UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Provision of Life-Saving Assistance and Supporting Communities

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
مفوضية الأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين

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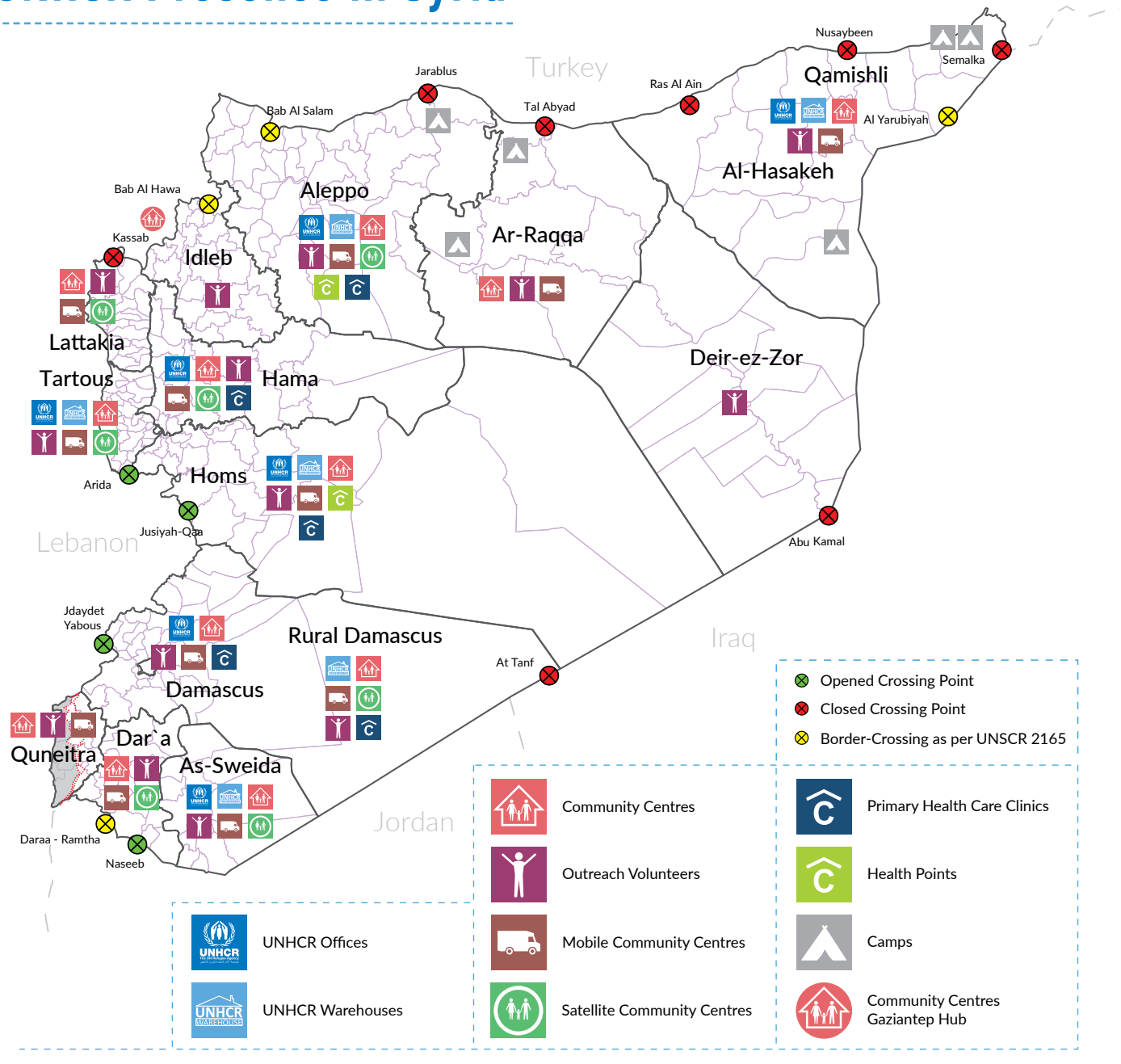
Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
AOG	Armed Opposition Group
AV	Armored Vehicle
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCS	Child Care Society
CLI	Community-Led Initiative
CP	Child Protection
CRI	Core Relief Item
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EPDC	St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee
ECHO	European Civil Protection &Humanitarian Aid Operations
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FO	Field Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCLI	Group Community-Led Initiative
GOPA	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
GoS	Government of Syria
HH	Household
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
ID	Identity Document
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMC	International Medical Corps
IOM	International Organization of Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFAE	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLAE	Ministry of Local Administration and Environment
MoSAL	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
OP	Operational Plan
ORV	Outreach Volunteer
PCSS	Protection and Community Services Sector
PHC	Primary Health Care
PoC	Person of Concern
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSS	Psychological Social Support
PUI	Première Urgence Internationale
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SCS	Social Care Society
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SIF	Secours Islamique France
SO	Sub Office
SSBG	Start-up Small Business Grant
SSBP	Start-up Small Business Programme
SSSD	Syrian Society for Social Development
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNAF	United Nations Assistance Framework
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USG	Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

UNHCR Presence in Syria



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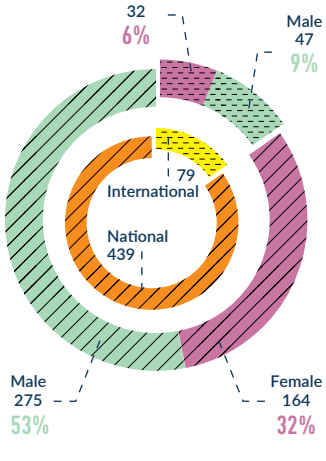
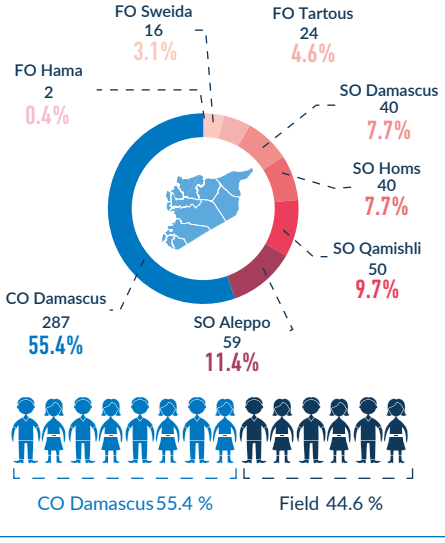
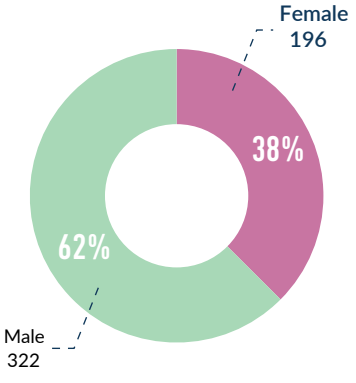






Syria 2018 an overview | Foreword

by UNHCR Syria Representative Sajjad Malik

As I look back at 2018, some images that I have seen will always stay with me. I remember going on the Inter-Agency mission to Douma in March to bring humanitarian assistance to thousands of people who had been suffering for years. I will never forget the faces of the children coming out of overcrowded basements, in which they had been living for months trying to stay safe. Their skin was pale and seemed as if they had not seen the sun for days. As humanitarians, it was the task of my team and I to ensure that more assistance was provided to the most vulnerable people in need, and to carry their voices with us, ensuring that they were heard.

In 2018, more than 1.6 million people moved across Syria. 11.7 million people in Syria remained in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.2 million Syrian women, men, girls and boys internally displaced. As people were forced into further displacement, UNHCR in partnership with SARC, international and national NGOs continued to provide life-saving assistance to those in need.

In the midst of emergencies there was also hope, people also started returning to their areas of origin, some to their houses, while others to their neighborhoods finding their houses destroyed. More than 1.4 million internally displaced and more than 56,000 refugees returned in 2018. UNHCR recognized that there were obstacles to return, and it was under less than ideal circumstances that IDPs and refugees conducted self-organized and spontaneous returns. UNHCR provides support to returnees not based on their status but based on their needs.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR introduced the village and neighbourhood support programmes, within the HRP, with the purpose of reaching areas where UNHCR and its partners identified a high number of IDP and refugee returns. When families returned to their areas of origin, they were in need of basic services to be able to regain some normality in their life. Through this programme, UNHCR together with its partners provided a combination of prioritized services including; shelter rehabilitation, minor repair and rehabilitation of schools, health points and bakeries. By providing these basic support and services the families were able to live in their houses, their children accessed education, they could seek primary healthcare in their local clinic and buy bread in their local bakery. UNHCR through its partners also established satellite centres and mobile units, where community-based protection services were provided through livelihoods projects, remedial classes, sexual and gender based violence awareness raising activities, recreational activities, vocational trainings, as well as provision of free-of-charge legal aid, including counselling, representation before responsible authorities and awareness-raising on civil status documentation and HLP-related documentation matters.

As new areas became accessible to the humanitarian community, there were 1.16 million people in need in hard-to-reach areas. With access to new areas, more complex humanitarian challenges emerged both in terms of scope and magnitude. Providing community-based protection services to millions of displaced people became more challenging than previous years, especially in remote rural areas. With limited resources, UNHCR managed to introduce new modalities and protection tools to reach out to those in need. By gradually expanding presence, and through the expansion of outreach volunteers, mobile units and satellite centres, UNHCR continued to reach people in need of protection even in remote areas. By the end of 2018, UNHCR reached more than 2.3 million people through 98 community centres, 26 satellite centres, 100 mobile units and 2,849 outreach volunteers in 12 governorates across Syria.

We witnessed first-hand that the children in Syria have suffered the most, with many childhoods being severely disrupted for the past eight years. In 2018, some two million children were out of school; many were forced to work to support their families, while others lived in hard-to-reach, besieged or ISIS controlled areas and did not access education for many years especially girls. Working closely with UNICEF, UNHCR through its education programmes, provided remedial classes and accelerated learning activities helping thousands of students, especially girls, to catch up and integrate in the national education system. I have witnessed many young girls who were out of school with no hope for their future, and when they were given the opportunity to catch-up on their studies and continue their education, they are doing remarkably well. They tell us that they dream of becoming teachers, doctors, lawyers and nurses. I met a young inspiring female teacher who, after returning to her home in one of the most destroyed areas in east Aleppo, started a community-led initiative, to provide education to 200 young girls, who had missed several years of school. Through her initiative the young girls could attend catch-up classes, go back to school and be one step closer to realising their dreams of a brighter future. We are expanding such initiatives.

In 2018, 4.2 million people remained in need of shelter, and many shelters in the return areas were damaged. Many families returning to their houses found their belongings and even doors and windows looted and were forced to use blankets and nylon sheets to protect themselves from extreme weather conditions. To meet the enormous shelter needs UNHCR designed and planned the “doors and windows” project, implemented by the community, for the community. Syria is extremely cold during the winter months and even one room with doors and windows can provide protection, privacy, warmth and comfort to a family. While a shelter intervention as such designed to meet the needs of returnees, the doors and windows project also entailed a livelihood component as it provided vocational training for returnees to be able to install the doors and windows for themselves and for their neighbours and thereby earning an income. We need to continue finding innovative shelter solutions.

UNHCR continued its provision of humanitarian life-saving assistance, including core relief items (CRIs) and winter items to respond to the basic needs of IDPs, returnees and host communities in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their resilience. In 2018 UNHCR reached more than 2.7 million individuals through its CRI and winterization programme.

The impact of the crisis, including on livelihoods in Syria continued to affect the entire household and explained the higher prevalence of early marriage at an increasingly lower age as a harmful coping mechanism. Some 70 per cent of the population in Syria continued living in extreme poverty and in the light of the severe impact of the crisis, unemployment increased to 55 per cent [1]. To reduce protection vulnerabilities, UNHCR, together with partners, including FAO, UNDP and national and international NGOs introduced innovative livelihood projects. We witnessed many female-headed households being sole breadwinners for their families and to support them and others in need, UNHCR offered start-up small business grants allowing people to start their businesses and generate income through small bakeries, hairdressers, barber shops, groceries, electricity workshops, tailors etc. Women are learning new trades, such as painters, masonry works, electricians, plumbers etc. I was inspired by the many women and men that through UNHCR's livelihoods programme felt empowered to start up their own business and support their families using their specialized skills. Through its livelihoods programme UNHCR also offered talented and skilled Syrians a chance to work again in their specialization, by providing plumbing, carpenter, electrician, sewing, blacksmith, painting and hairdressing kits as well as computer maintenance and mobile maintenance kits. At the end of 2018, UNHCR had distributed 7,323 livelihood kits across Syria.

During the crisis, many civil registries and cadastral services have been partially or totally destroyed in addition to the fact that official civil registration services have not functioned for years in areas outside Government control areas. This year, as people returned to their areas of origin, it was evident more than ever that the need for registration of civil documentation was immense. Children born without medical birth notifications or from sexual and gender based violence, leaving them unregistered and at risk of potential statelessness. The lack of certificates of death and divorce endanger widowed or divorced women by limiting their ability to inherit property, legally remarry, or register children born. Housing, land and property rights are more difficult to enforce in the absence of identity documentation. Furthermore, the lack of national ID cards limits freedom of movement.
UNHCR addressed these constraints and challenges through technical and material support to enable Syrian IDPs, returnees and host communities to access and register vital events and issue civil documentation in order to ensure that registration procedures are inclusive, non-discriminatory and age- and gender-sensitive. Legal aid programmes need to expand with more partners. We also need to continue working with the Ministry of Interior and Directorate of Civil Affairs on removing obstacles, by way of advocating for reduction of fees and facilitation of issuance of civil documentation.
UNHCR also in cooperation with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and Ministry of Interior drafted a civil documentation booklet which was formulated in simple language, questions and answers and provided information on the procedures needed to issue civil documents and register civil events. 200,000 copies were distributed through partners, community centres, and civil affairs offices in 14 governorates, immigration departments, medical facilities and diplomatic missions in five countries in the region (Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan), to raise awareness of IDPs, returnees and host communities on the importance and the procedures of registering civil events.

The refugee community continued to be generously hosted in Syria, however affected by the protracted crisis, facing multiple displacements, first from their country of origin and second inside Syria. UNHCR prioritized activities aimed at mitigating the impact of the crisis on the refugee and asylum-seeker population, as well as core protection activities, such as advocacy to preserve the asylum space, prevention of refoulement and detention, addressing SGBV and child protection concerns, mobilizing the community to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms and conducting registration and refugee status determination, finding resettlement opportunities as well as providing documentation to enhance their legal protection. The 49,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from Iraq, Sudan and Yemen in Syria have shown great resilience through eight years of crisis, hoping for a better future.

As I look back on this year I recall always being amazed by the resilience of the youth and children that I saw during my missions that I conducted together with my teams across Syria, including to; Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Qamishli, Al Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Dar'a, As-Sweida and Rural Damascus. I remember being on a mission in Eastern Ghouta in December and we had driven some 15 km through rural areas with not many people in sight from Kafr Batna town to a village – Deir Salmain. As we entered the village we reached a school that UNHCR's partner Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) had rehabilitated with community help by providing doors and windows. Hundreds of children had just finished class and they ran out with big smiles on their faces and I remember my team saying – the children are the future – they are what gives us hope.

I have witnessed first-hand how Syrians are eager to look to the future though the ever-present pain and trauma is still there. We are constantly learning from them, and the hope and the resilience of the Syrian people give us the strength and courage to continue our important but challenging work on the ground.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of the work of international and national NGOs in Syria, without whom UNHCR would not be able to continue its work across Syria. A special thanks to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) for their continuous support and cooperation in these last eight years.

Furthermore, through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Interior signed in 2017, UNHCR supported

1 Humanitarian Response Plan 2018 and Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 draft

Civil Registries in 12 governorates which resulted in an impact of 100 % of increased access to various civil documents. In 2018 minor repair and rehabilitation and technical in kind support were provided in six key locations to additional civil registries, one court and one window project, to rehabilitate their functionality and to enhance their capacities to respond to the huge needs of returnees in relation to civil documentation including birth, marriage, divorce, and death and issuing the vital civil documents.

The partnership with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour enabled the establishment and continuous support to 207 community-based child protection structures in various locations across the country (shelters, schools and through community centres in 11 governorate), namely children's clubs and child welfare committees. In 2018 arrangements were initiated with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to set up systems and procedures to integrate education certificates of returning students.

The shelter sector continued to be co-led by UNHCR and Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE). Shelter sector partners continued to collectively provide need-based shelter assistance and ranging from the provision of emergency shelter to durable shelter supports.

