

HIGHLIGHTS

- Electricity cuts, fuel shortages and growing food insecurity exacerbate humanitarian needs.
- Up to 360,000 Palestine refugees require aid.
- Lack of funding affects provision of food assistance.
- Launch of revised humanitarian response plan on 19 December.
- Refugee population reaches more than 507,000 people.

FIGURES

Population	22 m
Governorates	14
Affected population	2.5 million
Number of IDPs	1.2 m
Number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries and North Africa	507,331

FUNDING (US\$)

348 million

requested by UN for activities inside Syria

51% funded**488 million**

requested under the Regional Refugee Response Plan

51% funded

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Humanitarian situation in Syria gets worse by the day

Children bearing the brunt of conflict

Every day the civilians of Syria are paying the price as the crisis deepens. Ordinary men, women and children continue to be caught up in the violence and have few alternatives as to where to seek refuge. On 4 December, nine children and a teacher were reportedly killed when a school in Wafideen, north-east of Damascus, was hit by mortar fire. On 26 November, ten children were killed in Deir al Asafir, east of Damascus, as bombs hit a playground. The UN continues to call for respect of international humanitarian law to protect civilians in conflict.

Many children have been unable to attend school for the past 18 months, due to on-going violence and insecurity. School attendance is very low in some governorates. In Aleppo for example, where fighting has been relentless over recent months, an estimated 14 per cent of children are able to go to school, according to the Minister of Education. Children who have been internally displaced are most at risk of dropping out or missing school. School enrolment among children in collective shelters varies and many children are reported to have dropped out due to insecurity and complications related to displacement.

In a recent report, Human Rights Watch highlighted that opposition groups are using children for combat and other military purposes. Children as young as 14 years of age have served in at least three opposition brigades, transporting arms and acting as lookouts, according to Human Rights Watch. Children as young as 16 years of age have carried arms and taken combat roles against the Syrian Armed Forces, the report states.

Electricity cuts and fuel crisis increasingly affecting people

The lives of Syrians across the country are increasingly affected by electricity cuts and lack of fuel supplies. In the past two weeks, electricity cuts have become more frequent in the capital Damascus. Such electricity blackouts impact the operations of health facilities and bakeries and negatively affect people's access to cooking and heating. A nation-wide black-out affected mobile phone networks, landline and internet access for two full days.

A fuel crisis has taken hold in Syria, caused by central rationing and price hikes. Official fuel prices have more than doubled in Damascus and quadrupled in Hassakeh. People are finding it increasingly difficult to access fuel and long queues are reported at gas stations. Many poor and displaced families have limited access to heating and cooking gas at a time when needs are rising due to the cold of winter. Delivery of humanitarian assistance has also been affected, as fuel shortages have caused delays to aid convoys.

Limited supplies of chlorine gas and sodium chloride affect access to safe water

Access to safe drinking water and appropriate sanitation in affected areas has been interrupted, leading to an increased risk of waterborne diseases, according to WHO. Shortages of chlorine gas and sodium chloride in some governorates have led to

restrictions on the delivery of potable water, especially to rural areas. Due to such shortages, insufficient quantities of water are being treated. WHO reports that there is only one supplier for these essential chemicals left in the country and prices of supplies are reported to have risen five-fold.

WFP forced to cut rations for lack of funds amid deteriorating food security

WFP is warning that food insecurity is on the rise due to bread shortages and higher food prices in many parts of the country. Bread shortages are becoming more common with long queues in front of bakeries, a shortage of fuel affecting output, damage to bakeries, and increased demand from fresh waves of internally displaced people. Most basic food items are still available in the market, but at higher prices. In areas of fighting, shortages of some food commodities have been observed while prices have almost doubled. In these areas, access to the market is often curtailed. In Aleppo, the majority of the population is now dependent on sourcing bread from bakeries where prices are up to 40-50 per cent higher as compared to prices in other governorates.

