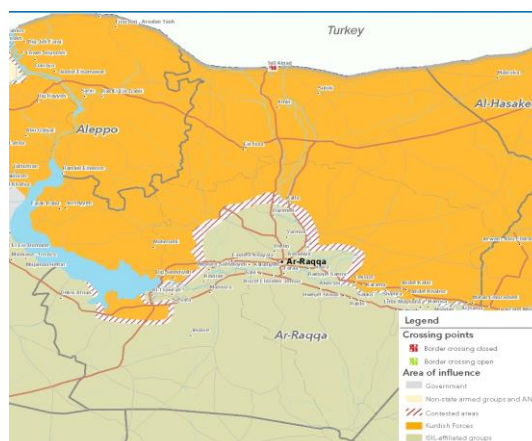




This report is produced by the OCHA Syria Crisis offices in Syria, Turkey and Jordan. It covers the period from 1 to 8 April 2017. The next report will be issued in May.

Highlights

- Over 50,000 people displaced in Ar-Raqqa Governorate since November 2016, of which 20,000 in the month of March only.
- Concerns over security and the integrity of the Tabqa Dam.
- Civilian infrastructure severely affected by fighting, however rehabilitated bridges in Menbij enable civilians to cross Euphrates River.
- Last remaining road out of Ar-Raqqa City to Deir-ez-Zor blocked since 6 March.

**20,652**

individuals displaced from 1 March–1 April 2017

**71,500**

people reached with Ready to Eat Meals during the month

**2,500**

Core relief items distributed so far benefiting over 12,000 IDPs

**150m³**

of potable water being supplied daily to more than 4,200 people



Situation Overview

Ar-Raqqa Governorate

The third phase of the Euphrates Wrath Operation continued throughout the month of March, particularly on the northeast of the Euphrates River, east of Ar-Raqqa city. By 6 March, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) succeeded in cutting the road between Ar-Raqqa city and Deir-ez-Zor Governorate both under ISIL control, closing all land routes in/out of Ar-Raqqa.

By the end of March, hostilities in the governorate were concentrated in and around the Al-Thawrah and Safsafah towns, to the west of Ar-Raqqa city. As of the 1 April, the SDF completely encircled the Al-Thawrah town. Reportedly, hundreds of civilians were able to flee the town prior to its encirclement; however, serious concerns are raised regarding the situation of those left in the town. The nearby Safsafah town also saw displacement of thousands of its civilians after the SDF engaged ISIL in heavy armed clashes in the southern part of the town.

Between 8 and 13 March, a number of villages in Ar-Raqqa's eastern countryside were cut off from access to water, following damages to water infrastructure reportedly by airstrikes. On 21 March airstrikes hit a school located close to Al-Mansoura town in western rural Ar-Raqqa Governorate, which has hosted a number of displaced families from Palmyra and Homs for the last three years. An estimated 25 – 30 internally displaced families were in the school at the time of the incident. Initial reports claimed at least 32 civilians including women and children were killed and scores of others injured. On 22 March, more airstrikes reportedly hit a bakery and the adjacent local market in Al-Hay Al-Thani town of the ISIL-held Tabqa area of Ar-Raqqa Governorate. Initial reports indicated at least 25 civilians were allegedly killed and more than 38 others injured. Since 25 March, airstrikes on the Ar-Raqqa power station resulted in power and water cuts in Ar-Raqqa city.

