

North-west Syria

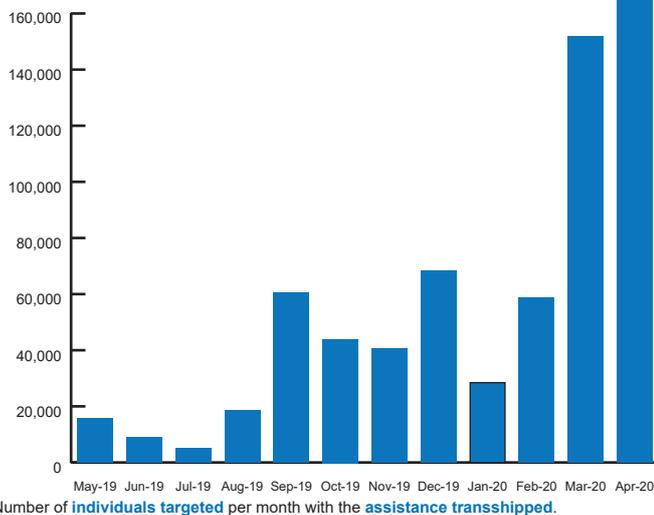
April 2020

In 2020, UNHCR has sent across the border over **453,000** core relief items and shelter materials to assist **406,900 individuals**.

As humanitarian needs continue to be urgent, in April, UNHCR sent 10% more relief items than in March and 65% more than in February.

In 2020, through its partners, UNHCR has provided protection services, such as information dissemination and referrals, to over **41,700 individuals**.

CRI AND EMERGENCY SHELTER ASSISTANCE

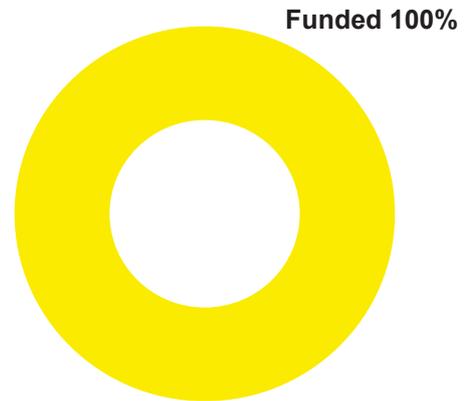


Despite COVID-19 mitigating measures, in April 2020, UNHCR further increased its target compared to the previous month, and by 7.5 times compared to April 2019. To respond to the humanitarian needs of the population, breaking the record achieved the month before, April 2020 was the month with the highest number of items transhipped since the cross-border operation was established in July 2014.

FUNDING LEVEL as of 21 May 2020

USD 45.7 million

requested for the UNHCR cross-border humanitarian response



MAIN OBJECTIVES

1. Support the coordination of the cross-border humanitarian response through the Cluster system
2. Identify protection risks and assistance needs and inform the overall response
3. Provide protection services and emergency assistance with core relief items and shelter material
4. Build capacity of (local) humanitarian organizations
5. Fill critical gaps in the basic needs of IDPs where required and feasible

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Of a total population of 4 million people in north-west Syria, there are 2.7 million IDPs, who are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance. The violence that escalated in December 2019 caused 960,000 people to be newly displaced from Idleb and western Aleppo; around 840,000 of them remain displaced in an area that has limited shelter options. The fighting has caused the destruction of civilian infrastructure, including health facilities, schools, bakeries, and has disrupted the provision of basic services, further deteriorating an already dire situation. Half of the IDPs are children and many are people with specific needs. Protracted IDPs share the same urgent needs as new IDPs.

In January, the UN Security Council Resolution that enables the cross-border humanitarian response was renewed for six months until 10 July 2020.

In March, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. While there are no known cases in north-west Syria, access to health and adequate sanitation in the context of continuous displacement remains limited. Humanitarian actors are active in preparedness and response planning to ensure effective prevention and response to COVID-19 and, at the same time, continue delivering lifesaving humanitarian assistance.

