

Several initiatives on the ground have gathered pace and there is an increasing recognition that disaster risk reduction must be a foundation for successful sustainable development.

Advancing Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab region: key facts and challenges ahead

Like in many regions, disasters are a recurrent reality in the Middle East and North Africa region. Different parts of the region are regularly exposed to storms, floods, earthquakes, wild fires and landslides. Drought and water scarcity are also major challenges for the region, both climatic threats that are expected to be exacerbated by the impact of climate change. It is estimated that during the past 30 years the region was affected by more than 330 disasters, resulting in more than 160,000 deaths and affecting approximately 60 million people.

There has been significant advance in reducing disaster risk in the region since the adoption, in 2005, of the International Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015. Several initiatives on the ground have gathered pace and there is an increasing recognition that disaster risk reduction must be a foundation for successful sustainable development and that disaster risk reduction is an investment, instead of a cost. As evidence of this commitment to reduce disaster impacts in the region, the League of Arab states adopted in 2012 the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 and it is committed to its implementation.

There has been also a steady progress in the consolidation of historical disaster loss data, critical to establish a baseline for developing effective policies. Currently 10 out of the 22 Arab countries have already established or are in the process of establishing national disaster loss databases, so that future decisions to reduce risk can be better.
The current political situation and tight budgeting have prevented the region from accelerating progress on disaster risk reduction.

Climate change is also altering the face of disaster risk and what used to be exceptional weather events in an arid region like the Middle East have started to become recurrent.

In Bahrain, all schools and hospitals have undertaken multi-hazard risk assessments. Algeria and Morocco have strengthened gender perspectives in disaster risk reduction with women forming an integral part of Civil Protection personnel. Meanwhile, the State of Palestine has been at the forefront of regional progress to pass legislation and policy that attempts to integrate disaster risk considerations into sector strategies.

Despite significant efforts and progress being made regionally in reducing risk of disasters, challenges still remain. The current political situation and tight budgeting have prevented the region from accelerating progress on disaster risk reduction. Other factors such as rising urban populations, weak governance, poor urban planning, inappropriate construction quality and the decline of ecosystems have also aggravated the risks of disasters.

Urban risk is also a major problem in the region and countries have struggled to address the rapid growth of cities over the past years. Currently, over 55% of the total Arab population—estimated in more than 357 million people—lives in large cities and small towns. In some Arab countries the percentage of people living in urban areas is as high as 80% of the total population. This rapid urbanization has pushed people to settle in potential danger zones such as on unstable hills, flood-prone lowlands or coastal territories.

Climate change is also altering the face of disaster risk and what used to be exceptional weather events in an arid region like the Middle East have started to become recurrent. Since August this year, Sudan has suffered the worst floods for the last 25 years; Somalia was hit by a tropical storm and heavy rains disrupted Saudi Arabia. Several states from the Middle East, like Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Syria, were hit by the worst snow storm in decades in December 2013, causing evacuations, blackouts, damage to thousands of homes, road closures, and livestock losses.

To address such challenges, constant coordination meetings have been taking place twice a year where UN and other International Organizations discuss, analyze and propose plans for proper solutions and strategies to handle such challenges. Moreover, an Arab multi-stakeholder Platform will convene in June 2014 to review progress on disaster risk reduction in the region at the Egyptian city of Sharm El Sheikh. This gathering aims to shape Arab priorities for disaster risk reduction beyond 2015.
In brief: Inter-Agency Emergency Preparedness and Response Network for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA Group)

The “Inter-Agency Coordination Network on Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Middle East and North Africa” (MENA Group) held its fifteenth bi-annual meeting in Cairo on 4-5 December 2013. The meeting aims to strengthen inter-agency collaboration on emergency preparedness and response and ensure coherence in terms of support provided by different International Organizations to countries in the region.

During the workshop, the participants reviewed the humanitarian situations in Yemen and Iraq, as well as the emerging humanitarian trends in the region. For Yemen, the humanitarian impact of continuing conflict was discussed and there was concern with regards to the funding environment and the ability to respond to the increasing level of needs. For Iraq, there was a focus on continuing civil unrest and its impact on civilian protection and forced displacement. Furthermore, organizations highlighted the need to advocate for maintaining the borders open for Syrian refugees and to improve humanitarian access to urban refugees. Participants also discussed the emerging humanitarian trends in the oPt, Sinai, Syria, and Libya as well as some thematic issues in the region, including food insecurity indicators and methodologies for assessing need.

A plenary discussion was held on the outcomes of the Minimum Preparedness Package database, an OCHA tool that assesses preparedness levels in each country. The discussion tackled the preparedness gaps in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, oPt, and Yemen. Key issues include improving contingency planning, carrying out simulations to test preparedness levels, increasing support to national authorities on disaster management mechanisms and effective information management.

A brief analysis on resilience was discussed with an emphasis on how it helps draw the humanitarian and development agendas closer while strengthening the focus on end users. An agency based approach was presented to demonstrate how resilience can be applied in practice.

UN collaboration with the League of Arab States (LAS) was discussed with all agencies emphasizing the importance of coordinating all disaster preparedness activities. A workshop will take place on 29-30 January 2014, in which LAS will discuss a proposal to develop a humanitarian network among Arab States.

In terms of agreed outcomes, the MENA Group will:

- intensify efforts to increase resource mobilization in support of Yemen and Iraq.
• monitor developments in Gaza and the effects of border restrictions on the humanitarian situation with a view to increase advocacy.

• develop a needs-driven matrix that identifies and addresses preparedness gaps and prioritizes countries in the region on the basis of the Minimum Preparedness Package database, recommendations from recent simulation exercises and contributions from members of the group.

• coordinate engagement with LAS through a comprehensive mapping exercise.

The MENA Group is a coordination network that was initiated in 2006. The membership of the network has gradually expanded to include more than 20 UN agencies, INGOs, as well as few governmental and inter-governmental technical cooperation agencies. This latest meeting was hosted by WFP with the participation of thirty one representatives from 11 UN agencies, seven regional INGOs, ECHO and ICRC.