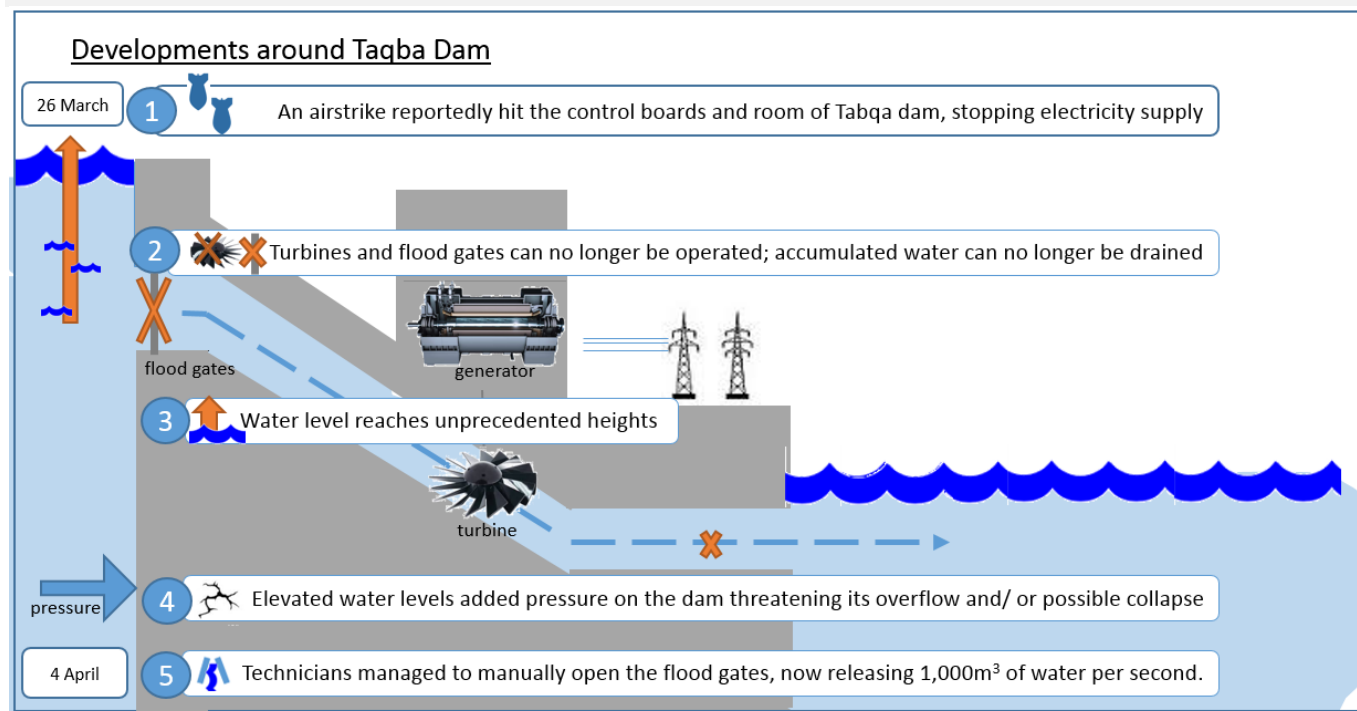
The flow of information from Ar-Raqqa city and surrounding areas remains limited. Unconfirmed reports indicate that ISIL ordered the closure of the National Hospital in Ar-Raqqa city and the subsequent evacuation of patients and equipment. Prices of basic commodities and drinking water reportedly continue to increase. Civilians wanting to leave Ar-Raqqa city are allegedly facing threats from ISIL as well explosive hazards in the vicinity of the city.

Tabqa Dam:

During the reporting period, reports indicated the Tabqa dam's integrity was compromised by ongoing hostilities in its vicinity.

On 26 March, hostilities reportedly damaged the dam's control room. Within hours, news spread among civilians in Ar-Raqqa city that the Tabqa dam was about to collapse causing panic amongst the population and prompting some to leave their homes. On 27 March, an agreement was reached between the SDF and ISIL, to allow repair teams to access the dam and the following day a team of technicians attempted to reach the control rooms, but an airstrike reportedly hit the dam resulting in the death of the dam's acting director, one of the technicians and a Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) member. On 29 March, a repair team consisting of SARC members and previous Tabqa dam employees visited the gate of the irrigation canal north of the dam. Through the use of a generator, the repair team managed to open the floodgate, thus reducing the water level in the dam water reservoir. On the following day, the increase in the water level of the irrigation canal flooded nearby areas, causing 3,000 people to flee to elevated ground, especially from western Sahlabiye and eastern Sahlabiye towns.