BACKGROUND

Following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2165, UNHCR established its cross-border activities from southern Turkey in July 2014. In 2020, through its own programme, UNHCR has partnerships with nine organizations - IRC, ACTED-REACH, WATAN, Bir Dunya Çocuk Derneği (Children of One World), SHAFAK, NRC, Maram Foundation, SEMA and SRD - to assist displaced people by providing core relief items (CRIs), shelter support, and protection services. In addition, UNHCR is leading the Protection, Shelter/NFI (SNFI) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Clusters. All Clusters closely follow the humanitarian developments in the conflict areas in north-west Syria and contribute to emergency preparedness response plans accordingly.

UNHCR Programme

In 2020, UNHCR and its partners have scaled up their response to provide basic assistance and protection services to IDPs and conflict-affected vulnerable host community members in north-west Syria under the cross-border operation from Gaziantep, Turkey. Moreover, to respond to the COVID-19 situation, the UNHCR cross-border operation has been putting in place mitigation measures and has increased, prioritized and expedited transshipments and distributions of hygiene kits. UNHCR has also been closely monitoring its partners' activities to ensure the continuity of the humanitarian response. Partners have found innovative ways to continue their activities, like a door-to-door approach, holding sessions in small groups and using psychological first aid techniques when meeting. Partners distribute hand sanitizers, masks and gloves to their project and field staff and conduct awareness sessions on prevention and safeguarding.

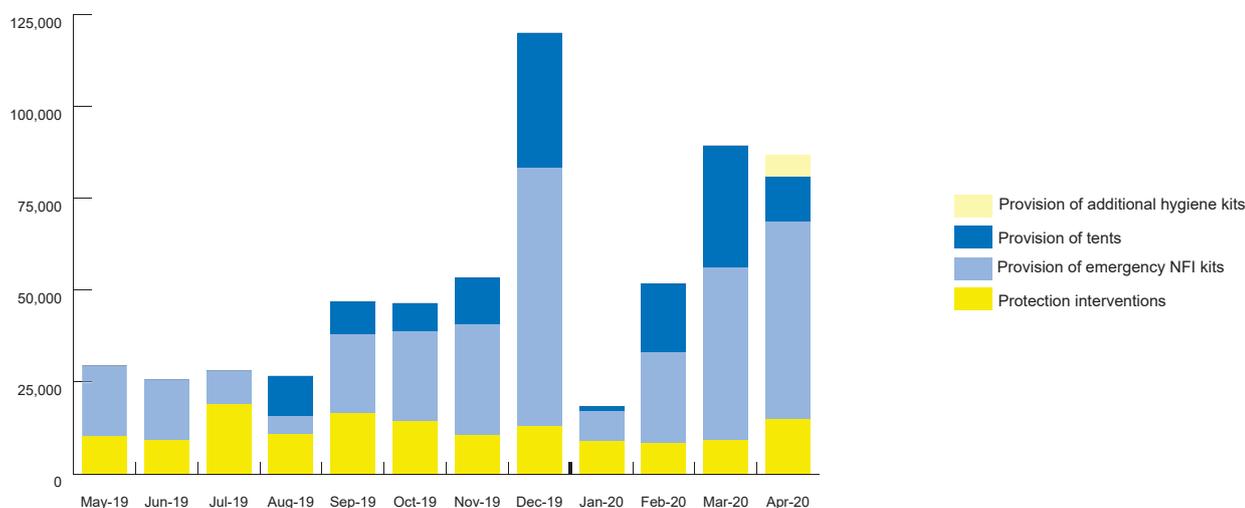
In April, UNHCR's partners distributed a total of **10,743 non-food item (NFI) kits** (8,555 NFI kits in Idleb and 2,188 in Aleppo) and **2,042 tents** (1,786 tents in Idleb and 256 in Aleppo) to assist **65,967 conflict-affected and displaced people**. Moreover, **5,785 people were assisted with 1,157 hygiene kits** in Idleb and Aleppo Governorates. UNHCR's protection partners carried out the distributions door-to-door to prevent gatherings and in compliance with other mitigating measures against COVID-19. During the distributions, outreach teams shared information on the prevention of COVID-19.