Internal displacement remains a constant feature of the current conflict. UNDP has reported a growing number of new IDP families in need of assistance in Dera'a, Hassakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Rural Damascus and Suweida. WFP staff monitoring food distribution in different parts of the country report that food consumption is low among some displaced families staying in schools and public buildings due to lack of adequate cooking facilities. Displaced families living in rented accommodation who receive WFP food assistance report adequate food consumption but are running out of resources, having lost jobs and exhausted their life savings.

The WFP monthly food baskets contain mixed commodities, including rice, bulgur, vegetable oil, sugar, dried and canned pulses, pasta and salt. However, due to funding challenges, WFP has been forced to reduce the size of its food rations.

Visit to Homs uncovers humanitarian needs among IDPs

Conditions in collective shelters continue to be dire. Following a recent visit to Homs, UNHCR and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) estimate that about 250,000 internally displaced people urgently require winter items and access to basic health care. Many of the displaced people are living in communal shelters without proper heating. In an effort to keep the cold out, people cover missing windows and line porous walls with plastic sheeting provided by UNHCR. The largest communal shelter in Homs is currently housing more than 2,300 people.

Similar to other parts of Syria, access to basic services is limited. An estimated 60 per cent of all doctors in Homs have left the city. Medicine and medical equipment are in short supply. Only half of the city's hospitals are currently functioning with some of those out of service hosting IDPs.

Syrians flee as a result of violence, threats

The flow of refugees to neighbouring countries continues unabated. More than 507,000 refugees have so far registered or been assisted, awaiting registration. Refugees cite violence, threats against their families and lack of basic services as the key reasons why they have fled the country. Some of those who cross from Syria have injuries and require immediate treatment. Many women and children are visibly traumatized as they arrive into neighbouring countries. As some have experienced gender-based violence, their situation is of particular concern. In a recent field report, Refugees International highlights the specific protection needs of women and girls and calls for enhanced services in camps and communities.

IDPs require longer term shelter solutions

IDPs who have had their homes destroyed have nowhere to go

Shelter visits by UNHCR continue to reveal the very challenging conditions endured by IDPs. Many IDPs staying in collective shelters in Rural Damascus report that they are unable to return to their areas of residence as their houses have been completely

destroyed. For these IDPs, as with many others who are staying in different areas of Syria, longer term shelter solutions are required.

The Ministry of Local Administration has recently identified collective shelters that require rehabilitation works. Of 520 potential sites, 40 have been selected for immediate rehabilitation although works have yet to commence. Such rehabilitation is expected to benefit 20,000 people this year.

Palestine refugees increasingly affected

UNRWA estimates that up to 360,000 Palestine refugees require assistance

Syria hosts more than 500,000 Palestine refugees, the majority of whom live in conflict-affected areas, for example Yarmouk, south of Damascus city centre. According to UNRWA, some 360,000 refugees are now affected by the crisis and require urgent assistance as they are no longer able to meet basic needs. More than 10,000 Palestine refugees have crossed into Lebanon, while another 2,000 Palestine refugees have fled to Jordan.

The humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees are a reflection of on-going displacement, exposure to violence and limited access to services due to insecurity. Almost 60,000 families, or 300,000 people, have so far requested assistance from UNRWA. Agency-run health centres and schools report occasional closures due to insecurity. Its installations have also been damaged as a result of the fighting. Since 1 November, at least 84 Palestine refugees have been killed, according to UNRWA.

On 4 December, during a visit to Damascus, UNRWA's Commissioner-General highlighted that more must be done to ensure the protection of Palestine refugees and other civilians from the effects of the conflict. To meet growing needs, UNRWA is requesting US\$75 million under the revised humanitarian appeal for Syria.

Violence hampers access, aid delivery

Fighting in and around Damascus impedes access

Access to warehouses and other locations where aid supplies are stored has been limited over recent days due to on-going violence in Damascus city and fighting near Damascus Airport, close to one of SARC's warehouses. In Rural Damascus, clashes in An-Nabk severely damaged a rub hall and distribution centre used by UNHCR and SARC. WFP also reports that insecurity along the road to and from Damascus has placed additional strains on the dispatch of food from WFP warehouses to some parts of the country, in particular to the north. UNRWA, which has some 3,700 staff in Syria, reports that many of its workers experience difficulties and danger when travelling to work.