The opening of the floodgate of the irrigation canal coupled with actions taken by the Turkish authorities to decrease the level of water flow to Syria, have helped mitigate risks temporarily. Nevertheless, allowing maintenance teams to carry out the necessary repairs in a safe manner will be the only durable solution. On 5 April, the SDF press center stated that two of the dam's floodgates were opened and that water is now passing into the river. Although the news cannot be confirmed independently, this development would mean that the risk of collapse has been mitigated. As of 9 April, water started returning to the governorate after the water level of the Euphrates River increased, following the opening of two floodgates. This enabled the main water station to draw water from the river. However, the dam is still not carrying out its second function (generating electricity). The water station is being powered through a generator due to the lack of the electricity.



Displacement trends

Displacement

Displacement patterns observed during the first and second phases of the Euphrates Wrath continues, with the majority of the affected population opting for temporary and local displacement over fleeing to far areas. The Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM) estimates that 20,652 individuals were displaced from 1 March to 1 April 2017. Of the total, 18,472 people displaced inside the governorate with the rest displacing to communities in Aleppo, Idleb, Hasakeh and Deir Ez-Zor governorates. The predominant pattern of displacement – local and temporary – has led to a massive increase in the prices of tents in the governorate. As such, the price of a tent went from 25,000 SYP prior to the offensive to 400,000 – 500,000 SYP due to the increased demand.

Several large-scale displacement waves have reportedly resulted in ISIL reportedly running patrols on the Euphrates River to prevent further population movement to the south; from Atabaqa city towards the north, or from areas near the northern bank of the Euphrates River.

On 30 March, around 3,000 people (IDPs and host community) in western and eastern Sahlabiyeh towns were displaced to nearby elevated areas, as a result of increased water levels. Another 2,000 people were reportedly displaced from Yamama village. Some 3,000 people from Maskana sub-district in Aleppo's eastern countryside also arrived in Jurneyyeh sub-district in Ar-Raqqa's western countryside, using boats to travel along the Euphrates River.

	Dates	n. of IDPs
Phase I	Nov 16-early Dec 16	17,000
Phase II	Dec 16- Feb 2017	18,000-25,000
Phase III	Feb	3,000-4,000
	March	20,652

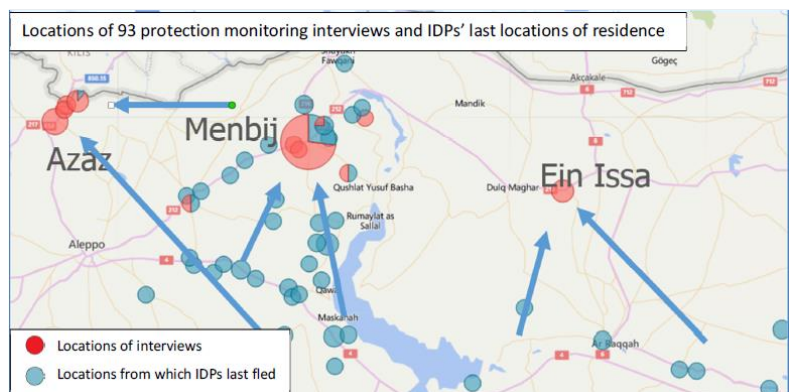
Mabrouka Camp

On 30 March 2017, a UN team carried a follow-up assessment mission to Mabrouka camp in Al-Hasakeh Governorate to assess needs and camp preparations. Since the last assessment on 20 March, the camp population grew from 1,464 to around 3,500 IDPs. The majority of the new arrivals were people on transit, who were stopped at checkpoints and brought into the camp in buses. IDPs have been forced to cover transportation costs from the checkpoints, where they were stopped in Menbij and Ar-Raqqa to Mabrouka camp for security screening. Although screening could take place in the nearer Ain Eissa camp, the Kurdish Self Administration (KSA) is displaying a preference for IDPs to be brought to Mabrouka. The camp management informed the United Nations (UN) of their inability to respond alone to the needs of such a number of IDPs. The IDPs are in urgent need of food, WASH, health and non-food items (NFIs). The camp management also informed that, since the beginning of March, 1,000 people, who met the exit criteria were allowed to leave the camp although many others meeting the exit criteria are being kept at the camp.