During the month of April, despite COVID-19 preventing measures that caused delays in procurement of items, UNHCR organized **10 transshipments** through the Bab Al Hawa and Bab Al Salam border crossings: The distributions of the items transhipped (11,000 NFI kits, 20,000 hygiene kits and 900 tents) will target a total of 167,900 people. From January to April 2020, UNHCR transhipped NFIs and tents to assist 406,900 people in north-west Syria.

UNHCR's protection partners conducted awareness raising and psychosocial support sessions, identified cases and referred them to basic services in Idleb and Aleppo Governorates; such **community-based protection interventions reached 14,183 people** in April. In addition, **861 displaced and vulnerable people received protection services** such as awareness raising on civil status documentation and housing, land and properties, legal counselling and assistance, case management and referrals.

In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, UNHCR partners have reviewed all their activities to align with the recommendations and guidelines issued by the WHO, the clusters and the relevant coordination fora.

IDPS AND HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS REACHED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



The graph shows the number of **individuals who received humanitarian assistance as tents, emergency NFI kits, hygiene kits and who were assisted with protection interventions** per month.

As shown in the graph, in April, in addition to hygiene items regularly provided with NFI kits, UNHCR's partners started distributing additional hygiene kits during protection interventions, as part of the COVID-19 mitigating measures.

As part of the winterization plan, between October and December 2019, UNHCR provided also winter NFI kits.



Distribution of humanitarian assistance in north-west Syria in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak © WATAN



CCCM Cluster

The **Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster**, led by UNHCR, coordinates the efforts of 30 active member organizations providing cross-border assistance in north-west Syria. Activities focus on coordinating and monitoring the Cluster members to cover the multi-sectoral needs in 983 IDP sites that host 1.4 million IDPs (271,000 families) in north-west Syria and, on behalf of the humanitarian community, track IDP movements. In April, 108 new sites were added to the ISIMM and 9 sites were inactivated for reasons such as depopulation of sites and their subsequent closure. It is estimated that 60 per cent of the population in these sites is comprised of children; around 15,000 IDPs hosted in those sites are persons with specific needs and around 52,000 people are elderly.

The total reported IDP population in April 2020 is **2,738,448 IDPs**, whereas the number of IDPs who were reported as having returned to their community of origin is 113,945 IDPs; with Ariha, Ehsem and Bennsh sub-districts recorded as the top three returnee destinations. The Cluster tracked more than 1.8 million individual displacements between January and April 2020, which include second or third displacements, meaning that **some people may have been forced to move multiple times within the same period**. The number of displacement movements during the month was above 110,000, mostly to Dana and Bennsh sub-districts.

Since its establishment in December 2019, the **Land Identification Task Force** has identified 319 expandable camps/lands with an area of over 8 million sqm that targets almost 270,000 IDPs (close to 45,000 households).

In preparation for possible interventions for the COVID-19 outbreak, the CCCM Cluster collected information on 553 IDP sites in north-west Syria, particularly on living conditions and available facilities, especially for sanitation and health. The Cluster primarily aims to enhance coordination and develop a unified approach to deal with the specific risks that an outbreak would pose in reception centres. Relocating IDPs from overcrowded Reception Centres that are running at over their capacity is a main priority; key challenges include identifying and verifying sites, and ensuring that services are available for all IDPs in the new locations.

The CCCM Cluster has developed a **guidance note on COVID-19 for camp and camp-like settings specifically in north-west Syria**, a practical tool to assist CCCM humanitarian workers and field teams in preparing to respond to potential emergencies.



Shelter/NFI Cluster

The **Shelter/Non-Food Items (SNFI) Cluster** is led by UNHCR, coordinating the efforts of 55 active member organizations in the cross-border operation. The Cluster addresses emergency shelter and NFI needs by providing in-kind assistance as well as cash or voucher assistance. It promotes household and community resilience. The Cluster also raises awareness and provides technical guidance on housing, land and property rights relevant for humanitarian shelter activities. The Cluster is co-chaired by CARE.