I want to stress the important work that the humanitarian community and all the UN agencies in Syria are conducting, respectively, and together to respond to the immense humanitarian needs.

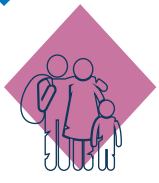
I also want to thank all our donors for their generous support in 2018, with the help of our donors we were able to provide humanitarian assistance, protection and hope to millions of Syrians in need.

For 2019 and beyond, I hope for a better future for the Syrian people, a future where families are reunited in their homes, where children can attend schools that have heating and desks, where adolescents, youth and especially girls, can fulfill their dreams with no fear and can graduate and become doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers and lawyers and strengthen the communities across Syria.

Ahmed with the big smile. He was the first one to return to the school Osama Bin Zaid, in old Aleppo city when it finally reopened after UNHCR's minor repair and rehabilitation after 6 years. | ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | *October 2018.*

Humanitarian Snapshot

In the eight year of the crisis in Syria, three major emergency situations in Eastern Ghouta, Afrin and South West/ Dar'a during the first six months of 2018 led to continued internal displacement and loss of lives. The year continued with the government gaining more access across Syria, with the South West area being under the control of the government and with the opening of the Naseeb border in October, the cross-border operations from Amman are terminated. At the end of the year, the future of the Idleb situation remained uncertain with some three million people still residing in the area, further displacement is expected.



11.7 million
people remain in need of humanitarian assistance.

5 million
people are in acute need (severity 6-4).

People in need
38 % are in areas not under government control
62 % are in areas under government control.

People in areas of acute need
46 % are in areas not under government control
54 % are in areas under government control.

11.3 million
people are in need of health assistance, less than half of Syria's health facilities are fully operational.

An estimated
1.6 million
people moved accross Syria in 2018, many multiple times.

13.2 million
people are in need of protection interventions.

More than
one in three
schools are either damaged or destroyed, while others are being used as collective shelters or for other purposes.

An estimated
2.1 million
children are out of school.

At least
56,047
Syrian refugees spontaneously returned to Syria in 2018 while,
1.4 million
displaced persons returned.

4.4 million
people are in need of core relief items.

4.7 million
people are in need of shelters.
A **18 %** increase in 2018.

6.5 million
people are food insecure.

Partnership and Coordination

UNHCR's main governmental counterpart in Syria is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates (MoFAE) based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012. Line ministries essential for UNHCR's work include the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MoSAL), the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

UNHCR in an inter-agency mission to Douma, Eastern Ghouta providing core relief items to people in need. | ©UNHCR/ | July 2018.

UNHCR with other UN agencies maintained its relations with the inter-ministerial Coordination Commission on Returns. UNHCR's position as lead agency for the Protection/ Community Services, Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs) sectors make it a key player in the coordination structure of the Whole of Syria response, coordinating with other hubs in the neighboring countries. In the Damascus hub, the Shelter sector is co-led by UNHCR and MoLAE, whereas the NFI Sector is led by UNHCR in close coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).

SARC is the key humanitarian agency in Syria, entrusted by the Syrian Government with overseeing operational assistance. SARC approves all international NGOs operating in Syria and plays a crucial role in facilitating the delivery of aid.
The constraints faced by international NGOs to operate in the country, the limited experience and capacity of national partners to implement large-scale humanitarian programmes, and the difficulties in obtaining the necessary approvals for implementation of projects will continue to be challenges.

Following a full-fledged partner selection process carried out at the end of 2017 to support the expansion of the operation, UNHCR Syria by the end of 2018 had 30 partners, of which nine are international NGOs, 18 national NGOs and two governmental entities, including MoLAE and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), in addition to one UN agency.

In the volatile security environment, partnerships with national NGOs are essential in order to reach out to the displaced and affected populations. As such, UNHCR Syria continued to build the capacity of its national NGO partners to provide protection and assistance to Persons of Concern (PoCs), including as part of the ongoing decentralization process. At the end of 2017, the Syrian Government introduced new procedures whereby national NGOs are required to submit for government approval their partnership agreements with UN agencies. The impact of this new process resulted in delays in implementation.

UNHCR Syria also has strategic partnerships with WFP and UNICEF, as well as UNFPA, UNDP and FAO focusing on livelihoods and self-reliance projects, and plans to expand such partnerships in 2019.

The World Bank has expressed interest in partnering with the UN on Syria in planning for potential World Bank engagement in the country and is already working on an analytical work-stream on "factors of returns". UNHCR Syria will continue to engage in the 2016 - 2016 "Strategic Framework for Cooperation between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations" and will take part in the development of a successor UN Assistance Framework (UNAF) for 2020 and beyond.

UNHCR together with a mobile team from its partner Namaa visiting a child friendly space in Tal Shair in Aleppo, where many displaced children from Afrin are happy to finally have a safe place to play in. | ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | September 2018.

UNHCR
Strategic Directions in 2018

1. Provision of emergency life-saving assistance to IDPs

During its response to large displacements, UNHCR built its emergency response and management capacity in-house in Syria and developed its robust supply chain (stockpiles and warehouses in each field location, available frame agreements for core distribution items), its staffing expansion, increased office space and administrative support (AV fleet etc.). UNHCR Syria was able to shift gears from only life-saving assistance to community-based protection focused assistance leading the shift to other agencies as protection became one key objective of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in 2017. In 2018, in the eighth year of the crisis in Syria, three major emergency situations occurred in Eastern Ghouta, Afrin and South West/Dar'a leading to continued internal displacement and loss of lives. UNHCR responded to these emergencies through providing life-saving assistance through its NFI/Shelter and protection programmes.

2. IDP protection and assistance programme

In an IDP context, UNHCR focused on supporting national and international actors in mitigating protection risks and strengthening resilience, reducing vulnerabilities of persons affected by the crisis and enhancing their protection through a wide range of integrated community-based activities. Inside Syria, UNHCR led the Protection and Community Services Sector (PCSS), the Non-Food Items (NFI) and Shelter Sectors and contributed actively to the Health, Education, and Early Recovery and Livelihoods Sectors. The core functions of the sectors included: needs assessment, analysis and prioritization to inform strategic decision-making; service delivery support (including elimination of gaps and duplication); planning and strategy development; and advocacy and fundraising.

IDP Protection and Assistance programme was implemented through various modalities:

- In government controlled areas regular programme through the Country Office Syria, six UNHCR Sub/Field Offices, 30 partners, a network of over 200 community centres and satellite centres and mobile units together with 2,810 outreach volunteers (ORVs)
- In areas controlled by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) through cross-border from Turkey to Idleb and from Jordan to parts of Dar'a and Quneitra, which stopped in August 2018, when the government took control of the south-west region.
- The community centres provided a portfolio of integrated protection services, and were supported by 100 mobile units, and 26 satellite centres and provided i.a. legal aid, primary health care, vocational training, psychosocial support, in collective shelters and remote/hard-to-reach locations with a high number of IDPs/returnees, as well as in new displacement/return areas. The community centres operated in coordination with the UNFPA's Safe Houses and UNICEF's Child Friendly Spaces.

In partnership with UNDP, WFP and FAO to promote resilience and livelihoods, and with UNICEF to promote education for out-of-school children, UNHCR supported access to basic services such as education (rehabilitation of schools), health (support to health centres and hospitals), water (well digging and water networks), food security (rehabilitation of bakeries), etc. UNHCR will in 2019 continue to engage in a gap-filling and strategic type of response in relation to access to services.

3. Refugee protection and assistance programme

The refugee response inside Syria remained extremely important to UNHCR. Out of the 45,360 refugee/asylum seekers in the country, 7,879 were living in camps in Al-Hasakeh and were seriously affected by the situation in Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor, and Mosul triangle. Damascus and Rural Damascus held the largest urban population, 12,648 individuals. Given the increasingly diminishing resources for this population group, UNHCR continued to devise ways to integrate refugees/asylum-seekers into other assistance programmes.

UNHCR continuously tried to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the refugee and asylum-seeker population and conducted core protection interventions, such as advocacy to preserve the asylum space, prevention of refoulement and detention, addressed SGBV and child protection concerns, mobilized the community to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms and conducted registration and refugee status determination, as well as provided documentation to enhance legal protection.

UNHCR monitored the protection situation in areas and shelters hosting refugees, and worked with the ORV network and partners to identify and respond to the most pressing protection risks. In terms of durable solutions, UNHCR continued to advocate for increased return and resettlement opportunities for this protracted refugee population due to the unavailability of local integration options in Syria. The cash assistance programme, previously composed of two components (cash-for-food for all Persons of Concern, and financial assistance for the vulnerable) was replaced as of March 2018 by a multi-purpose cash grant (MPCG) for urban refugees only, based on updated vulnerability criteria and family size.

4. Winterization

UNHCR has been the leading UN agency in providing need-based non-food items (NFI) assistance to displaced persons, returnees, host communities and other crisis-affected populations. NFI assistance programme consisted of two distinct cycles, i.e. winterization and regular assistance programme. Winter assistance was delivered from September through March and as more areas became accessible, winterization support became even more pressing. This is due to the fact that many of the newly accessible areas were not assessed or assisted for a long period of time and their residents were extremely vulnerable. Seasonal items included additional blankets, jackets, undergarments, sleeping bags, and additional plastic sheeting. 788,339 IDPs, returnees and host communities were provided with winter items by end of December 2018, and UNHCR plans to reach 1,250,000 by March 2019.

5. Preparation for returns and response to immediate and urgent needs of spontaneous returnees

While fighting continued in some parts of Syria, military developments on the ground led to significant improvements in security conditions and, subsequently convinced civilians to return to their areas of origin. There were some 800,000 returns in Syria in 2017: the self-organized return of over 50,846 Syrian refugees, as well as over 764,310 IDPs. In 2018, 1.4 million IDPs and 56,047 Syrian refugees returned. UNHCR was successful in 2018, in ensuring that return was included in the HRP and resources were allocated to respond to immediate and urgent humanitarian needs of returning IDPs and refugees.
UNHCR Syria's interventions inside Syria on refugee and IDP return were informed by:

- Humanitarian Response Plan (2018) which presented the inter-agency coordinated humanitarian response;
- UNHCR Syria's Country Operations Plan for Pillar 3 which provided the programmed activities for IDP and refugee returnees;
- UNHCR's Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy: Voluntary Return to Syria, that sets out the programmatic and policy guidance on UNHCR's engagement in the return of Syrian refugees (phase 1/phase 2);

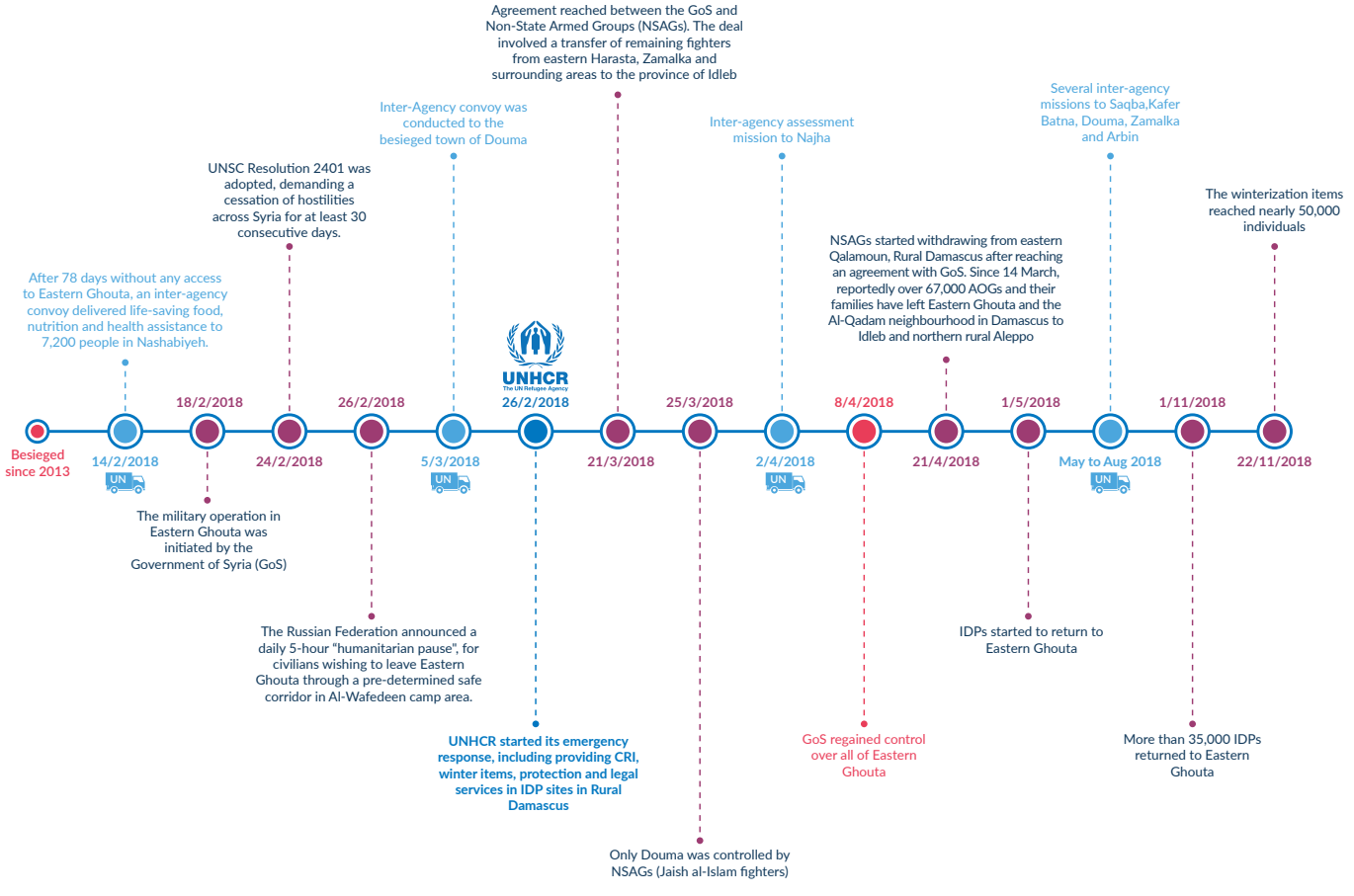
Within the context of return coordination, UNHCR facilitated the work of the Return and Reintegration Working Group established as part of the Humanitarian Country Team. UNHCR serves as the Secretariat for this group.

Internally displaced persons from Afrin in Fafin area relieved as their identity cards are issued, a challenge for thousands of IDPs who lost documentation due to displacement.| ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *October 2018.*

UNHCR
Responding to Major Emergencies

In 2018, three major emergency situations occurred in Eastern Ghouta (Rural Damascus), Afrin (Aleppo) and the south of Syria (Dar'a and Quneitra) leading to continued internal displacement and the loss of lives and livelihoods.

UNHCR's response to the Eastern Ghouta emergency



Between 2013 and 2018, UNHCR participated in 15 Inter-Agency convoys providing core relief items to people in need of assistance in Eastern Ghouta.

In March 2018, due to the escalation of the military operation in Eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus, over 92,000 civilians left or were evacuated from the area, including some 77,000 that were accommodated in overcrowded conditions in eight collective shelters in Rural Damascus, namely: Harjellah, Adra School, Adra Electricity Complex, Najha, Nashabiyeh, Dweir, Fayhaa Al Sham, and Akram Abu Nasser.

UNHCR's response to the needs of the people in this displacement included, among others, legal counselling to nearly 22,000 individuals; distribution of more than 559,986 at least one core relief item to some 304,910 individuals in eight IDP sites and inside Eastern Ghouta, including high thermal blankets, warm clothes, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, mattresses, solar lamps, sleeping bags, hygiene kits and jerry cans. UNHCR also provided shelter support that included the installation of three rub halls and 50 family-size tents in two IDP sites, in addition to the provision of 3,984 shelter kits, of which some 2,144 were installed in the various IDP sites. The rehabilitation of three schools (180 rooms) in one of the IDP sites was completed, in addition to the installation of four sheds (big size tents) in another site. The remaining shelter kits were installed inside Eastern Ghouta in Harasta 800, Erbin 400, Zamalka 200, Muliha 176, Der Salman 144, Deir Al-Assafeer 120. In total, nearly 21,827 people benefited from UNHCR's shelter response to the Eastern Ghouta emergency.

UNHCR's partner the Syria Trust provided legal aid services for IDPs in the collective shelters, while SARC, DRC and the Syria Trust assisted IDPs who were allowed to leave the shelters and moved to the urban areas, such as Al Tal, Qudsaya, Masaken Barzeh and Jaramana. The identified legal aid needs were mainly related to civil documentation issues such as the lack of IDs, family booklets, and civil status documents, as well as registering/authenticating personal status events, such as births and marriages. More than 32,000 IDPs were identified to be in need of legal interventions, either before the courts or administrative bodies.