Considering current practices and the slow security screening procedures, the population of the camp is expected to increase, in the coming months, beyond the anticipated capacity of 5,000 IDPs. Preparations will need to be made accordingly to increase the capacity of the camp. Response efforts are underway.

During the reporting period, further displacement of civilians into Menbij continued both as a result of developments in Ar-Raqqa and as hostilities intensified in several areas in the eastern countryside of Aleppo.

From 1-19 March, the CCCM Cluster tracked 36,889 displacements (including secondary movements) of IDPs into Azaz, Ain Eissa and Menbij sub-districts. Of these displacements, 33,014 were to Menbij, 2,859 to Azaz and 1,016 to Ain Eissa sub-district. People were primarily displaced from Dayr Hafir, Tadaf, Rasm Haram El-Imam, Al Bab, Al-Khafsa, Maskana and Menbij sub-districts. The main reasons cited by IDPs for their displacement were protection concerns (i.e severe shelling, airstrikes, destruction of their homes, lack of basic needs, fear of being trapped in their villages or being used as human shields by ISIL).



In terms of intentions, those in Ain Eissa did not plan to return and intended to travel onwards, mostly to Menbij. Those in Azaz mostly did not intend to return and intended to travel onwards, mostly to Turkey. Those in Menbij mostly did intend to return to their villages, but those who intended to travel onwards noted Turkey or Jarablus as intended destinations¹.

As a result of growing displacements, the self-rule administration in Menbij reportedly agreed to open a new IDP camp in Qanat Sheikh Tabbash village. As of 9 April, 224 tents were set up, raising the total number of hosted families at the camp to 230. Humanitarian NGOs continue to respond to the needs of the IDPs in the area. One NGO has finalized work on the camp's sewage network and is in the process of installing toilet blocks.

On 28 March, two bridges in Menbij town, previously destroyed in fighting, were rehabilitated, enabling people to travel to and from Menbij town. Reportedly, high prices and difficult living conditions for IDPs arriving recently in Menbij, have resulted in increased begging, particularly among women and children. On 13 March, Al-Khafsa water pumping station received electricity from Tishrine dam again, after being out of service since 15 January.

¹ Syria protection cluster (March 22-28, 2017)

Between 8 and 10 March, several villages west of Menbij were reportedly handed over by SDF to Government of Syria (GoS) forces, as per an earlier agreement.

Ain Eissa Camp:

On 22 March 2017, a UN team carried out a follow-up assessment mission to the Ain Eissa (transit) camp in Tell Abiad sub-district to assess needs and camp preparations. At the time of the visit, 220 families (approximately 1,000 people) were residing in the camp, mostly from Ar-Raqqa city as well as 15 families from Iraq. The estimated number of IDPs who have transited through the camp since December 2016 stands at about 7,000 households. Approximately 20 families arrive to the camp per day, spending an average of 3-5 days in the camp before moving onwards; although recently, more than 70 families have been staying in the camp for a longer period. Conditions in the camp remain precarious. Plans are underway to increase the capacity of the camp to host 5,000 IDPs and improve service provision. Other response efforts are ongoing.



Access

- Access and security constraints continue to be the main challenge to a sustained presence and ability to respond – both from GoS-controlled areas, and from Turkey. Access from Iraq is possible, but limited in scale.
- Authorities in Jarablus issued a directive on 3 April, closing the Jarablus-Menbij road to commercial traffic. This action will likely have a direct effect on markets and potentially increase the need for humanitarian assistance.
- New administrative requirements put in place by Kurdish Self Administration on the UN and INGOs may significantly curtail the ability of operational partners to deliver assistance in areas of displacement, at a time of growing needs. The humanitarian community is currently developing a joint approach on how this will be addressed.

Humanitarian Response



Protection

Needs

A multitude of GBV-related issues have been identified in former and current ISIL-controlled areas, with women and girls subjected to kidnappings and ISIL taking women as ‘spoils of war’. Child marriage and forced marriage have been reported, including some being forced into temporary marriages, a form of sexual exploitation. Women and girls have been subject to very limiting dress codes, movement and no access to specialized services. Discrimination towards widows and divorcees, including girls, affiliated to ISIL has been reported.