On 29 November, a convoy of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) came under fire on the outskirts of Damascus, wounding four people. UNDOF troops continue their mission uninterrupted. Since the start of the conflict, eight UN staff and 18 SARC volunteers have been killed in the violence. Most of those killed were caught up in crossfire. Seven SARC volunteers were killed whilst on duty.

Response continues despite temporary re-location of non-essential staff

UN agencies have temporarily re-located non-essential international staff due to the deteriorating security situation in Damascus. Three-quarters of international UN staff remain in the country and there are about 1,000 national staff employed by the UN in Syria. Aid delivery continues through the UN, SARC, international NGOs and local NGOs.

Sustained humanitarian response efforts despite insecurity

More than 710,000 children vaccinated against polio, about 580,000 children vaccinated against measles in joint campaign

UNICEF, WHO, the Ministry of Health, SARC and a number of NGO partners work to maximize coverage in an on-going vaccination campaign. Since the start of the nationwide measles and oral polio vaccination campaign on 26 November, more than 710,000 children under the age of 5 have been vaccinated against polio and over 581,000 children aged 1 to 5 have been vaccinated against measles. The campaign targets a total of 1.4 million children.

Vaccinations are taking place at some 1,200 primary health centres, with WHO reporting that a total of about 4,400 health workers and volunteers are taking part in the campaign across 13 governorates (the campaign does not include Deir Ez-Zor, with the exception of one private hospital, as the majority of the governorate's residents have relocated to other areas). More than 100 mobile vaccination teams are providing support. Despite insecurity and limitations on access, staff have delivered supplies to conflict-affected areas in an effort to ensure the campaign's success.

Food distribution continues amid WFP funding challenges, access constraints

Dispatches of food assistance under the November distribution cycle are on-going. WFP has dispatched rations covering nearly 1,360,000 people so far, reaching people across all governorates. Over the last week, WFP dispatched food to assist more than 42,000 people in Homs, Tartous and Lattakia governorates. WFP continues distributions into December to meet the target of 1.5 million beneficiaries per month.

ICRC continues to deliver food assistance to people in need. During the month of November, ICRC food parcels covered a total of about 120,000 people.

UN agencies deliver NFIs to 39,000 people in Homs, Hassakeh and Ar-Raqqa

In the last two weeks, UNHCR provided essential items to more than 35,000 people. The agency was able to deliver urgent winter assistance to Homs, including 6,000 quilts, 12,000 sleeping mats, 13,000 winter blankets, 1,000 mattresses and 6,000 boxes of sanitary supplies. In Hassakeh, UNHCR visited 32 shelters and provided NFIs to people who had not previously received such assistance. Focusing on IDPs in Ar-Raqqa, UNDP provided winter NFIs to about 4,000 people hosted in communal shelters.

UNRWA cash and food assistance helps 106,000 Palestine refugees

UNRWA continues to prioritize food and cash assistance to the affected Palestine refugee population. Over the past two weeks, UNRWA distributed cash assistance to about 78,000 Palestine refugees in Damascus. Some 28,000 Palestine refugees (11,000 refugees in Dera'a camp and 17,000 refugees in Homs) received food assistance.

To date, an estimated total of 180,000 Palestine refugees have received UNRWA cash assistance in Aleppo, Dera'a, Hama, Homs, Lattakia and Damascus. UNRWA has also distributed a total of 21,600 food parcels, covering around 108,000 Palestine refugees in Aleppo, Dera'a and Homs.

UNRWA operates 23 primary health centres offering services throughout the country, as well as 118 schools.

UNFPA assistance to about 30,000 women in conflict-affected areas

UNFPA supported reproductive health services, including emergency obstetric care and psycho-social support for around 24,000 women in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Homs. Some 2,200 women received reproductive health vouchers, enabling them to access free maternal health services.