Some 40 lawyers and outreach volunteers from the Syria Trust and SARC provided more than 33,116 legal aid counselling sessions. Lawyers finalized 1,775 legal interventions before administrative bodies, assisting displaced communities in obtaining IDs and family booklets, which helped them access other protection services and granted them freedom of movement. Additionally, 4,632 persons of concern attended 80 legal awareness raising sessions conducted by SARC and the Syria Trust lawyers to highlight the importance of registering/authenticating personal status events, children and women rights.

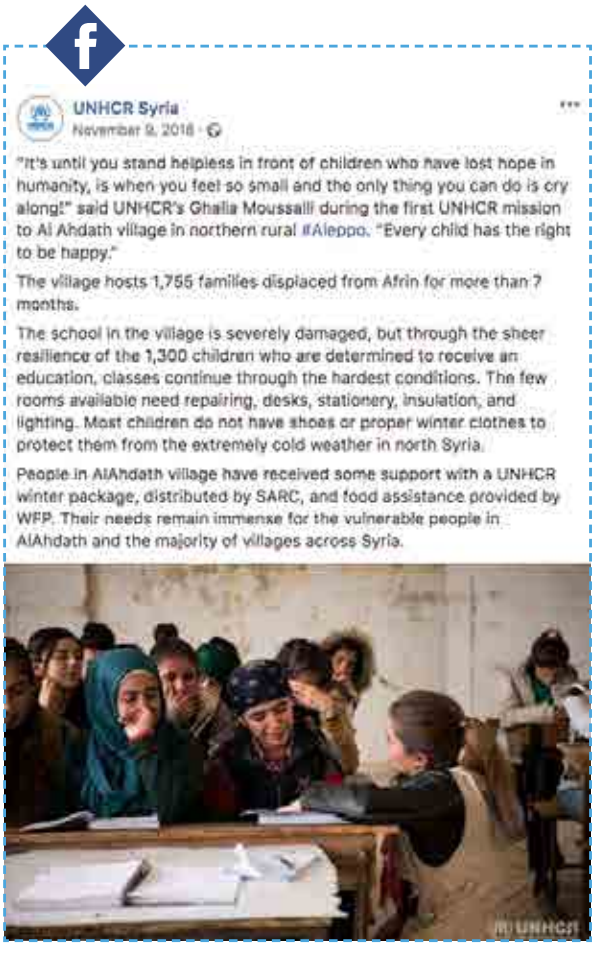
The legal aid partners also visited areas witnessing IDP returns in Eastern Ghouta, such as Douma, Harasta, Saqba, Hamouriah, Erbin, Aien Tarma, Hazzeh, Zamalka, Ayutthaya, Jisrin, Mesraba, Deir Salman, Beit Naiem, Ziabieh, Madiera, Beit Sawa, Deir Al- Asafeer and Zibdin where they provided legal aid services.
UNHCR and its partners provided several protection activities in the IDP sites to respond to the needs of all persons of concern. SSSD, SARC, Al Nada and Al Tamayouz provided SGBV, PSS and Child Protection counselling in addition to awareness raising sessions on different topics to help spread information on the available services and mitigate protection risks.
The partners provided awareness raising sessions on Child Protection with the total of 8,235 beneficiaries in addition to 212 awareness raising sessions and recreational activities under PSS with the total of 13,144 beneficiaries and nine SGBV sessions for 3,400 beneficiaries. Moreover, 1,065 PSS and 728 child protection counselling sessions took place for children and their caregivers.
UNHCR protection teams also visited the IDP sites to monitor the protection services, ensure the proper protection mainstreaming on the provided services, facilitate the linkages and overlapping between service providers, and guarantee coordinating efforts to have an effective approach in assisting and levitating the needs of the persons of concern.
During the evacuation from Eastern Ghouta, UNHCR with its partners SSSD and SARC, supported 251 beneficiaries through Medical In-Kind Assistance (MIKA) programme in different Fayhaa, Dwier, Adra electricity and Adra schools IDP sites. The main delivered items were walkers, crutches, wheelchair diabetic testing strips, nebulizer, medical air mattress and blood pressure testing device. This programme responded to the most urgent needs for the vulnerable evacuees.

In addition, the SSSD ORV network had a key role in identifying and supporting the urgent cases and finding the best solution in coordination with the different actors in the sites, in addition to the support in the food and CRI distributing and the facilitation of activities like recreational activities, education and PSS, as well as following up on the cases of persons with disabilities on daily living conditions.

Internally displaced persons in Harjellah IDP site, Rural Damascus where UNHCR provided core-relief items, shelter and protection services during the Eastern Ghouta emergency. | ©UNHCR/Ola Kablan | *March 2018.*

UNHCR's response to the Afrin emergency

An estimated 216,030[1] people were uprooted from their homes in the Afrin region, Aleppo governorate by fighting since the start of the Turkish "Olive Branch" military operation in January 2018. A total number of IDP families from Afrin in Aleppo governorate was 34,208 families/ 171,040 individuals. Out of this number 28,208 families/141,040 individuals were sheltered in the rural of Aleppo (Tal Refaat, Nuboul, Fafin districts including camps and scattered tents), while 6,000 families/30,000 individuals reached the city of Aleppo, mainly Shiekh Maqsoud neighborhood.



UNHCR's response to the needs of displaced persons included, among others, the distribution of more than 1,100,276 CRIs, such as high thermal blankets, warm clothes, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, mattresses, solar lamps, sleeping bags, hygiene kits jerry cans seasonal supplementary items such as fans, and mosquito nets for 237,795 individuals/47,559 families in Nubul, Zahraa, Tal Refaat, Fafin areas including the four camps, the scattered farms and villages and Aleppo city especially Sheikh Maqsoud.

Moreover, during 2018, more than 128,815 displaced persons from Afrin benefited from protection services provided through UNHCR-funded community centres, outreach volunteers and mobile teams in Aleppo, Nubul, Zahraa,Meskan, Tal Refaat, Kafar Naseh, Kurbet Al Hayat, Kafar Naya, Ziyara, Kashtaar, Kefin, Tanab, Tal Ajar, Ahras, Kafr Antwn, Iben, Wahshieh farms, Deir Jmal, Tal Qrah, Tal Shaer, Hassin, Harrah, Halisah, Oum Hush, Tal Sousen, Shahbaa camp, Fafin camp, Al Aser camp in addition to Al Ashrafeiah neighbourhood in Aleppo city. Secondary displacement from Nubul and Ziyara to Fafin camp was also observed, prompted by a lack of financial resources. An assessment of the situation in Fafin camp revealed a pressing need for documentation services, psychosocial support and recreational activities, especially for the large number of children in the camp.

UNHCR's response to the South emergency

The military operation in the south launched in June 2018 resulted in more than 300,000 people being uprooted from their homes in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates within a short period of time. Of those, around 60,000 individuals were displaced to areas near the Naseeb border crossing with Jordan. The military operation started initially in east Dar'a, moving then to areas held by non-state armed groups west Dar'a and Quneitra.

Some 22,000 individuals exited through the three corridors of Kherbet Ghazala, Tafas and Kafr Shams towards the government-controlled areas and were directed towards Jbab IDP site in north Dar'a, and another 2,000 individuals moved towards As-Sweida including to the Rassas shelter, while a few families went to Herjalleh IDP site in Rural Damascus.

Inter-agency mission to Al-Lajat in Dar'a | ©UNHCR/Bassam Diab | *October 2018.*

Within a few weeks, the majority of the displaced population started to return to their villages as fighting subsided across east Dar'a governorate and following the rapid and large-scale territorial gains by the Government of Syria across south-west Syria. Cross-border operations from Jordan was suspended in August, and the entire response to south-west Syria became Damascus-based.

UNHCR responded rapidly through its partners by providing CRIs from existing stocks to around 6,925 individuals/1,385 families. At the same time, UNHCR prepositioned 1,000 CRI kits with SARC in Izraa , 3,000 kits with GOPA in Bsir, and 500 kits with SARC in Khan Arnaba, Quneitra. Another 3,000 mattresses, 3,000 high thermal blankets, and 1,000 kitchen sets were dispatched to SARC warehouses in As-Sweida and Shahba.

1 *Figure provided by SARC 14 January 2019, the total number of registered IDPs originating from Afrin district rose to 216,030, up from 151,400 IDPs registered as per the previous report released on 1 September 2018*

Visit of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the MENA Bureau Director to a UNHCR-supported bakery in Dar'a | ©UNHCR/Bassam Diab | August 2018.

UN High Commissioner and the MENA Bureau Director **Missions to Syria**

Visit of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to Syria

On 28 and 29 August 2018, the High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi conducted a visit to Syria where he met with high-ranking Government officials, including the Minister and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, and the Minister of Local Administration who is chairing the High Relief Committee. The High Commissioner's mission also included meetings with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Heads of Agencies, Head of SARC, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation as well as NGOs and UNHCR staff.

UN High Commissioner for refugees visited a community centre supported by UNHCR and GOPA in Dwailaa, Rural Damascus. | ©UNHCR/Bassam Diab. | August 2018.

The High Commissioner visited a community centre in Dwaila, Damascus managed by UNHCR's partner GOPA. He also visited Eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus and witnessed first-hand the progress of UNHCR's activities on the ground through a school, a bakery and a civil registration office in Kafr Batna rehabilitated by UNHCR in partnership with PUI and met with a displaced returnee family in Douma who had benefited from services provided by UNHCR. The High Commissioner's mission was concluded with a visit to the Nasseb border.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi meets Mustafa Adas, 75 years old man, living in his brother's partially destroyed house with his three children in Douma city, Eastern Ghouta.| ©UNHCR/Bassam Diab. | August 2018.

Visits of UNHCR's MENA Bureau Director to Syria

Assessment in Kafr Batna, Eastern Ghouta for a school in need of rehabilitation Rural Damascus. | ©UNHCR/Bassam Diab. | July 2018.

From 23 to 25 July, Mr Amin Awad, the Director of UNHCR Middle East and North Africa (MENA) bureau and the Regional Refugee Coordinator for Syria crisis visited Syria. During his visit, Mr. Awad met with official counterparts and UNHCR partners. He also visited Eastern Ghouta to assess the situation on the ground and oversee the implementation of UNHCR projects in the area, including legal awareness sessions in Douma and the rehabilitation of a school in Kafr Batna.

A visit to Dar'a was also organized where Mr. Awad discussed with the Governor the needs in the area. He visited a community centre offering vocational courses and attended a recreational event for displaced and host communities, in addition to a bakery rehabilitated by UNHCR. The mission was concluded with a visit to the Nasseb border.

Mr. Awad, made a second visit to Syria from 24 to 27 September where he met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, the RC/HC and senior management of UNHCR Syria operation.

A third mission to Syria took place from 19 to 24 November during which Mr. Awad met with Director of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences, Counsellor of the Embassy of the Russian Federation, RC/HC, Return and Reintegration Working Group Heads of Agencies, and Russian Federation Deputy Commander for Reconciliation.

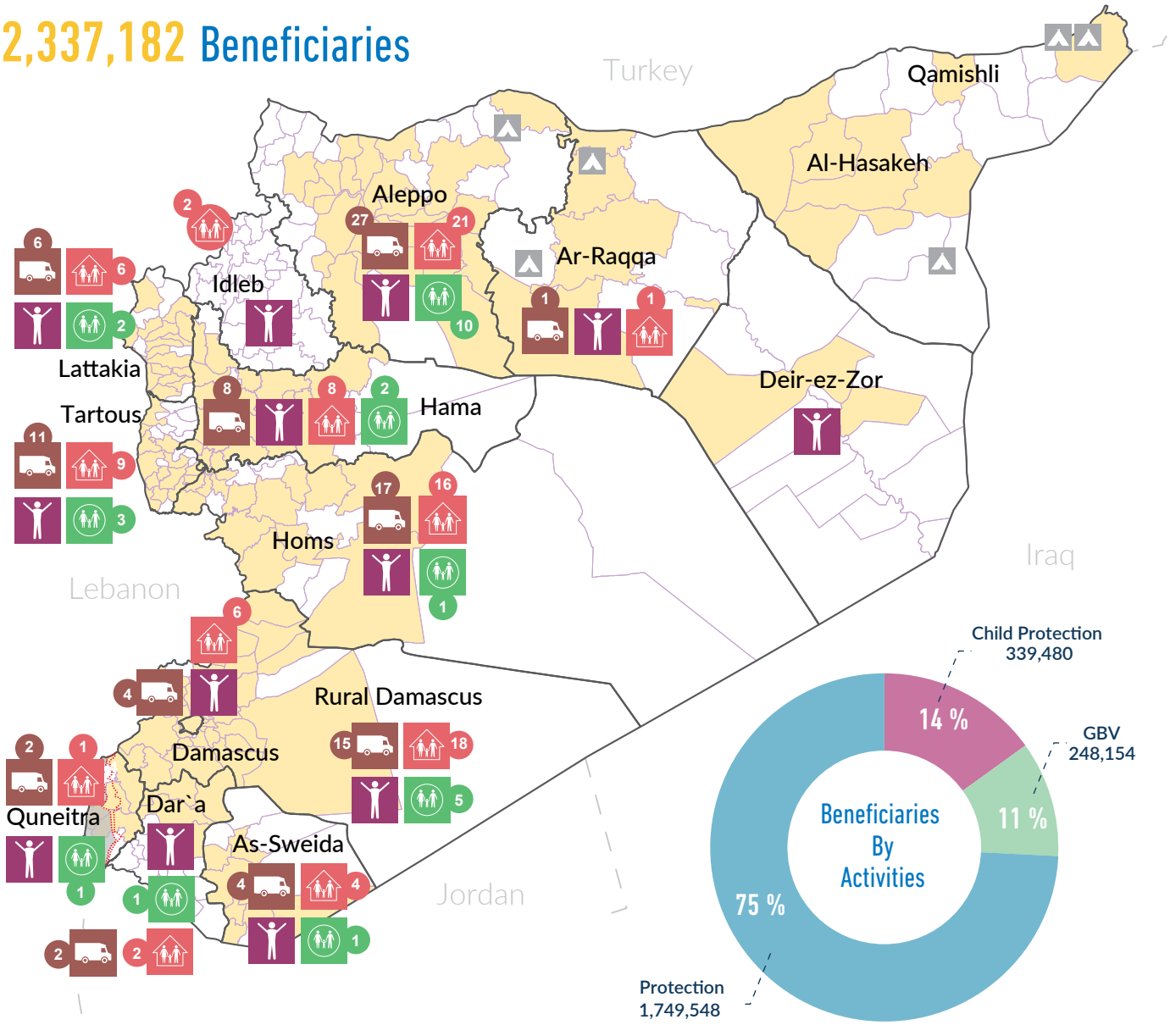
Local women from Aleppo watching a play about women's rights during the «16 days of activism against gender based violence event» in one of the community centres supported by UNHCR in Aleppo city. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *November 2018.*

UNHCR
Providing Protection Response

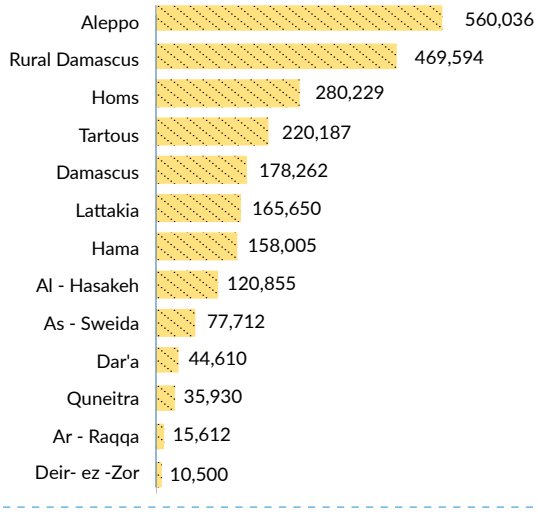
IDP Protection and Assistance Programme

Protection Activities

2,337,182 Beneficiaries



Beneficiaries By Governorate



98 Community Centres

2,849 Outreach Volunteers

101 Mobile Community Centres

27 Satellite Community Centres

2 Community Centres Gaziantep Hub

Camps

UNHCR static facilities and ORVs figures Jan–Dec 2018

	# of CCs	# of ORVs	# of SCCs	# of MCCs
Pillar 4 (IDPS)	97	2810	26	100
Pillar 3 (Returnees & Host communities)	1	39	1	1

UNHCR's Community-Based Protection Strategy

In 2018, UNHCR Syria continued to strengthen the rights and the community-based protection foundations of its work. UNHCR worked with communities to ensure people fulfil their rights to participate and decide on matters affecting their lives and improve protection as they are empowered, gain awareness and learn to seek assistance and services, all of which are entirely embedded in community - based protection principles.