ISIL reportedly exposes children to extreme violence, including observing/participating in public executions such as beheadings, stoning and crucifixions. ISIL also pays salaries and incentives to children for recruitment. Besides the negative psychological effects of directly participating in violence, Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) will be vulnerable to revenge killings and will need special protection.

Response

Partners based out of Qamishli are regularly visiting the Mabrouka and Ain Eissa camp and setting up two “assistance hubs” (safe spaces for community interaction, needs identification, psycho-social support, recreational activities) with mobile activities out of Ain Eissa and in Ras El Ein town, to be operational within the next weeks.

Gender-based violence response in Mabrouka includes mobile health clinics and reproductive health interventions, while pre-positioning of sanitary items and kits is ongoing.

Explosive hazard risk education is being distributed through intermediaries in Ar-Raqqa. Explosive hazard survey and removal is also ongoing but limited to Menbij and areas of Hasakeh due to access and security constraints. Training and capacity building efforts are underway in the surrounding areas to prepare teams to carry out initial contamination surveys and removal efforts in Ar-Raqqa city, funding, access and security permitting. Additional IED disposal capacity, however, will be required.

Child Protection actors are providing services through fixed and mobile services in Mabrouka Camp, Ain Issa, Suluk, Menbji and Tell Abyad. Further interventions are planned in Ain Al Arab and Jurneyyeh. Interventions will include: awareness raising on key child protection concerns (such as prevention of child separation and risk education),

psychosocial support and specialised child protection services, including for unaccompanied and separated children. Situation monitoring of child protection activities is ongoing through one child protection actor, and training on key competencies to deliver child protection services has also commenced.

Civil-military coordination is also ongoing to address critical protection concerns associated with military operations.

Gaps and constraints

Freedom of movement continues to be a major concern, particularly in camps, where identity documents essential for movement are being confiscated upon entry. Discussions are ongoing with camp management to identify how to ensure safe and free movement. Access and security constraints undermine a sustained presence and ability to deliver protection services, both from GoS-controlled areas, and with the increasing constraints facing humanitarian partners in Turkey. Increased partner capacity to deliver services is also required, as is the case in many locations, along with the expedient release of funding by donors.



Food security:

Need

A recent Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment by the Syrian Relief Network in Ar-Raqqa governorate indicates that 80 per cent of the markets are inaccessible with main commodities not available in sufficient quantities. Additionally, the prices of staple food commodities have witnessed an increased price compared to last year. Bakeries in ISIL-controlled areas are non-functional, mostly for lack of sufficient yeast, flour and fuel. Rural areas are even more affected than Ar-Raqqa city. Food security needs both in and outside of camps are not being fully met due to the increasing number of IDPs arriving in various parts of Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh and Deir ez-Zor governorates, limited capacities and access constraints.

Response

7,300 Ready to Eat Rations (RTERs) for 35,000 people were distributed in Ar-Raqqa Governorate during the month of March. Of these 5,500 RTERs (for 27,500 people) were distributed in the sub-districts of Ain Issa and Suluk and 1,800 RTERs (9,000 people) in Tell Abiad. A further 7,000 RTERs (35,000 people) were distributed in Menbij sub-district. In total in March, WFP provided RTERs to 71,500 people, each covering food needs for a family of five for five days.

A further 300 RTERs (for 1,500 people) were distributed by WFP in the Mabrouka IDP camp, while a cross-border NGO distributed 190 RTERs (to cover food needs of a family of five for 10 days) in the same camp for 950 beneficiaries. In the Ain Issa IDP camp (cotton factory), 515 RTERs were distributed in March, covering the food needs of about 2,575 beneficiaries.