Cluster members continue to actively respond to the needs of the newly displaced population as well as protracted IDPs in north-west Syria. In particular, a sharp increase in rental fees is forcing many to rent sub-standard and unfinished buildings or share one apartment with other families.

In April, **around 137,000 individuals, both IDPs and host community members, received NFI kits**, which contain kitchen sets, mattresses and blankets, among other items. **Over 110,000 people received shelter assistance**,

such as emergency shelter (family tents or shelter kits) and shelter rehabilitation. Since the beginning of the year, the Cluster reached around 862,000 people with NFI kits and around 538,000 people with shelter assistance.

In coordination with the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, SNFI Cluster members are trying to identify more land to extend the perimeter of existing camps.

The SNFI Cluster is actively coordinating with the Health and WASH Clusters to respond to the needs of the IDP population in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cluster updated its **recommendations for shelter and NFI activities in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak**, available in English and Arabic. As part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the cluster set up triage stations in the existing health facilities in Idleb Governorate. All the triage stations are now operating with family tents used for health purposes. Hygiene measures, in line with recommended WASH practices specific for COVID-19, are promoted during assistance distributions to reduce the risk of transmission.



Protection Cluster

The **Protection Cluster** (co-led by UNHCR and IRC) brings together 69 active members, which include actors of the three Sub-Clusters: Child Protection (led by UNICEF and World Vision), Gender Based Violence (led by UNFPA and Global Communities) and Humanitarian Mine Action (led by UNMAS). The Cluster also convenes the Protection Monitoring Task Force (led by UNHCR and IRC) and a Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Technical Working Group (co-led by UNHCR and NRC) on a regular basis, as well as a Technical Working Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, formed in February 2020 (co-led by UNHCR and HI). The Cluster continues to prioritize the provision of lifesaving emergency response services to newly displaced populations and to expand specialized protection services through expansion to an increased number of communities, including using outreach capacity and mobile teams. In addition, the Cluster continues to inform advocacy and the overall response through protection monitoring, while also supporting capacity building of cluster members to strengthen programming, information collection and advocacy on protection concerns, and do-no-harm efforts.

In April, Cluster members reported to have provided **188,296 interventions to IDPs and affected host community members** in 199 communities in three governorates (Aleppo, Idleb and Ar-Raqqa). Main services provided were: psychological first aid for 570 girls, 738 boys, 1,675 women and 1,647 men; legal awareness raising sessions focusing on housing, land and property and/or civil status documentation for 35 girls, 23 boys, 1,083 women and 1,228 men; integrated/comprehensive case management services for 53 girls, 115 boys, 157 women and 81 men; and referrals to other services for 1,216 girls, 1,289 boys, 1,646 women and 795 men.

The **Protection Monitoring Task Force** conducted in April a total of 841 key informant interviews (491 males, 350 females) in Idleb and Aleppo Governorates, reaching 132 communities within 20 sub-districts.

The Cluster issued its **guidance on protection concerns in relation to the COVID-19 situation**, recommending the protection actors to prioritize lifesaving and critical protection activities while taking appropriate precautions, including changing modalities of activities. The Cluster also issued **COVID-19 related guidance specific to persons with disabilities** and a guidance note on how to integrate protection into Community-Based Isolation Centres according to the four protection mainstreaming principles: participation and empowerment; meaningful access; safety, dignity, and do-no-harm; and accountability.

While activities related to COVID-19 containment, prevention or response are being prioritized, the protection sector will continue to advocate with all relevant key stakeholders to ensure that all identified programme criticality level activities continue if practicable under current local health protocols and directives. The Protection Cluster also launched a survey to assess the impact of the COVID-19 and related restrictions on the continuity of protection activities.

External and Donor Relations

Thanks to UNHCR's donors for supporting the humanitarian response in north-west Syria:

Germany | Japan | United States of America | CERF | International Organization for Migration