UNHCR's protection response strategy followed a community-based approach and aimed to reduce vulnerabilities and protection risks. It applied a community participation and self-reliance approach through psychosocial support, services for persons with specific needs, legal aid, in particular in relation to birth registration and critical documentation, education services and activities supporting resilience livelihoods, vocational training to improve skills and opportunities to generate income, SGBV prevention and response and child protection services.

UNHCR aimed to achieve these goals through its network of community centres and diversified national and international partner actors. To further expand the reach of community centres, UNHCR introduced the concept of satellite centres and mobile units operating from the community centres.

The network of community centres, satellite centres and mobile teams with its outreach volunteers network of Syrian lawyers and provided services, continued to be a fundamental tool for the implementation of community-based protection strategy, reaching out to affected populations, assessing protection risks and needs using a participatory age, gender and diversity approach, identifying community resources, and offering services and support to the affected populations.

A community centre for the whole family

"Since we found this community centre, my son's ability to study has improved and my husband can now provide for the family", said Om Mohamad, mother of three children.

Om Mohamad and the family were displaced from Al Khaledia in Homs city five years ago and they lived in Al Khoja collective shelter. Her son Mohamad, seven years old, suffers from cerebral atrophy causing an atrophy in the optic nerve. Mohamad's ability to see and to study decreased gradually as his family could not afford the appropriate treatment for him.

Through a visit of the outreach volunteers to the collective shelter, the team met Mohamad and his parents and observed their needs. The volunteers informed the family of the protection services of the nearby community centre in Masaken Gharbieh supported by UNHCR and run by Aoun. In the community centre Mohamad received glasses through the medical-in-kind assistance for his sight improvement. In addition, Mohamad's father enrolled in the start-up small business grant programme and his proposal of establishing a painting workshop was approved. "Now we can live in dignity", said Mohamad's father after receiving the grant.

Achievements end of year 2018 – IDP programme

- By end of 2018, UNHCR continued supporting 97 community centres, 26 satellite centres and 100 mobile units in 12 governorates; Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Dar'a, As- Sweida, Tartous, Lattakia, Homs, Hama, Quneitra, Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa through 15 partners.
- In 2018, five community centres were newly opened and other five centres were relocated to other new areas bringing the total number of these centres to 97. Additionally, UNHCR and its partners opened 19 satellite centres, out of which three were closed and relocated and 16 were newly opened bringing the total number of satellite centres by the end of 2018 to 26. The satellite centres concept expanded from two governorates in 2017 to nine governorates by the end of 2018 in Aleppo, As- Sweida, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Lattakia, Quneitra, Rural Damascus and Tartous.
- Each community centre continued to receive over 1,300 beneficiaries per month while the satellite centres received over 650 beneficiaries.
- The vast majority of the two million beneficiaries reached by UNHCR through community- based protection services in 2018 received support through community and satellite centres.
- UNHCR also increased its mobile units across Syria to widen its geographical outreach to the most vulnerable populations lacking access to the community centres for a variety of reasons, including in remote and hard-to-reach locations, and to be able to respond in a timely and flexible manner to newly arising emergencies. By end of 2018, 100 mobile units operated from the community and satellite centres across Syria.

Community-Led Initiatives

15 UNHCR partners facilitated over 1,200 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) through their outreach volunteers and community-led initiative coordinators. The discussions addressed the displaced and affected communities within the community centres' geographic areas of coverage. The FGDs were used as a platform for building trust with communities by exploring their needs, and motivating them to play an active role in the community-led initiatives. The outcomes led to the implementation of 816 initiatives revolving around minor school rehabilitation, establishment of safe playgrounds for children, teaching knitting and sewing, teaching handcrafts, livelihood for persons with disabilities, securing water sources, waste disposal and hygiene promotion campaigns, securing dangerous roads in villages, establishing voluntary schools in non-school areas and providing supporting classes, distribution of CRIs, rehabilitation of gardens, providing needed services for the community, special activities for older persons, in addition to helping persons with disabilities by preparing an assistive environment for them.

The implemented initiatives were managed by 12,240 persons from the self-managed groups and they benefited some 448,800 internally displaced, returnees and host communities.

Football court initiative has positive impact on children in Izraa

A group of parents, school teachers and athletes from the community in Izraa in Dar'a Governorate, in cooperation with the Municipality Council and the Thneibeh Al Thaniya School initiated the "Our Football Court Gathers Us" community-led initiative for the benefit of the school students.
All participants in the initiative worked together for three weeks to pave a piece of land of 4,050 sm (45*90) in Izraa and prepared construction materials, iron bars, paint, nets and white sand. With the support of UNHCR and GOPA, the participants worked hand in hand removing rocks, balancing the ground, making and setting up two goals, repairing a damaged part of the fence, and teaming up football teams. After the rehabilitation and installation phases were completed, the football court became ready for children of different ages. The final stage of the initiative was concluded with a football match between the two teams spreading joy among the children. One of the Izraa community members said "We highly appreciate the initiative and the positive impact it created as the football playground provided a secure and safe space where our children could interact, play and spend quality time with each other in a beneficial way, despite the crisis".

Group Community Led-Initiatives addressing Youth

In 2018, a new procedure was integrated in the implementation plan of the Group Community-Led Initiatives (GCLIs) programme addressing youth. This programme was initiated to mobilize and train youth on understanding communities, identifying and prioritizing needs then designing initiatives that address those needs, with full consideration for the Age Gender and Diversity (AGD) and other community-based approaches. The training was developed at the UNHCR's country office and was implemented inside the community centres.

Furthermore, to ensure that the key techniques and information of the training were delivered to the youth in same good quality countrywide a training of trainers (ToT) was designed by UNHCR country office and was provided during missions to sub-offices to relevant UNHCR and partner staff. By end of 2018, some 800 boys and girls were trained countrywide.

Managed by 525 Syrian youth, the GCLIs were implemented to respond to many needs in the community, including child labour, street children, raising community awareness on health, providing job vacancies for youth, and media campaigns.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) programme

Deputy Representative/Head of Operations visit to a CBO in Tartous. | ©UNHCR | *November 2018.*

In order to emphasize the capacity building and empowerment of the existing community structures, UNHCR developed a training material that covers topics on project management, strategic planning, human resources management, building financial strategies and procurement policies, management skills, monitoring and evaluation, AGD and proposal writing. The topics aimed at enabling participants to effectively manage and run their projects, and later propose and implement humanitarian projects in their areas of responsibilities. The materials were shared with seven partners who provided this training to over 210 staff from 70 small NGOs in 11 governorates across the country. 34 CBOs were supported to implement projects categorized as vocational, community development and mobilization, support to persons with specific needs, education, medical, rehabilitation for persons with disabilities, PSS in addition to child protection/ education such as classes for children with visual disabilities.

Outreach Volunteers

The community centres continued to be supported by 2,810 Syrian Outreach Volunteers (ORVs) whose capacities were developed to play an active role in their communities by identifying the needs and linking communities to the specialized services delivered in the community centres and other service providers, disseminating protection information and providing first responses and referrals. Compared to 2,190 ORVs by the end of 2017, their expansion was in line with the expansion of the community and satellite centres across the country.

Yazan goes back to school

During a UNHCR follow up visit to southern Tartous, a UNHCR team met Yazan a nine-year old boy who suffers from Hydrocephalus. After following the awareness raising sessions organized by the outreach volunteers of Al-Batoul, Yazan became able to pursue his education "I cannot believe that I can now continue my study to reach the university level. I want to become a doctor one day," said Yazan with determination. Through the outreach volunteers, UNHCR managed to re-enrol 167 displaced children in school in 2018.

A training for UNHCR outreach volunteers on child protection. | ©UNHCR | *2018.*

Education

UNHCR provided non-formal education programmes through remedial classes and accelerated learning activities to over 107,440 primary and secondary level students at public schools and within the community centres. Out of this number, 14,754 were out of school children and 23,322 were beneficiaries from the homework café activities within the community centres in different governorates.

Dropout students applying for the national exams

When the reconciliation agreement took place in Al Waer neighbourhood in Homs after three years of besiegement, the community centre of Al Waer opened on 25 October 2017 in cooperation with UNHCR partner Aoun to serve with a full package of protection services some 18,500 individuals in the area, of whom 3,700 are internally displaced.
In one of UNHCR's visits to the community centre, the team met Shifaa Sebaai who is the education coordinator. “Our students who were internally displaced did not have the chance to formally study the 9th and 12th grade so they registered in remedial classes to be eligible for these two national exams. In the latest revision that they took, many of our students got full marks thanks to the good guidance and orientation of our teachers here at the community centre.” Shifaa said proudly.

Services for persons with specific needs

The psychological needs of the population in Syria were still on the rise due to the prevailing extensive stress factors linked to the extended crisis and its effects having a serious impact on the psychological well-being of the majority of people, resulting in the insistent need for sustainable services of mental health and psychosocial support. In 2018, 26,667 IDPs were provided with psychosocial support case management services, and individual and group counselling sessions. A total of 794 humanitarian workers and service providers were trained on different MHPSS topics. Some 1,800 IDPs who suffered from severe mental disorders were referred to specialized MHPSS services carried out by psychotherapists and/or psychiatrists. In addition, 739,646 persons of concern participated in 27,958 social and recreational events and awareness sessions such as art, drawing, dancing, interactive theatre and psychodrama. Furthermore, UNHCR’s partners provided different types of medical and general in-kind assistance to address identified needs of 101,963 individuals with the aim of reducing the risks they face and preventing their resort to harmful coping mechanisms. The specific needs of older persons were identified and addressed through home-based trained Syrian ORVs and ‘golden age’ clubs (constituted of older persons) in the community centres. 3,997 older persons without support networks, in addition to 1,370 children with severe developmental delays were reached, respectively, through the home-based rehabilitation and home-based training programmes, which include intensive training for family members and other care givers.

Madiha overcomes her illness

Madiha is a displaced widow who fled Jeser Al-Shughour in Idleb seeking a safe haven in Lattakia with her two daughters. One day, Madiha was diagnosed with cancer and her psychological condition deteriorated, until she heard about the services of the UNHCR and SARC-supported community centre in Qnenes from which she sought support and enrolled in the psychosocial support programme as well as in a vocational training course on recycling.
As the recycling and production of items do not require a big investment, Madiha was able to start a home-based production workshop. “I have been through times when I felt I had nothing left in life. Now, I am in the acceptance phase where I feel I have the power to defeat my illness” said Madiha to a UNHCR staff during one of the monitoring visits to the community centre. “With the production of competitive good-quality items, I can now pay for my medication and make a remarkable improvement in my health condition”, said Madiha with a voice full of hope.

Child protection

In terms of recreational services, approximately 339,480 children benefited from social and recreational activities in community centres, child-friendly spaces, schools and other outreach activities. In addition, 14,926 awareness raising sessions were conducted for children, caregivers and community members (an estimate of 298,520 children and their families were reached through the awareness sessions). Through these interventions, children with protection risks were identified from the displaced persons, returnees and host communities, and referred to a comprehensive case management process conducted by trained child protection case workers or managers. By the end of 2018, a total number of 13,379 children exposed to various types of protection risks were assessed and assisted through the case management process. Regular counselling and assessments were conducted for children at risk to ensure their well-being and to respond to their specific needs directly or through referrals.

Yousef lives his childhood

Yousef is a nine-year old boy who barely knows his home. Since he was two, his family was displaced from Qusour in Homs city. At the age of seven, Yousef was forced to leave school and work to support his family. “The environment in which Yousef was living made him unfriendly and sometimes aggressive. However, we have no other choice as we have no source of income”, said Yousef’s mother sadly while approaching UNHCR’s community centre run by Al Birr in Qusour neighbourhood.
Yousef was referred to a case manager for assistance where he expressed his desire to enroll in school like other children of his age. To achieve this, Yousef was registered in the accelerated learning programme and he attended awareness sessions and recreational activities to enhance his abilities and build up his personality.
Moreover, Yousef’s mother was informed of the available services at the community centre and received a start-up small business grant. “For years, I suffered watching my son work for our survival. Now I can afford to support us while he can pursue his education.” said Yousef’s mother proud and happy.

UNHCR along with its partners, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, established and continued to support 207 community-based child protection structures in various locations across the country (shelters, schools and through community centres in 11 governorate), namely children's clubs and child welfare committees.

Mobile team from UNHCR's partner Namaa playing with Mohmed, 6 years old displaced child from Afrin to Ahres village in northern rural Aleppo. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *October 2018.*

Amal struggles to get her right to education

After her displacement from Aleppo to Tartous, Amal was taken out of school. "My parents wanted me to get married but I am still young", said Amal seeking support from a case manager in Al-Batoul community centre in southern Tartous after attending one of the awareness sessions.

"I feel that I have lost my basic right to continue my education, however thanks to the empowerment and problem solving skills that I learnt in this course, I managed to convince my parents to let me go back to school", said Amal who received educational support from the community centre to apply for the 9th grade exam.

Amal managed to pass the national exam and when meeting the UNHCR team she said "My journey will not stop here, this is only the beginning," she continued "my fight was not only for myself, but also for my sister, she can now pursue her studies at school and apply for the exam next year!"

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

UNHCR and its partners identified and supported 7,837 survivors of SGBV through case management in the community centres (including counselling, PSS, women resilience and empowerment interventions, health care and legal aid). In addition, survivors who faced safety concerns and were at imminent risk by the perpetrator and in need of comprehensive follow-up were referred to a safe house for SGBV survivors funded by UNHCR. The safe house provided assistance to 28 SGBV survivors with children who faced safety concerns or suffered severe psychosocial consequences and were provided with psychosocial support, specialized PSS, medical services, vocational training, educational sessions and recreational activities. Capacity building activities were conducted for a total of 792 frontline workers, social workers and gynaecologists through workshops and sessions on basics of SGBV, case management, clinical management of rape, and facilitation of awareness activities. Furthermore, 9,850 awareness sessions were conducted for 224,445 displaced persons in collective shelters and community centres in various governorates. During some of these sessions, 70,874 kits were distributed to address the different needs of women in the community, including during the 16 Days of Activism campaign. Furthermore, UNHCR partners established 97 women committees to enhance the role of women in the decision-making process, in the identification of needs of their communities and in the design of activities which will be supported by UNHCR and its partners.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

UNHCR has been acting as a co-chair to newly revived Syria PSEA In-Country Network and is co-leading various initiatives. UNHCR conducted training of trainers' sessions for an expanded countrywide network of UNHCR focal points and back-ups. The training has been rolled out to all staff at field offices. Trainings of partner organizations on PSEA and setting of community-based complaint mechanisms in place will be rolled out in 2019 in collaboration with UN Agencies, Government and Partner Organizations. Internally, the PSEA reporting and complaint mechanisms have been reinforced with the appointment of PSEA focal points at country and field offices.

Legal aid and related issues

The legal aid project expanded since the beginning of 2018 with 211 lawyers and 102 legal ORVs, which provided legal services to 386,776 displaced persons in 14 governorates. Out of the total, 170,080 individuals benefited from legal counselling, 109,160 benefited from lawyers' intervention before courts/administrative bodies, and 107,536 benefited from 4,591 awareness sessions on legal issues mainly related to civil documentation. Furthermore, the consistent cooperation with the various local NGOs and the close coordination with relevant authorities, have enabled partners to enhance the access of displaced people to civil documentation, through mobile teams, on issues mainly related to birth and marriage registration, family booklet, identity cards, specifically in hard-to-reach and rural areas that have undergone the reconciliation process such as Jeroud, Al Doumeir, Eastern Ghouta, Afrin and Al Rastan.

As a follow up on the impact of UNHCR technical support project that was implemented in 2017 and early 2018, more beneficiaries were served on various issues related to civil documents and since the beginning of 2018 an increase of 100 % of civil document issuance was observed comparing with end of 2017.

In addition, in 2018, the Civil Documentation Booklet that was developed by UNHCR in coordination with the Ministry of Interior/ Directorate of Civil Affairs was printed and published. The booklet was designed to assist in raising the awareness of Syrian nationals on the importance of civil documentations, their requirements, and the relevant procedures to obtain the civil documents. By the end of 2018, 200,000 copies of the booklet were printed and distributed in 14 governorates through UNHCR partners, Sub and Field Offices, civil registries, immigration departments, Syrian Diplomatic missions in five regional countries and other relevant agencies. The booklet was also made available on UNHCR's and MoI's websites.