A cross-border NGO distributed a total of 2,276 emergency food baskets covering the food needs of a family of five for 10 days, in addition to 261 RTERs covering the food needs for a family of 5 for 5 days in Menbij sub district, including 145 RTERs in Menbij Camp. Some 16 emergency food baskets were also distributed in Ain Al-Arab sub-district. In Ar-Raqqa Governorate, the same NGO provided 84 emergency food baskets covering the food needs of a family of five for 10 days in Suluk sub-district and another 225 to Ain Issa sub-district, which included 165 in Ain Issa IDP camp (cotton factory). In Jurniyeh sub-district, a total of 244 emergency food baskets covering the food needs of a family of five for 10 days were also distributed. Another cross-border NGO distributed 770 Food Kits covering food needs for a family of five for a period of 14 days supporting 446 households of IDPs in Menbij City.

Gaps and constraints

Lack of cooking materials, heaters and fuel for heating and cooking in ISIL-controlled areas, inaccessibility of markets and lack of transportation to access existing markets remain key constraints. The sector considers all new IDPs to be food insecure for the first three months. Thus, even though immediate food needs are sporadically being addressed, the sector recommends repeat distribution of RteRs and Emergency Food Rations to cover the remaining gaps and/or follow up with Food Baskets based on the context - access to cooking facilities/utensils/fuel.



Health care

Response

WHO, in cooperation with the Ar-Raqqa Department of Health, launched a five-day polio vaccination campaign on 12 March for children under 5 years, targeting 20,000 children in all functioning health centers in Tell Abiad, Suluk, Ein Issa, Al-Jurniyeh, Ain Al-Arab and Hamam Al-Turkman sub-districts?.



Nutrition

Response

Nutrition sector partners, mainly UNICEF and WFP, are increasing their pre-positioning of prevention and therapeutic nutrition supplies in Qamishli (1,425 boxes of fortified spread and 558 boxes of Supplementary Plumpy Doz) to support treatment for 1,000 moderately malnourished children. The supply pipeline will be further enhanced by the planned airlifting of nearly 2,500 boxes of Plumpy Doz to Qamishli to support IDPs in Ain Essa and Menbij. Additional nutrition supplies including High Energy Biscuits, Fortified Spread and Micronutrients are prepositioned in Homs hub for a better preparedness and response.

Nutrition partners continue to support partners in Qamishli to respond to the nutrition needs of displaced people. Essential nutrition support including the distribution of high energy biscuits, Plumpy Doz and multiple micronutrients to IDP children and women in Mabrouka and Ain Eissa camp have so far been provided through two UNICEF supported partners intervening in the camps. In addition, WFP is planning to send 490 boxes of fortified spread (Plumpy Doz) along with Ready to eat food ration to Jurnieyyeh and Al-karama in Ar-Raqqa and also Abo Khashab in Deir-e-zor in the coming days.

Through cross-border operations from Turkey, nutrition supplies for 100,000 people, including 17,000 children under five years and 800 pregnant and lactating women (PLWs), were pre-positioned in Azaz and Jarablus. Three primary health care facilities in Jarablus city are providing nutrition services to IDPs from Ar-Raqqa residing in Al Ghandorah and Thaheriya subdistricts in Jarablus. Additionally, there are three corners for infant and young child feeding (IYCF) that provide counselling services on breastfeeding to pregnant women and new mothers from the camps in Shmarekh villages in Azaz. Preventive and therapeutic services are also being provided through two mobile clinics, one each in Jarablus and Azaz districts, working with a network of 25 community health workers.

Through the above facilities, 54 children under five years of age were screened for acute malnutrition, of which three were identified as moderate cases and received the required treatment. Another 20 children (6-23 months) and 34 children (24-59 months) received blanket feeding including Plumpy Doz and high energy biscuits. An additional 34 PLWs received multiple micronutrient powder and counselling on infant and young child feeding (IYCF). 300 men and women received IYCF awareness raising sessions.



Shelter and NFIs

Response

Efforts continue in Ain Eissa and Mabrouka camps to install and expand necessary shelters, normally tents and laying out of plots. In Mabrouka camp, two large tents are being sent to IDPs staying overnight, until they are allocated tents. Communal kitchens are under construction as well.