In Ras Al Ain, located on the Syrian-Turkish border, UNFPA supplied SARC clinics with reproductive health supplies and medicines to cover up to 1,000 women per day for three months. UNFPA also provided 2,000 hygiene kits. Assistance to Ras Al Ain was an immediate response to reports that highlighted the plight of pregnant women in the area, which has seen an upsurge in violence over recent weeks. Many women live in squalid conditions in an IDP camp along the border.

UNICEF and partners provide WASH support to IDPs in 38 collective shelters

With UNICEF support, Premiere Urgence continues to deliver daily water trucking to 13 collective shelters hosting IDPs in Damascus, covering about 5,000 people. UNICEF in partnership with Secours Islamique France is also reaching almost 7,000 displaced people in 25 collective shelters in Damascus and Rural Damascus. Interventions include provision of drinking water, light rehabilitation and upgrades to sanitation facilities.

UNICEF-supported school clubs offer respite to more than 23,000 children

School clubs supported by UNICEF and partners provided basic education and psycho-social support for 23,340 children in 106 locations in Dera'a, Latakia, Rural Damascus and Tartous governorates. The Danish Refugee Council continues to hold remedial classes in 11 schools. Some 5,000 school bags have been dispatched by UNICEF for distribution among children in Tartous.

80 national NGOs authorized to enter bilateral agreements with UN agencies

The Government of Syria has authorized 80 national NGOs to enter into direct bilateral agreements with UN agencies. NGOs authorized will be provided with a "laissez-passer" to facilitate movement through checkpoints. This will enable a diversification of humanitarian implementing partners and increases access to areas where aid delivery has been limited to date.

More than half a million refugees registered or assisted in neighbouring countries

More than 90,000 refugees registered or assisted in November

The number of Syrian refugees registered or assisted as they await registration has now passed the half million mark. In November alone, more than 90,000 refugees were registered or assisted in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and North Africa. Host country authorities estimate that there are tens of thousands of refugees who have not come forward to register.

Following his visits to refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey last week, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the generosity of the host countries and appealed to all sides to stop the violence. He also urged the international community to stand united and act decisively to end the Syria crisis.

Country	Refugees registered and/ or assisted	Estimated number of refugees by the end of 2012
Iraq	64,449	60,000
Jordan	142,664	250,000
Lebanon	152,159	120,000
Turkey	136,319*	280,000
North Africa	11,740	N/A
Total	507,331	710,000

Source: UNHCR as of 9 December. Refugee figures are based on estimates and may thus vary.

* Figure provided by the Government of Turkey.

Save the Children report highlights urgent need for winter supplies

About one-half of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries are children. These children have already experienced the shock and trauma of having to leave their homes, school environment, friends and family. Many have witnessed terrible violence or suffered directly from attacks. As winter sets in, children are particularly vulnerable to disease associated with the cold, and require targeted protection measures. For children staying in camps and within communities, the distribution of supplies to help refugees through the winter is becoming more urgent by the day.

Refugee numbers in Iraq exceed 2012 estimate

More than 64,000 Syrian refugees are now registered or assisted in Iraq. More than 40,000 refugees are currently in Dohuk governorate in the Kurdish region of Iraq, where 24,000 people are provided shelter in Domiz camp. Another 8,400 refugees are staying in Al Qa'im camp in Anbar governorate.

In November, WFP food assistance reached more than 10,000 Syrian refugees in Domiz camp.

More than 140,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan registered or assisted

The refugee population in Jordan continues to grow at a steady pace. While some 140,000 Syrians have been registered or assisted, the Government of Jordan estimates that the country is currently hosting up to 250,000 Syrians. More than two-thirds of Syrian refugees live in towns and cities, where response activities have so far targeted those considered most vulnerable. Assistance to urban refugees includes cash for rent, non-food items and support from mobile health clinics.

Preparations for winter continue at Za'atari camp in northern Jordan. About 32,000 refugees are currently in the camp. The temperature now drops to nearly freezing point at night. To protect refugees from the cold, tents are being reinforced and insulated. Gas heaters are also being attached to tents in specialized "porches". Distribution of 30,000 thermal blankets and winter clothing is on-going.