Additionally, a leaflet on birth registration was drafted by UNHCR in coordination with the Civil Affairs to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration and the required procedures. The flier was approved by MoFAE to be published by one of UNHCR's partners (SARC). 15,000 copies were printed and distributed to IDPs and returnees through SARCs community centres and other UNHCR partners.

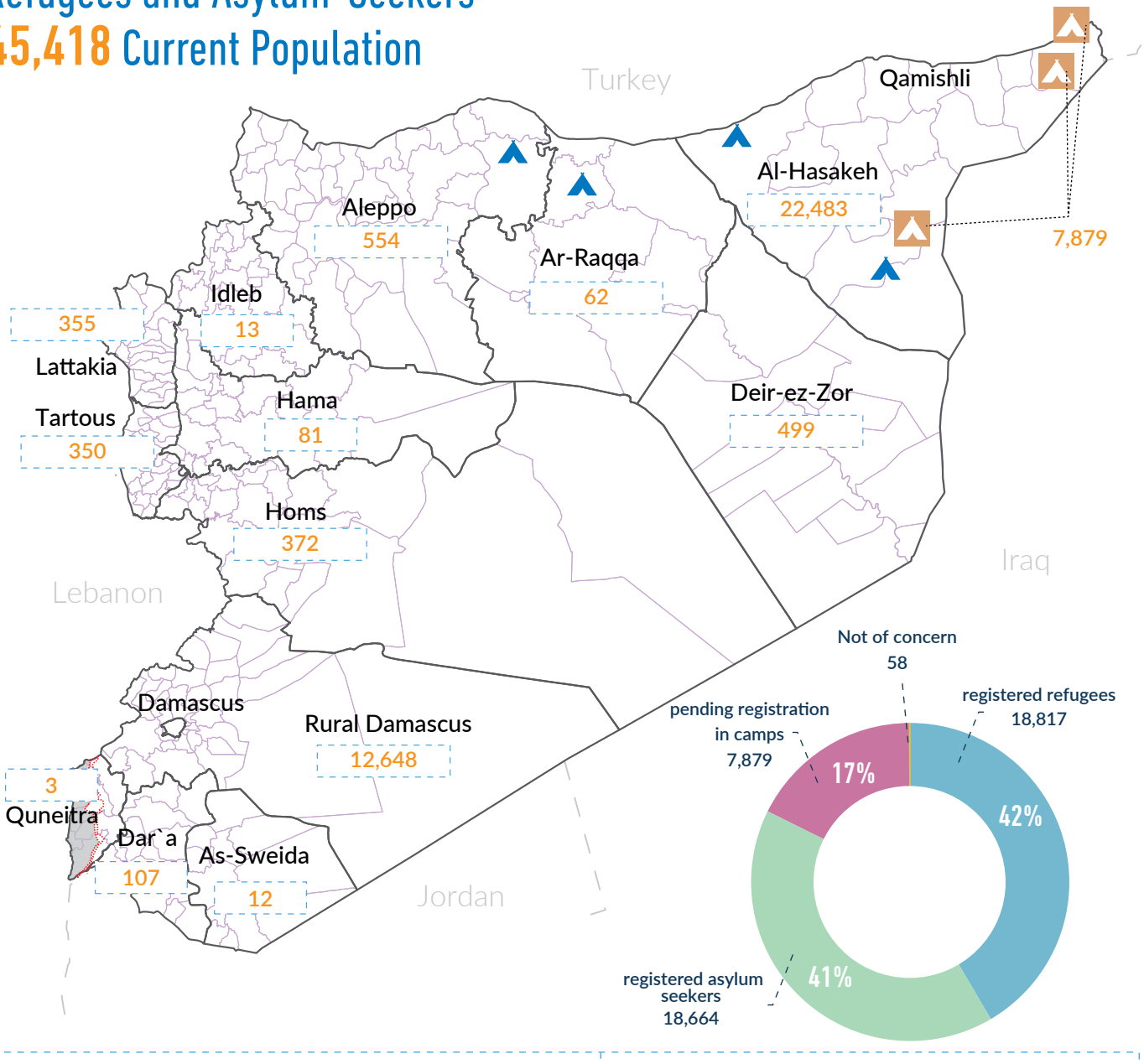
Avin, 19 years old shows us her finger prints after her first time applying for an identity card. Once she receives her identity card she will be able to apply for University. Fafin area, rural Aleppo. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *October 2018.*

Khatma obtains vital civil documentation after several years

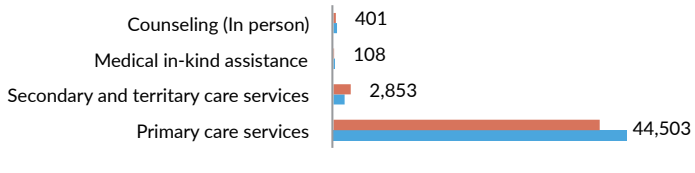
Khatma, a mother of three, was displaced to Salamiya from northern Hama three years ago. Khatma and her husband got married seven years ago, but their marriage was not registered in the court due to the security situation in their area, nor was the birth of their children registered. Khatma recently realized that the need to register the birth of her children is vital in order to receive basic rights, starting with the education of her children.
"The process of marriage and birth registration in our situation is complicated and expensive", said Khatma.
Through the legal aid offered by UNHCR and its partner SARC, the lawyers assisted Khatma and her husband to register their marriage, and to issue birth certificates for their three children. "My children now actually exist. They have an identity and they can go to school", said a hopeful Khatma.

Refugee Protection and Assistance Programme

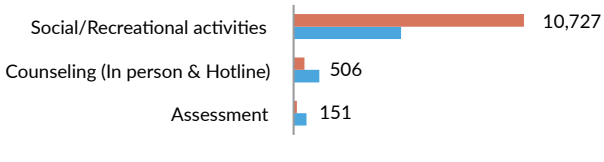
Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
45,418 Current Population



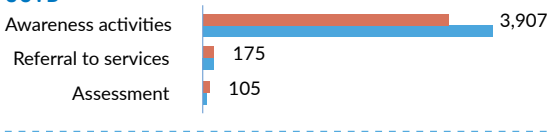
Health

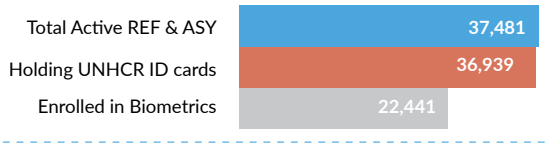


Child Protection

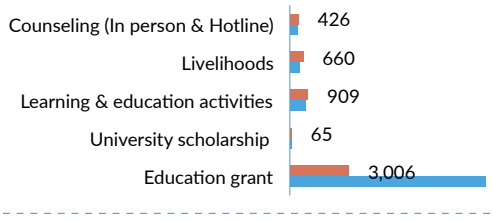


SGVB

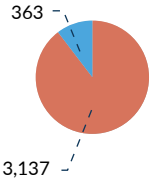




Education/Livelihood



Legal Services



Total of refugees and asylum-seekers | Refugees Camps | IDPs Camps

The Syrian Arab Republic is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and has also not enacted national refugee legislation. Nevertheless, Syria has been tolerant in hosting refugees and has continued to cooperate with UNHCR in extending protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers on its territory. The population of refugees and asylum seekers is 45,418. This includes 18,817 refugees mostly residing in Damascus and in Al-Hasakeh Governorates who are predominantly from Iraq (some 18,664 asylum-seekers, mostly residing in urban Qamishli; and 7,879 Iraqi asylum seekers located in three camps (Newroz, Roj and Al-Hol) in Al-Hasakeh governorate). There has been a significant reduction in the camp-based population in 2017 due to nearly 19,000 individuals returning to Iraq under bilateral arrangements of the authorities since November 2017. Although the Syrian Arab Republic maintains a generous approach to refugees (granting them access to territory and free access to education), since the onset of the crisis in 2011, the protection environment for refugees has seriously deteriorated.

The breakdown of family structures and of law and order have led to an increase in SGBV and child protection concerns, such as child labour, school drop-outs and early marriages. Lack of documentation, residency problems, detention and lack of solutions are key challenges for a number of refugees. Refugees can access health care facilities in Syria, but these services are not free of charge. As a consequence of the present situation in Syria and the unconducive conditions for return in most refugees' countries of origin, there are few prospects for durable solutions aside from the over-stretched resettlement programme.

The registration of the Iraqi camp population in Al-Hasakeh started in May 2018 and will continue in a phased manner, starting with refugee camps, followed by registration of any refugees currently residing in IDP camps.

Achievements end of the year 2018 – Refugee programme

Registration

The total number of refugees in Syria decreased from 19,429 by the end of 2017 to 18,817 by the end of December 2018 and mainly originating from Iraq (83 %), followed by Afghanistan (7 %), Sudan (4 %), Somalia (2 %), and other countries (4 %). By contrast, the number of asylum-seekers increased to 18,664 individuals by the end of December 2018 compared to 18,108 by the end of 2017 with 98 % originating from Iraq and other main countries of origin being Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia. In addition, 7,879 individuals from Iraq have been identified in Al-Hol camp in Al-Hasakeh governorate who are yet to be registered as asylum-seekers, while the population of Newroz and Roj camps were formally registered with UNHCR and included among the total number of asylum-seekers.

Biometric IRIS scan and registration for an Iraqi asylum seeker in Newroz camp, Al-Hasakeh | ©UNHCR | November 2018.

UNHCR continued to register urban asylum-seekers, while Newroz and Roj camps populations were formally registered as asylum-seekers (605). The remaining population in Al-Hol camp in Al-Hasakeh governorate will continue to be 'identified' until formal registration takes place.

The overall coverage of ID cards reached 99 % of the registered refugees and asylum-seekers. Full coverage is constrained by issues of access to those who reside in areas not controlled by the GoS or who face challenges in reaching UNHCR.

Refugee status determination

UNHCR conducted Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews for 580 individuals with 640 decisions issued in 2018 282 individuals were granted refugee status, while 194 were rejected. Those recognized were predominately Iraqis and of those rejected, Sudanese and Iraqis were the predominate nationalities. The reduction in processed numbers reflects the lower numbers of new registrations in Syria throughout 2018. In line with this reduction of registration cases, the RSD Unit reduced its caseworkers by two staff. In line with the trend from 2017 there was only one 'No Semblance of Claim' case. The removal of cash assistance for asylum seekers appears to have removed any pull factors for such registrations. UNHCR reduced the waiting period from registration to first interview from 233 days in 2017 to 50 days in 2018. UNHCR has also embarked on a capacity building project to enhance RSD knowledge and competence among national staff through extensive on-the-job training and engagement of all case workers in either the RSD learning programme or the interview learning programme. The RSD capacity to process claims pending at field level was also increased throughout the year. An RSD mission to Tartous was undertaken and innovative techniques used for Aleppo have helped to reduce numbers in these governorates. While an RSD mission has not yet been possible to Al-Hasakeh, a programme has been designed remotely with the field office to process cancellation of Syrian nationals registered as Iraqis starting in January 2018 and capacity building with Al-Hasakeh staff is ongoing.

Resettlement

Presently 18,863 refugees in addition to 18,669 registered asylum-seekers are under UNHCR Syria's mandate. These refugees fled human rights violation and violence in their home countries and are now facing the effects of the crisis in the countryasylum. Prohibited from legal work opportunities, even informal employment was in 2018 difficult to find due to the deterioration of the economic situation in the country and extensive destruction of infrastructure, leaving many refugees entirely dependent on humanitarian aid. The crisis and insecurity also had a negative impact on access to education and health care. Unable to return home, with no local integration prospects, resettlement is increasingly the only durable solution available. In this context, resettlement serves as a protection tool to resolve the problems of the most vulnerable refugees in Syria that cannot be addressed otherwise.

UNHCR Syria submitted 376 persons under 107 cases for resettlement consideration to the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, Canada, Norway and the Netherlands between January and December 2018. Out of these, 63 % were submitted under survivors of torture and violence category, 24 % under legal and physical protection needs, 10 % were submitted under women and girls at risk category and the remaining under medical needs, children at risk and family reunification categories. In 2018, a total of 219 persons departed on resettlement to Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. UNHCR also assisted in the (non-resettlement) departure of 68 persons. Owing to the limited solutions for refugees out of Syria, management of refugee expectations continues to be a priority. A total of 3,378 persons were counselled during the year of 2018 on resettlement and durable solutions.

Enhanced support continued to be provided to resettlement countries through facilitation of Digital Video Conferencing (DVC) interviews, biometric collection, and hand-delivery of documents to various locations, Emergency Transit Facility transfers and 'land bridge' departures via Lebanon. In 2018, biometrics were collected on behalf of Australia for 61 persons and 75 persons were interviewed via DVC by Australia and Canada. UNHCR Syria also facilitated the evacuation of 34 persons to the Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) for onward resettlement in the United Kingdom.

Education

As of December 2018, approximately 9,806 of the refugee and asylum-seeker population are at primary school age while 2,499 children are at secondary school age. In an effort to support and maintain refugee education, UNHCR provided Education Cash Grant to over 3,006 refugee children in nine governorates. 909 refugees and asylum-seekers children benefited from remedial classes and accelerated learning programmes through the network of community centres. UNHCR continued to support 65 refugee students to continue their university studies in Syria covering tuition fees and some living expenses. Furthermore, 426 individuals were advised on provided education activities and school registration in public schools through dedicated hotline and counselling.

UNHCR providing a cash grant for a refugee student with his mother | ©UNHCR/Ola Kablan | *September 2018.*

Community mobilization

During 2018, 109 refugee Outreach Volunteers (ORVs) coming from different age groups and diverse social backgrounds, representing the refugees communities of Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Chad, Eritrea continued to support their communities in four governorates; Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus and Al-Hasakeh. The ORVs attended some 100 technical and participatory meetings which were held by UNHCR focal points to share information, receive proper coaching and review identified cases.

Two rounds of training refreshing sessions were provided to the ORVs during 2018, covering topics about basic child protection, SGBV, vulnerabilities and community mobilization, in addition to a training on life skills and leadership provided by Sub-Office Damascus. UNHCR acknowledges the ORVs' contribution in mobilizing their communities and responding to the urgent needs, therefore UNHCR Sub-Office Damascus organized a retreat for the teams to enhance the volunteers' wellbeing, and to strengthen the team building spirit.

The ORVs maintained their key role in linking these communities with UNHCR offices, disseminating information on services, identifying cases in need of urgent intervention by the offices, in addition to facilitating Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and awareness raising sessions on health, PSS, SGBV issues. As part of their role in mobilizing community resources, and through the FGDs conducted by them, the ORVs were able to inspire the refugee community to propose 25 community initiatives implemented by 375 refugees, benefiting 13,750 refugees residing in Damascus, Rural Damascus and Al-Hol camp in Al-Hasakeh. The implemented initiatives addressed various needs raised by the refugee communities, such as establishing playgrounds for children, teaching tailoring, cleaning campaigns, rehabilitating refugee residences for older persons, wool knitting, WASH related rehabilitation and campaigns, self-managed campaigns promoting self-hygiene, making and producing hygiene products, self-learning and community self-managed education and preparing special rooms for older persons to meet and participate in some activities.

Smile with us, a community-led initiative by refugees

A group of four refugee dentists in Damascus came up with an initiative titled “smile with us» to assist the vulnerable refugees suffering from dental diseases, to have dental implants, dentures and dental prostheses replacing missing teeth. Around 25 refugees from different nationalities, have benefited from this initiative.
Khuder Alani, a 72 - year old refugee from Iraq, who suffered from dental diseases said “I used to have painful chewing, bleeding while brushing or when eating hard food. However, I could not financially afford the high expenses of the medical treatment. The surgery had a significant impact on my health and consequently my life”.

Services for persons with specific needs

UNHCR continued its partnership with GOPA in order to provide psychosocial support services to the refugees and asylum seekers in Al-Hasakeh and Qamishli camps, while the refugees in other rural and urban areas were provided with psychosocial support services through community centres supported by UNHCR in all the governorates. A total of 5,442 refugees participated in 259 social and recreational events including soft PSS activities organized in Al-Hol, Roj, and Newroz camps in Al-Hasakeh. Additionally, 974 refugees received direct psychosocial services by UNHCR staff and PSS outreach volunteers, and were referred to MHPSS services at the multi-disciplinary clinics of SARC. The identified predominant psychological disorders among adults were depression and anxiety, while the predominant disorder among children was attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. In addition, 2,985 refugees with specific needs benefited from the medical in-kind assistance aiming at reducing the risks they were facing and helping them meet their various basic needs.