In host communities, new arrivals receive emergency shelter kits which include the necessary basic tools to seal off and expand shelter for lifesaving protection. Newly arrived IDPs in camps and communities are being prioritised to receive core relief items, such as blankets and stoves. At least 2,500 full kits have been distributed to families in need, and further pre-positioning is ongoing.

Gaps and constraints

Absorption capacity in many communities is being tested, and security and access constraints limit the predictability of response, especially at large scale. Access constraints reduce the capacity for humanitarian partners to respond, in particular those based in Turkey.



Camp coordination & Camp Management (CCCM)

Response

CCCM partners continue to report on verified displacements in the area of concern, and are also seeking to expand coverage of its displacement tracking. Partners working on the response based in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, Turkey and Iraq were briefed and provided with information on the tracking mechanism.

Gaps and constraints

Freedom of movement and the need to improve access to particularly food and WASH remain the main operational gaps to responding to IDP needs. If the outflows increase, it is unclear if security and access constraints will allow for a response to meet needs. Access constraints from Turkey reduce the ability for the CCCM partners to respond on the ground.



Response

During March, the WASH sector initiated a detailed assessment of water systems in Ar-Raqqa Governorate. The sector is considering different scenarios, including emergency support to water systems, provision of potable water in case of severe damage to water infrastructure, and support to IDPs in camps.

Since the beginning of March, WASH sector partners responded extensively to the influx of IDPs in the Menbij area. Fifty water tanks of 134m³ were installed and emergency water trucking, water quality monitoring and chlorination were carried out. More than 150m³ of potable water was supplied daily, benefiting more than 4,200 people each day. Distribution of more than 2,000 hygiene kits (12,000 beneficiaries) in Menbij, Ain Eissa, Tell Abyad, Suluk and Jurneyyeh sub-districts was also carried out.

Some sector partners (IRD, UNICEF) have been working on the rehabilitation of water and sewerage systems that benefit both host communities and IDPs. Water systems have also been supported by the installation of back-up generators, submersible water pumps, and chlorination systems in Menbij, Kobani (Ain Al Arab), Tel Abyad, Tel Hajib, and in Al-Hasakeh governorate. UNICEF delivered 120 metric tons of Calcium Hypochlorite to water authorities in Al-Hasakeh. In addition, rehabilitation of sewerage systems is ongoing in Menbij and Kobani.

Since 31 March, sector partners have started improving WASH conditions in Mabrouka IDP camp in Ras Al Ain district, Al-Hasakeh governorate. Fifteen water bladder tanks of a total volume of 90m³ were installed. Agreements for additional potable water trucking have been signed. IDPs were also able to access non-potable water for sanitation and hygiene purposes from the shallow borehole in the camp. For the Ain Eissa IDP camp, World Vision International is supplying 10 m³ of potable water daily. WASH NFIs were distributed in Mabrouka, Ain Eissa and Menbij IDP camps, covering the needs of 882 families.

In terms of preparedness, stockpiles of WASH NFIs (water tanks, bladder tanks, Sodium Hypochlorite) are being maintained. Hygiene kits are pre-positioned in Homs (10,000 sets) and Al-Hasakeh governorates (45,000 sets in Ras Al-Ain, Al-Hasakeh, Qamishli, Al-Malikeyyeh/Derik districts) and in Ain Al Arab district. Humanitarian actors and private contractors are on standby to provide emergency water and other support to IDPs and returnees, including in Ar-Raqqa city.



Response

The education sector has a plan to respond to the education needs of 32,000 school-age children displaced to the northern part of Ar-Raqqa (i.e. Tell Abyad, Suluk, Ain Eissa, and Jurneyyeh sub-districts) as well as to Al-Hasakeh Governorate through the provision of education supplies. As part of this, pre-positioning of more contingency supplies is currently underway. In late March, UNICEF and partners signed a partnership agreement for the distribution of multi-sectoral supply packages, including education supplies. Data collection of school-age children is ongoing.

Gaps and constraints

Access remains a concern for Turkey-based humanitarian actors, although a rapid response mechanism for education supplies and Temporary Learning Spaces is in place to support the response, access permitting.

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