WFP food vouchers targeted 48,000 beneficiaries in Jordan in November. In Za'atari camp, food assistance in the second cycle of November covered almost 28,000 refugees.

US\$179 million plan in support of refugees launched by Lebanese Government

More than 110,000 Syrians have registered as refugees in Lebanon with nearly 42,000 people awaiting registration with UNHCR.

The Government of Lebanon recently launched a plan in support of the Syrian refugee community in the country. The plan seeks US\$179 million in funding to provide assistance through the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the High Relief Committee. Support envisaged under the plan includes health, education and social services, as well as the provision of basic items.

In November and the first week of December, UNHCR, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), World Vision, WFP, UNFPA and the Makhzoumi Foundation distributed fuel coupons along with a variety of NFIs, including mattresses, blankets, hygiene items, food vouchers and food kits to approximately 100,000 registered refugees in Beirut, the north, east and south Lebanon.

Water, sanitation and hygiene support continues to focus on refugee families in the Beka'a Valley and the north, with almost 12,000 people in vulnerable areas assisted through access to potable water. UNICEF supported almost 3,000 Syrian children with back-to-school kits and has distributed about 23,000 stationary kits in November.

Turkey camp population of 136,000 refugees is beyond current capacity

The number of Syrian refugees hosted in camps has surpassed capacity, according to the Turkish authorities. The Government of Turkey reports that more than 136,000 refugees have registered and are living in 14 camps which were originally planned to accommodate 126,000 people. Daily arrivals continue to be high, with more than 3,200

refugees crossing into Turkey during the first three days of December. Since April 2011, an estimated 258,000 Syrians have arrived in Turkey.

To accommodate the growing number of refugees, the Turkish authorities are setting up new camps. A camp in Gaziantep province will have the capacity to host 5,000 people while another camp in Şanlıurfa will provide shelter for up to 10,000 people. Other camps are planned in Adana, Kilis, Malatya and Osmaniye-Düziçi.

WFP in co-operation with the Turkish Red Crescent Society provided e-card food assistance to more than 21,700 Syrians, including 13,700 refugees in Kilis camp and about 8,000 refugees in Hatay.

Launch of revised Syria Humanitarian Response Plan on 19 December

UN to launch revised response plans to reflect growing needs

The revised Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan will be launched in Geneva on 19 December. The revised plan estimates that 4 million Syrians are in need of assistance, including 2 million internally displaced people. Projects under the plan will cover ten sectors and provide life-saving humanitarian interventions across all governorates. The Syria response plan will be launched jointly with the revised Regional Refugee Response Plan.

Humanitarian financing fails to keep up with needs

Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan only 51 per cent funded

The Syria humanitarian response remains seriously underfunded. So far, only 51 per cent of the required US\$348 million has been received. The level of funding is impacting the ability of the humanitarian community to respond to existing and growing needs. Due to limited funds, several agencies are unable to provide planned assistance, for example in the food and health sectors. Health projects under the appeal are currently only 30 per cent funded. In the food sector, WFP has been forced to cut the size of its food rations inside Syria as a result of the funding shortage.

Regional Refugee Response Plan has received 51 per cent of needs

The current Regional Refugee Response Plan seeks US\$488 million to assist Syrians in neighbouring countries. To date it has received only US\$248 million, or 51 per cent, of required funds, which is insufficient to provide the necessary support to Syrian refugees. An additional US\$240 million would be required to cover projects until the end of 2012.

Fresh funds enable ERF to accept new project applications

The Emergency Response Fund (ERF) encourages project applications following recent contributions. Total allocations to date amount to more than US\$8 million for 33 projects and nine projects at the value of US\$2.7 million are currently under review. The current balance of the ERF is US\$17 million, making the ERF for Syria the second largest fund of its kind globally. The Fund is expected to amend initial funding policy directions that are part of the country-specific terms of reference in order to allow different ceilings and allocations per country. Agencies and organizations that wish to apply should approach OCHA through the ERF Manager, Ms. Amani Salah, salah1@un.org.

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