Child Protection

Refugee children are facing various challenges such as bullying in the community and schools, psychosocial problems, SGBV and dropping out of school forcibly in order to contribute to the families’ income; taking into consideration the fact that refugees are not allowed to work in Syria. UNHCR continued to provide counselling and assistance to refugee children at risk through various types of interventions based on the outcomes of children assessments in order to determine their best interests and the most appropriate intervention, including referrals to specialized services. By the end of 2018, 17 best interests’ determination (BID) processes were carried out to identify the most suitable durable solution for specific cases including separation from family (unaccompanied and separated children), dispute on custody and domestic violence. In addition, 259 best interests’ assessments (BIA) for children identified with different risks were conducted. Furthermore, 77 other types of assessments such as note for the file were carried out, while 506 counselling sessions and follow ups were delivered through hotline and interviews.
UNHCR partners and the refugee ORVs played an essential role in reaching out refugee children at risk through home visits and during recreational activities especially those conducted in hard-to-reach areas. 160 awareness raising sessions about child protection were also delivered to the community members. Additionally, UNHCR supported child-friendly spaces within its premises and at one of the refugees’ shelter in the North East of Syria, providing children a safe place to play, learn and interact under the supervision of the outreach volunteers and the partners’ staff. During 2018, 13,856 refugee and asylum seeker children benefited from social and recreational events and PSS activities, through mobile and fixed child-friendly spaces and outreach activities.

SGBV

SGBV case management continued to be directly undertaken by UNHCR in addition to partner’s efforts in Qamishli. Qualified and trained staff within Damascus and Qamishli Sub Offices (where the majority of the refugee population reside) were dedicated to assess and follow up on the needs of survivors of SGBV to ensure an adequate access to available services. 105 new cases of SGBV were identified within the refugee and asylum-seeker population. Following to the identification of cases and the counselling, survivors were referred to services relevant to their needs such as PSS, health care, safe shelter and legal aid. In addition, complementary types of assistance were provided including monthly financial assistance, urgent cash grants, community support through trained volunteers and empowerment programmes.

The role of the community in preventing SGBV was further enhanced through focus group discussions and the active presence of the outreach volunteers in the community and their engagement in awareness programmes especially during the campaign of 16 days of activism. The awareness activities were designed with full participation of the outreach volunteers to address and increase the awareness of women, men, boys and girls on topics raised by the community themselves on the occurrence of SGBV, its causes and negative consequences as well as services available for survivors. Up to 3,907 refugees benefited from 226 awareness campaigns.

Legal aid

UNHCR continued to provide legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers through contracted lawyers before administrative departments and courts whenever required. By end of 2018, 1,380 refugees and asylum seekers were assisted by UNHCR through counselling, direct interventions and awareness raising on issues related to birth registration and civil documentation. Furthermore, 1,757 refugees and asylum seekers received legal assistance on issues mainly related to residency, exit visa issuance, response to SGBV incidents, in addition to other legal/protection matters. 19 legal interventions before courts were finalized on birth registration, GBV response and marriage authentication.

UNHCR continued to conduct regular visits to accessible detention centres to monitor the conditions of detained persons of concern, and conduct protection interviews to provide basic material assistance. 55 individuals were reported to be detained, two of them were minors arrested with their families. UNHCR continued to advocate for the release of refugees and asylum seekers not involved in criminal acts, and to sensitize the authorities on the need to respect the principle of non-refoulement. 22 advocacy interventions for releasing were initiated by UNHCR and 27 refugees were released after being cleared by judicial apparatus.

UNHCR's advocacy with relevant Syrian authorities continued and approvals were received to regularize the status of refugees and asylum seekers with illegal entry/expired travel documents, including Palestinians who were living in Iraq. 273 asylum seekers and refugees were assisted in 2018 in legalizing their status in spite of their illegal entry and expired passports. Additionally, exit visa was granted for refugees without penalties in spite of their illegal entries or lack of documents, and refugees' children who were born in Syria and holding a Syrian birth certificate are granted residency based on the Syrian birth certificate.

UNHCR Syria Representative honoring Iman and Jawaher, refugees' outreach volunteers on the occasion of the World Refugee Day. | ©UNHCR/Bassam Diab | *June 2018.*

World Refugee Day

A series of special events inclusive of cultural activities, art and craft in 12 locations under the theme "We Stand Together #With Refugees" was carried out. More than 1,000 refugees participated as organizers, performers, and participants.

UNHCR and its partners' celebrations in Al-Hol camp, Al-Hasakeh on the occasion of the World Refugee Day | ©UNHCR | June 2018.

Cash assistance in urban areas and camps

The refugee cash assistance programme, which was previously composed of two components (cash for food for all refugees and additional financial assistance for vulnerable profiles), was replaced by a multipurpose cash grant (MPG) in March 2018. UNHCR also continued to support asylum-seekers living outside camps in Al-Hasakeh governorate with unconditional, unrestricted cash for food assistance, due to the fact that refugee status determination is not carried out for this population.

In line with evolving protection policy and regional practice focusing on targeted assistance, the operation introduced a targeted approach for cash assistance in order to assist the most vulnerable groups. Eligibility for the MPG and cash for food is determined by calculating a dependency ratio for each household, taking into consideration age and severe vulnerabilities. This results in a categorization of each household into one of four vulnerability categories. From March onwards, UNHCR has been providing cash assistance to refuges falling within categories II, III and IV, and to asylum-seekers falling within categories III and IV only. This resulted in a decrease of eligible households from 8,225 at the beginning of the year to 5,166 during the May/June distribution cycle.

To ensure precise targeting of families in need, UNHCR has been updating individual records and carrying out vulnerability assessments to ensure all vulnerabilities are taken into consideration. The transition phase between January and April saw a high volume of inquiries related to cash eligibility received by both the UNHCR hotlines and the refugee reception centre. One hundred and eighty-six families were given appointments for a review of their eligibility based on additional information provided to UNHCR. These numbers dropped during May and June as refugees used the opportunity to update their records during the previous months and had become more familiar with the new targeting criteria.

The operation continued improving its cash delivery systems and processes, ensuring convenience and ease of use for recipients as well as efficiency and cost-effectiveness for the organisation. A new software application was developed to manage assistance planning, disbursement, reconciliation and reporting. UNHCR is gradually phasing out of the cheque-voucher modality and has prepared the ground for a transition to ATM cards for refugees not from Iraq to streamline it with the card-based delivery mechanism used for Iraqi refugees. For the past several years, the group of refugees who are not from Iraq has been receiving entitlements through a cheque, which had to be collected from UNHCR premises and then cashed at a bank branch within a specified time period. This cumbersome procedure incurred high transport costs for recipients and demanded significant staff time from the UNHCR team. In July, all eligible families were issued rechargeable and prepaid ATM cards that can be used at ATMs throughout the country at the family's convenience.

In 2018, 1,535refugees were supported with education grant, which is a conditional grant with targeted entitlement paid to families who have children enrolled in primary or secondary public education institutions to encourage continued enrolment of children in school. Additionally tertiary level education grant (pocket money) was also paid to 57 selected university students to enable them to purchase books, stationery and other related needs over the course of their studies.
During the months of November and December, the entire target population of refugees and asylum seekers (22,958 individuals 7,163 families) benefited from the winterization cash assistance, a multi-purpose grant to cover increased basic needs during the winter season, in particular heating fuel and winter clothes.
In 2018, the total number of refugees supported with Multi-Purpose Cash Grant was 29,356 individuals/6,447 families while 7,859 asylum seekers/1,521 families were supported with Cash for Food.

Responding to Immediate and Urgent Needs of Spontaneous Returnees

UNHCR in Rasm Elahmar village, Menbij in eastern rural Aleppo assessing the needs of the new returnees. | ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | *October 2018.*

Background

In 2018 returns occurred amidst concerns about the availability of adequate services and risks for the civilian population due to high levels of explosive hazard contamination in areas of origin/return that was under protracted hostilities. Returns also created a high demand for housing, basic services, civil registration and documentation and livelihood opportunities.

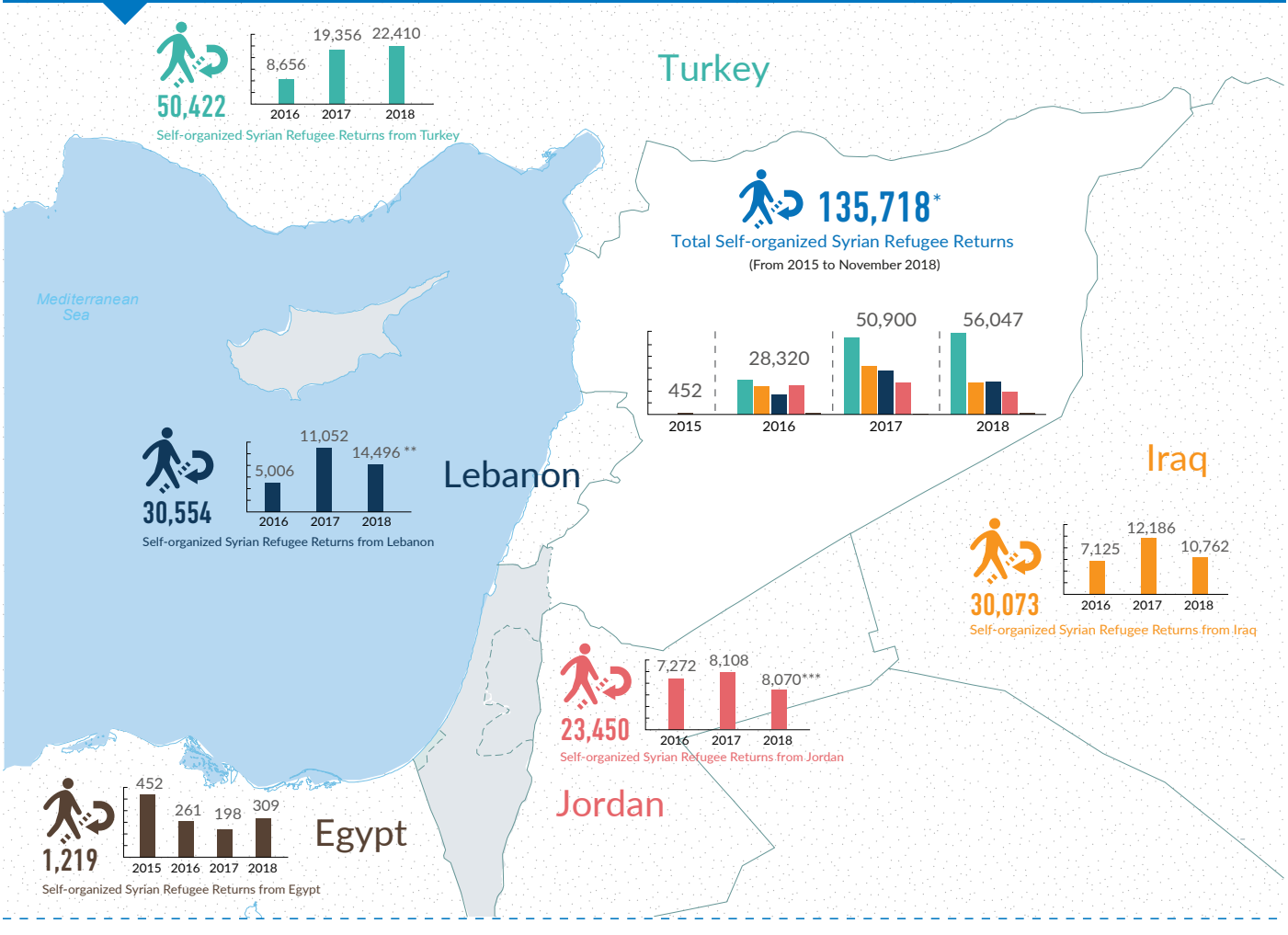
Self-organized refugee returns from neighbouring countries were observed in 2018. Overall, the conditions were yet not in place to allow for facilitated returns of refugees from abroad, however UNHCR was prepared for potential larger-scale returns. For the refugees that decided to return to Syria voluntarily in 2018, UNHCR assisted them as right of return is a principle of international law. Returning refugees were integrated into UNHCR's ongoing humanitarian programmes, on the basis of need and not status, in a manner equal to other populations, including IDPs and returning IDPs as well as the host communities.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR Syria scaled up its preparedness and response plan for refugee returns. UNHCR interventions inside Syria for refugee and IDP returnees were informed by the 2018 HRP, which presents the inter-agency coordinated humanitarian response, and which included UNHCR's projection of the return of 200,000 refugees in 2018. In addition, UNHCR's 'Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy: Voluntary Return to Syria', set out programmatic and policy guidance on UNHCR's engagement in the return of Syrian refugees (phase 1/phase 2). Also in 2018, the Syria Return and Reintegration Working Group (RRWG), was established, and multi-partner body dedicated to coordination and standard setting for returning and returned IDPs and refugees, bringing together key Government and interagency actors and coordination structures in Syria.

Return trends

Since 2015, UNHCR recorded 135,718 refugee returns to Syria from Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. These figures encompass returns verified and confirmed by UNHCR, based on government sources and direct observation by UNHCR. The actual number of returns may be significantly higher[1].

Self-organized Syrian refugee returns in 2018 as verified by UNHCR*



* The numbers reported are only those monitored by UNHCR and do not reflect the entire returns.

** This number includes 5,596 individuals who UNHCR has verified as having spontaneously returned on their own, as well as 8,900 individuals who have been matched against the UNHCR database from the GSO lists of organised group returns. The total number of individuals on lists shared by the GSO in 2018 amounts to 11,133 individuals, and the matching process is ongoing.

*** The figures following the re-opening of Jaber border crossing are tentative. UNHCR identifies returns based on departure lists regularly obtained from the Government.

During the first few months of 2018, the humanitarian situation in Syria deteriorated, with simultaneous crisis occurring in different areas of the country, including north-west Syria, Afrin and Eastern Ghouta, which required UNHCR and other humanitarian actors to scale-up their responses. At the same time, self-organized returns of IDPs and refugees from neighbouring countries continued to areas where stability was restored, hostilities declined or ceased, as well as to newly accessible areas. Some 800,000 spontaneous returns took place in 2017, including some 764,310 IDPs and 50,902 refugees. The trend of IDP returns continued in 2018 and by the end of 2018, 1.4 million IDPs in Syria returned to their homes, while 56,047 Syrian refugees spontaneously returned between January and December 2018.

[1] *These figures do not yet include the potentially large number of Syrians who returned through the Turkey Ramadan temporary return permits, but who did not return to Turkey by the permit expiry date.*

Refugee's intention to return

Since 2017, UNHCR operations in host countries neighbouring Syria have been conducting Return Perception and Intention Surveys (RPIS) as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with Syrian refugees on their future return intentions. During the fourth round of return intention surveys conducted between March and June 2018, 4,283 Syrian refugees residing in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan were interviewed. According to the 2018 survey, 76 per cent of Syrian refugees hoped to return to Syria one day. This percentage increased by about a quarter from 51 per cent in 2017. However, 19 per cent of refugees noted that they do not plan to ever return to Syria. For most, the intention to return will not materialize in 2019, as 85 per cent of respondents stated they do not have intentions to return to Syria in the next 12 months.

Common concerns raised by both those intending to return and those waiting to decide include the fragility of the security situation in some parts of the country, the presence of unexploded ordinance and physical risks in other areas, and the need for guarantees that they will remain safe on return and that their rights will be respected. For some, conscription, and fear of punishment for having fled or refusing to serve in the military remained a key deterrent to return. Legal obstacles and challenges in reclaiming property or having their civil documentation or education certificates recognized are also impediments.

Of those interviewed by UNHCR who owned property prior to flight, 46 per cent stated they believed their homes to have been destroyed, while 10 per cent believed that their homes were partially destroyed or damaged.

Refugees were similarly concerned about obstacles to accessing basic services, including health and education, and by how they will provide for their families. Refugee men, women, girls and boys, youth, elderly, minorities, and persons with disabilities may each require tailored legal and material support to overcome specific obstacles affecting them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hope to return one day

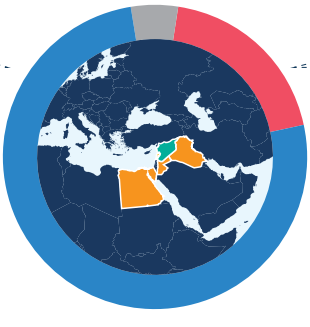
76% hope to return to Syria one day

41% of refugees not considering a return within the coming 12 months found it imperative to go back to Syria for a "go-andsee"visit

25% increase in refugees hoping to return one day since 2017.

5% are undecided

43% of undecided refugees found it imperative to go back to Syria for a "go-and-see" visit



19% do not plan to return

65% of refugees with no hope to return had destroyed property compared to 51 % of total respondents.

24% of refugees with no hope to return had no family members in Syria compared to 17 % of total respondents.

Intention to return in the next 12 months

85% **do not** intend to return in the next 12 months.

11% **are yet to decide** about whether to return in the next 12 months

4% **intend** to return in the next 12 months.

Syrian refugees` intentions to return in the next year may change with notable improvements in:

91% of refugees intending to return within 12 months had at least one family member in Syria compared to 83 % of total respondents.

47% of refugees intending to return within 12 months had an intact property in Syria compared to 23 % of total respondents.

89%* of refugees intending to return within 12 months were assessed to be severely or highly vulnerable compared to 74 % of total respondents.

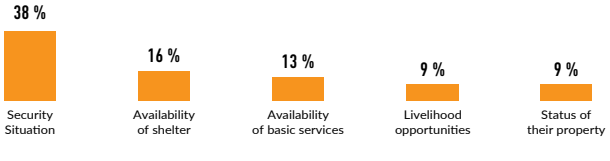
*In countries where information on refugees' socio-economic vulnerability is available (i.e. Lebanon and Jordan),

I. Safety & Security
The lack of predictable and sustainable physical safety in Syria is the primary factor influencing refugees' plans for the future. Refugees highlighted the situation of indiscriminate violence or risks of targeted reprisal as key obstacles to return.

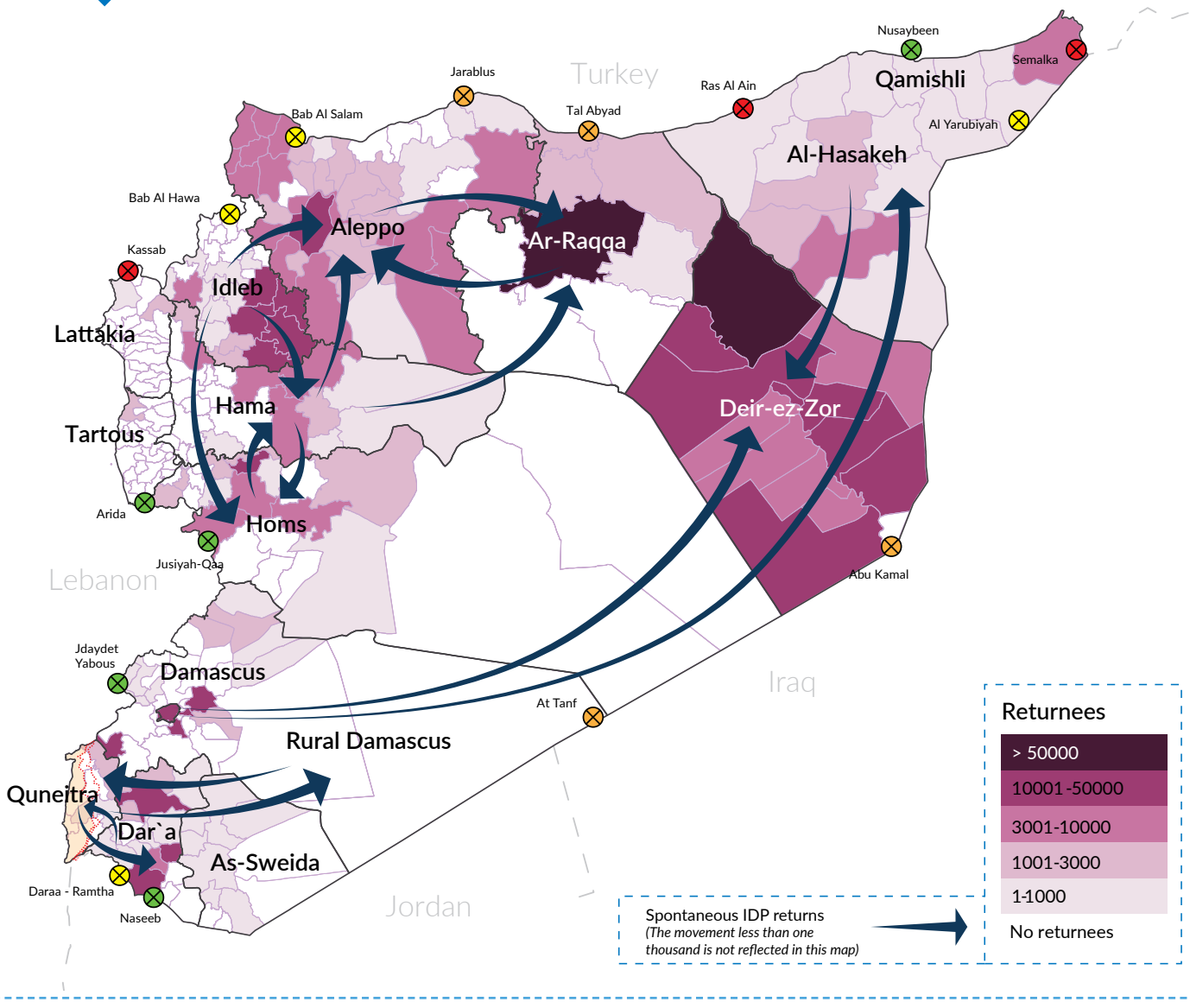
II. Access to adequate housing
75 per cent of refugees not intending to return in the next 12 months responded that they don't have inhabitable housing in Syria.

III. Work opportunities
Access to, or lack of, livelihood was regarded as a determining factor influencingdecisions on return.

51% of the respondents planning to return to Syria within 12 months believe they do not have sufficient information on their intended area of return for the purpose of restarting their lives - the top five information needs cited are in respect to:



1.4 Million IDP Returnees



UNHCR's framework for returns

In 2018, UNHCR Syria's interventions inside Syria on refugee and IDP return were informed by:

- Humanitarian Response Plan (2018) which presented the inter-agency coordinated humanitarian response, and which included UNHCR's projection of the return of 200,000 refugees;
- UNHCR Syria's Country Operations Plan for Pillar 3 which provided the programmed activities for IDP and refugees returnees (with planning figures of one million IDP returnees and 200,000 refugee returnees for a total budget of USD 259.2 million OP);
- UNHCR's Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy: Voluntary Return to Syria, that set out the programmatic and policy guidance on UNHCR's engagement in the return of Syrian refugees (phase 1/phase 2);

Under phase 1, UNHCR's support to returnees inside Syria was limited to humanitarian assistance, whether the returnees were IDPs or refugees, self-organized or organized by the Syrian Government and other stakeholders. Return and reintegration support was community-based, provided to all population groups on the basis of needs, not status. UNHCR's community-based programmes included the village support model in rural areas, and neighbourhood support programme in urban areas. Since 2017, UNHCR expanded in-country staff and office capacity for both IDP programmes and in places of actual or potential refugee and IDP return.

In 2018, the UNHCR Syria focused on the following priority areas:

Coordination: Under the UN Country Team (UNCT), the Return and Reintegration Working Group was established for which UNHCR was the secretariat in support of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). UNHCR was also the lead on the Refugee Return pillar. In collaboration with the RC/HC and the 3RP Regional Directors' Group, the RRWG was also the main point of contact between the UNHCR-run Durable Solutions Working Groups in neighbouring countries on refugee return.

Information Management: As part of the return planning, UNHCR Syria initiated setting up capacity to assess conditions in return areas, identify return movements, and answer key questions being asked by refugees in neighbouring countries.

Return Protection Thresholds: UNHCR was the primary UN interlocutor for the Government of Syria (GoS) on refugee return. UNHCR continued pursuing talks with the GoS on core protection principles that should facilitate the return. UNHCR aimed to further elaborate these principles into a legal framework of cooperation with the government of Syria that would help respond to the needs of the returnees as well as provide humanitarian support and social protection. UNHCR also sought to 'unpack' the principles with the GoS into concrete actions to address obstacles to return and address refugees' own concerns for their legal, physical and material safety.

Civil registration and documentation: Civil registration and documentation: UNHCR recognized the importance of civil documentation, freedom of movement, accessing to the humanitarian aid and basic services, as an enabling factor for return, to prevent statelessness and to mitigate risks of SGBV and exploitation.
Furthermore, as a part of its role in developing a return protection strategy, UNHCR was involved extensively in analysing the legal challenges for return, and in providing comments and answers to the "protection-returns monitoring toolkit"; based on the Syrian legal framework concerning the protection of returnees and how to facilitate their return.
In coordination with the Syria Trust, UNHCR conducted a workshop on the importance of civil documentation to prevent statelessness where challenges encountered by returnees in relation to civil documentation were discussed. UNHCR legal partners, relevant ministries and governmental departments attended the workshop.

Housing, Land and Property (HLP) – legal support: In cooperation with the GoS, other UN agencies and Syrian NGOs, UNHCR initiated its support to returnees to reclaim their property and resolve legal obstacles through analysis and advocacy around specific legislation and regulations, legal assistance and civil documentation. UNHCR's interventions were a part of a close inter-agency collaboration on HLP, with UNHCR co-chairing an HLP working group.

Community-Based Programming

Community Centres: By the end of 2018, UNHCR opened through its partners a community centre, a satellite centre and a mobile unit under Pillar 3 (Returnees and host communities). UNHCR also continued to support returnees through the other functional facilities under Pillar 4 (Internally Displaced Persons) including 97 community centres, 26 satellite centres and 100 mobile units in 12 governorates.
The community centres provided women, men, boys and girls of diverse backgrounds with safe spaces where they couldinteract, integration protection services and tailored assistance. The same services were expanded to cater to the returnees either in the already existing centres or in new centres established in return areas.

Syria Outreach Volunteers: This programme aimed at mobilizing and empowering the persons of concern to assume leading roles within their communities and to bridge them with UNHCR services.
In 2018, UNHCR in cooperation with 17 partners mobilized a network of 2,849 ORVs from the IDP, return and host community in 14 governorates, out of this 39 ORVs were under Pillar 3 (Returnees and host communities), managed by two partners and linked to a community centre in Aleppo and a satellite centre in Rural Damascus. The outreach volunteers (ORVs) provided a range of protection services, linked people in need to the community centres and provided information related to services. The ORVs organized focus group discussions and actively engaged in recreational and awareness-raising activities, building a two way communication fora and trust with communities. The ORVs were trained on basic community-based protection concepts.

Community-Led Initiatives: In 2018, four CLIs were implemented in Aleppo governorate in cooperation with UNHCR partner Al Ihsan, the implemented CLIs were managed by 60 returnees, benefiting 2,200 individuals.
Two CLIs were tackling WASH-related issues such as awareness raising sessions, securing toilets by implementing locks and repairing doors, and providing a safe and a secure water sources. The other CLI was about manufacturing wagons for returnees to bring goods from the nearby shops of their residents, as their return areas are still not accessible for transportation and people are suffering from lifting goods every day.

Communications with Communities: UNHCR Syria initiated its expansion on a feedback mechanisms including community-based structures and social media platforms, through partners and inter-agency working groups. A country strategy on Communication with Communities and Operational Plan was developed and endorsed by all field offices at the end of 2018.

Livelihoods: UNHCR worked closely with FAO and UNDP to support small scale livelihoods projects through small start-Up Business Grants/Projects (SSBG) and Livelihood Tool-kits Programme.

Back to learning and integration of education certificates: In collaboration with the education sector, UNHCR advocated for and support to expand access to education for returnees. Arrangements were initiated with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to set up systems and procedures to integrate education certificates of returning students. As part of UNHCR's role in supporting quality education and safe learning environments, UNHCR through its partner PUI, completed psychosocial training workshops for 2,183 social counsellors and teachers coming from different governorates. The training sessions were organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the trainees' were selected based on an assessment carried out by the MoE. As the rehabilitation of schools is the top priority of the Education Sector given the fact that many schools were out of service or partially damaged as a result of the protracted crisis, UNHCR rehabilitated 38 schools through its partners SIF, ADRA and PU in Rural Damascus, Hama, Homs, Dar'a, Lattakia and Aleppo governorates.

Services for persons with specific needs: The psychological needs of returns were addressed through two local partners in Aleppo and Rural Damascus. In 2018, 268 returnees were provided with PSS case management services, individual, and group counselling sessions. 21 returnees who suffered from severe mental disorders were referred to specialized MHPSS services carried out by psychotherapists and/or psychiatrists. In addition, 6,676 persons of concern participated in 252 social and recreational events and awareness sessions. Furthermore, UNHCR's partners provided different types of medical and general in-kind assistance to address identified needs of 586 individuals aiming at reducing the risks they were facing and to prevent their resort to harmful coping mechanisms.

Child Protection: The Child Protection risks of returnees were addressed through two local partners in Aleppo and Rural Damascus. In 2018, 176 awareness raising sessions were conducted targeting children, caregivers and community members (with approximately 3,520 targeted children and their families). Through these interventions, children with protection risks were identified from the returnee and host communities, and referred to a comprehensive case management process conducted by trained CP case workers/managers. By the end of 2018, a total number of 89 children exposed to various types of protection risks were assessed and assisted through the case management process. Regular counselling and assessments were conducted for children at risk to ensure their well-being and to respond to their specific needs directly or through referrals. Moreover, UNHCR along with its partners and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, established two community-based child protection structures in Aleppo.

SGBV: UNHCR in partnership with its local partners and in close coordination with its field offices in Damascus and Aleppo; launched an SGBV prevention and response program targeting the returnees in the returns areas. Also, UNHCR helped in building the capacity of 39 frontline workers from partners including 19 staff from the Syrian Commission for Family Planning and Affairs (SCFA) on basics of SGBV prevention and response. In addition, case management was delivered to 78 survivors in order to address their needs with the appropriate referrals. SGBV prevention activities continued to reach out 2,248 individuals through 129 campaigns where 165 risk reduction kits were distributed.

Shelter and Social Infrastructure: UNHCR helped returnees with minor rehabilitation of shelters through the provision of doors and windows, shelter kits, or repair tool kits, or tools for removal of debris etc. This support aimed to provide most vulnerable returnee families with basic standards of accommodation in terms of safety and protection from the elements. UNHCR supported small-scale businesses/workshop for the local production of doors and windows to rehabilitate the partially damaged houses. Additional interventions included capacity building of Ministry of Local Administration and Environment to train and equip governorates' and municipalities' technical staff on structural safety assessment. This programme was expanded to include rehabilitation of basic health clinics, bakeries, installation of solar street lights to prevent risks of harassment; and other essential social infrastructure – linked to the Community-Led Initiatives above - in collaboration with the concerned sector, and only where there was a gap that could be filled by UNHCR in the short-term.

Core relief items and Winterization: UNHCR's Core Relief Items (CRIs) were distributed to persons in need in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance resilience. Standard CRI packages for a family of five included high thermal blankets, mattresses/sleeping mats, kitchen sets, plastic sheeting, jerry cans and a solar lamps. CRI programmes were expanded to address seasonal needs, including a substantial winterization programme, including adult winter jackets, waterproof floor covering, winter clothes set, and sleeping bags.

Karam and his family return to their house in Deir Ba'albeh

After five years of displacement, Karam, a father of four children finally returned with his family to their house in Deir Ba'albeh, north-eastern Homs alike some 1,100 returnee families in the area. "We were displaced three times before we were finally settled here a month ago. Our house was looted and partially destroyed because of the fighting. We could not afford fixing the damages without receiving support as I am currently unemployed", said Karam.

UNHCR's partner Secours Islamique France (SIF) selected the most vulnerable families in Deir Ba'albeh for the rehabilitation of their house including the provision of doors and windows. Through SIF, UNHCR rehabilitated 126 apartments in the area in 2018.

Legal activities in support of returnees

UNHCR's mandate and responsibility continued to make it a leading agency on legal matters in Syria in 2018.

UNHCR's work on Civil Documentation

According to the Syria 2018 Protection Needs Overview (PNO), the loss of civil documentation was the most frequently reported protection concern (83 %) inside Syria, with concerns around approaching the authorities and loss of documents described as the main reasons for not having official/government-issued documents (74 %). Outside of Syria, difficulties in accessing civil documentation remained an obstacle for refugees to return, hampering their access to basic human rights such as freedom of movement, access to basic services, and livelihoods. As children born outside Syria may not have any recognized documentation of their identity, family composition or nationality, undermining the prospect of a sustainable reintegration in their communities of origin and rendering them at heightened risk of statelessness.

In light of the above mentioned, UNHCR took the lead in assisting IDPs, returnees and host communities with civil documentation, through a team of lawyers, (211 lawyers and 96 legal ORVs) who work under three local and international NGOs, (DRC,SARC,The Syria Trust). Additionally, the legal team provides various legal services on HLP, GBV, CP and other protection related matters. Furthermore, through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) signed in 2017, UNHCR supported Civil Registries in 12 governorates which resulted in an impact of 100 % of increased access to various civil documents. In 2018 minor repair and rehabilitation and technical in-kind support were provided in six key locations to additional civil registries, one court and one window project, ensuring their functionality and enhancing their capacities to respond to the huge needs of returnees in relation to civil documentation including birth, marriage, divorce, and death and issuing the main documents (Such as ID, family booklets, etc). As a result, some 900,000 returnees and IDPs benefited from services related to civil documentation, HLP and other related legal matters, provided by the rehabilitated civil registries, court and "one window" in Aleppo and Homs.

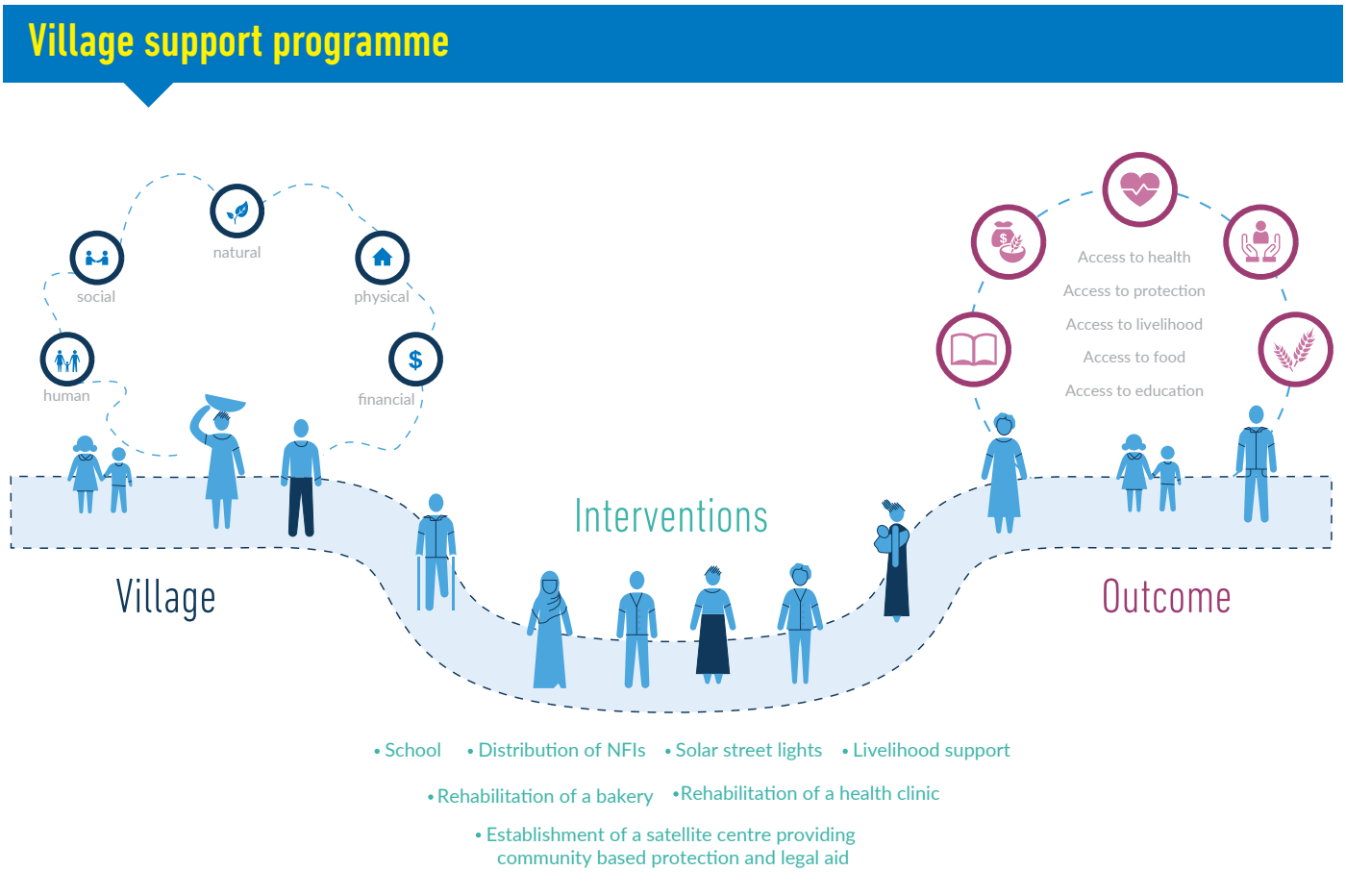
In the same context, three similar projects were processed in 2018 in five governorates, Dara, Homs, Hama, Al-Hasakeh and Deir-ez-Zor.
In addition, UNHCR raised the awareness of IDPs, returnees and host communities on the importance of documenting their civil events and getting the related civil documents. As part of this activity, and in coordination with the MOI/Directorate of Civil Affairs, UNHCR developed a Civil Documentation Booklet that was approved by concerned authorities in 2018. UNHCR distributed 200,000 copies of the booklet through partners' community centres, civil affairs offices in 14 governorates, immigration departments and through Syrian diplomatic missions in five regional countries (Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt).. The purpose of the booklet was to assist in raising the awareness of Syrian nationals on the importance of civil documentations and the relevant procedures to obtain the civil documents. Additionally, a birth registration leaflet was developed by UNHCR in cooperation with Syria Trust and SARC. 15,000 copies were printed out and disseminated through community centres run by UNHCR partners.

UNHCR's work on Housing Land and Property (HLP)

UNHCR as a co-convener of the Housing, Land and Property Technical Working Group, steered the technical analysis of Law 2018/10 to amend decree no. 2012/66 by introducing new legal provisions regarding establishing development zones in Syria. UNHCR continued extensive consultations, including technical meetings between the UN and the Government of Syria. In cooperation with the GoS, UN agencies and Syrian NGOs, UNHCR supported returnees to reclaim property and resolve legal obstacles through analysis and advocacy around specific legislation and regulations, legal aid, civil documentation. UNHCR's interventions were part of close inter-agency collaboration on HLP, with UNHCR co-chairing an HLP working group. In line with the work plan of the Technical Working Group on HLP, of which UNHCR was one of the conveners, additional foundational work relating to HLP rights in Syria was pursued through the compilation of a legal compendium of HLP-related legal provisions (and its translation into English), and accompanying thematic legal analyses, guidance notes and awareness raising activities. Civil documentation support activities were supported through a proposed Civil Documentation Working Group. These activities benefited returning populations as well as informed and enhanced UNHCR's shelter and minor infrastructure rehabilitation activities. The network of legal aid partners was enhanced through the engagement of additional lawyers to assist affected individuals in their civil registration/documentation and HLP-related activities with the competent national authorities. In parallel, the HLP-related capacities of lawyers engaged through NGO partners, as well as of civil servants serving with concerned authorities such as the MoI and MoLAE, were built through targeted training activities.

At the equally important operational level, UNHCR's 98 community centres operating across the country, in collaboration with partners and outreach volunteers, provided free-of-charge legal aid, including counselling, representation before responsible authorities and awareness-raising on civil status documentation and HLP-related documentation matters. These programmes were vital to support people to obtain the necessary information and documentation to ensure their rights were protected.

Village Support Programme for returnees



UNHCR introduced a village support and neighborhood support programme with the purpose of reaching areas where UNHCR and its partners identified a high number of IDP and refugee returnees and an increase was expected. When families returned to their area of origin, they were in need of many services to be able to regain normality in their life. Through this programme, UNHCR together with its partners provided a combination of prioritized services including; shelter rehabilitation, minor repair and rehabilitation of schools, health points and bakeries. By providing rehabilitation the families were able to live in their houses, their children could access education, they were able to seek healthcare in their local clinic and buy bread in their local bakery. UNHCR also through its partners established satellite centres and mobile units, where community based protection services was provided through livelihoods projects, remedial classes, sexual and gender based violence awareness raising activities, recreational activities and vocational trainings. UNHCR also provided basic core relief items that the returnees are in need of.

Examples of two areas where the village support programme have been implemented in 2018;

Khafse, rural Aleppo

Background: Al Khafse is a town located at the west bank of Al Assad lake, 85 KM east of Aleppo city. In the period between 2013 and 2017, many non-state armed groups; including ISIS; controlled this area, which caused considerable destruction in the infrastructure as well as to people's properties. The government took control over the town in May 2017 which also allowed the humanitarian actors to have access to the town and help those who were returning to the area. Before the crisis the population of the town was 18,000 persons, however due to the hostilities, the population was displaced for either short period or long periods of time.
UNHCR visited the location when it became accessible, many assessment missions were conducted to understand the needs on the ground. UNHCR's approach was multi-sectoral and focused on meeting the urgent the needs in the short-term and focus on longer-term solutions for the other need.

Fatima and Zahra studying and writing their homework in a homework Café in a UNHCR supported satellite centre in Khafse, eastern rural Aleppo. | ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | *November 2018.*

As a part of the village support programme, UNHCR conducted the following interventions in Khafse;

NFIs: Many families returned to their houses and found their furniture and assets stolen or broken. UNHCR distributed regular CRIs kits to those who returned as well as winterized items that helped people survive the cold winter season.

Shelter: Properties were damaged on different scales. UNHCR approach for returns encompassed the owner-oriented support whereby many families benefited from the scheme and families received shelter support in their homes, including installation of doors and windows.

Public services: To respond to the needs for basic services and prevent recurrent displacement due to poor conditions UNHCR implemented the following;

- Minor rehabilitation of a primary school to accommodate the children aged 6 - 15 in Khafse to grant them access to education.
- Minor rehabilitation and equipping of a bakery with the installation of a production line as it was highlighted as the most critical need by returnees as they had to travel long distances to Sfireh, Deir Hafer or Tal Aran to buy their daily bread. With a capacity of 12 tons per 20 working hours, this bakery allowed returnees to have their daily requirements of fresh bread locally.

Health: A primary health clinic (PHC) that belongs to Directorate of Health (DoH) was rehabilitated, furnished and equipped. Through this PHC more than 4,000 individuals could receive the essential medical services in light of the absence of any other options.

Community based protection services: UNHCR established a satellite centre in Khafse that provided an array of protection services such as: community mobilization, persons with specific needs services, education, community led- initiatives, in-kind assistance and mobile teams.

Legal services: The documentation needs was a major concern in eastern rural Aleppo, UNHCR supported through its legal aid partners and their mobile teams. Only in the first seven months of 2018, 26,663 beneficiaries were assisted by different protection services.

Livelihoods: Since the area is mainly depending on agriculture, UNHCR focused on carrying out income-generating activities related to cultivation as well as livestock breeding. This was achieved through funding startup small business projects which had a great impact on the community and the economy in the town.

Souran, rural Hama

Souran is a town located in the northern rural of Hama governorate, 18 KM north of Hama city. During the period from 2014 to 2017, Souran and its surrounding areas were controlled by non-state armed groups, which caused considerable destruction in the infrastructure as well as to people's properties. The Syrian government took control of Souran and its surrounding areas in April 2017 and the area became accessible to humanitarian actors in mid 2017. The pre-crisis population of Souran town was estimated at 45,000; however, the majority of the population were displaced and left their town for years.

As soon as the area became accessible, some 5,000 individuals returned, UNHCR immediately visited the area and conducted series of assessments. With increasing number of returnee families one of major needs identified was lack of doors and windows. Moreover, the communities told UNHCR about unavailability of schools for their children, and that the only functioning school was far away from their homes. The only bakery in Souran was also severely damaged, and the spread of debris in the city made it difficult for people to have access to their lands and properties and it also caused diseases.

A returnee man registering at the satellite centre run by UNHCR partner SSSD in Souran, northern rural Hama, one week after the centre was opened. | ©UNHCR/Rama AlKoukou | November 2018

To address the needs of the people in Souran, UNHCR applied a holistic approach that looked at a comprehensive support to the area. Through the village support programme, UNHCR with its partners on the ground provided a combination of rapid services including, doors and windows for families who had already returned to their damaged houses, core-relief items to support families upon their return, minor repair of some main infrastructure, debris removal, minor repair and rehabilitation of a bakery, and satellite centre to provide protection services. This programme also expanded to the surrounding villages in Souran sub-district.

Through this approach, UNHCR provided the returnee families in Souran sub-district with a variety of interventions, including:

Non-Food Items (NFIs) : The majority of the returnees found their houses empty upon return and their furniture and assets were either lost or damaged. UNHCR started an emergency response and distributed regular NFIs kits 46,435 individuals/ 9,287 families who returned as well as winterized items to assist people in the harsh winter season.

Shelter: Many families who returned to their houses in Souran and the surrounding areas used blankets and nylon sheets instead of doors and windows. UNHCR through the doors and windows project distributed and installed doors and windows to the most vulnerable families in Souran. This was also applied in other areas of Souran sub-districts including Ma'ardes, Taibat AlImam, Khurbet AlHijameh, AlFan AlShamaly, and Kaser Mukharram, providing 2,560 "doors and windows" packages to the most vulnerable families. Many families returned to their areas of origin only to find their houses destroyed. These families had to either rent houses in their towns/villages or live with their relatives in one house. UNHCR in partnership with SIF rehabilitated and prepared seven collective shelters with a capacity for 304 families in the return areas in Souran sub-district to receive families who had voluntarily returned to their place of origin but found their houses destroyed or severely damaged.

Community based protection services: UNHCR established a satellite centre in Souran that provided a variety of protection services including awareness sessions, psychosocial support, child protection, community-led initiatives, in-kind assistance, and livelihood support. In addition, the centre deployed two mobiles units and 15 outreach volunteers to Taibat AlImam and Ma'ardes towns, to address the needs of people in the area that could not reach the satellite centre.

AlShuhada School: AlShuhada School is located in the northern neighbourhood in Souran city, an area that incurred a high rate of return due to limited destruction. However, the school was damaged and not functioning. UNHCR in partnership with PUI rehabilitated the school which opened in November 2018 and more than 700 students of different ages are attending the school.

Livelihoods programme: Souran public bakery was one of the most important bakeries in the northern rural of Hama, providing bread to approximately 75,000 people in 25 villages. The premises of the original bakery was totally destroyed, therefore Souran municipality identified an alternative location to enable rapid solution. UNHCR in partnership with SSSD rehabilitated the building and installed a production line with a daily capacity of 13 tons of flour wheat providing bread to 12,250 individuals on a daily basis.

The municipalities: The three municipalities of Souran, Taibat AlImam and Ma'ardes were damaged and had limited capacity for work. With the increasing rate of return, the limited capacity was expected to hinder the returnees to access the necessary documentation and registration for public services and assistance. Thus, UNHCR provided support with minor rehabilitation and technical assistance to the Souran municipality.

Public services: In addition to the above, UNHCR implemented a package of public services including:

- Removing debris from in the return areas in Souran, Taibat AlImam and Ma'ardes, facilitating access to families who have already returned to their houses and properties.
- Minor repair and maintenance work in the secondary water and sanitation networks in the return areas in Souran, Taibat AlImam and Ma'ardes to provide safety and dignity for the returnees.
- Distributing 90 garbage containers in the return areas in Souran, Taibat AlImam and Ma'ardes.

Doors and windows model

To meet the enormous shelter needs for returnees in the two governorates of Homs and Hama, UNHCR designed and planned the "Doors and Windows" project. While, a shelter intervention as such designed to meet the needs of returnees, the project also included a livelihood component as it provided vocational training for returnees to be able to install the doors and windows. A common feature within the shelters that were partially damaged in the return areas was the total loss of doors, windows, and gates. During several field visits, UNHCR staff observed that almost every house whether partially damaged or even intact did not have doors and windows. UNHCR discovered that in these areas of return, there were no skilled labor, or workshops that could produce doors and windows. UNHCR consulted with the returning population, the municipality, and with Homs and Hama governors on many occasions during assessment field visits, the conclusion was that providing the returnees with doors and windows and some skilled labor will lead to an efficient solution to the shelter rehabilitation immense needs. During 2018, UNHCR assisted 2,801 households with the door and window assistance.

Trainees using the carpentry machine at Al Talmaza vocational training school in Al Arman neighbourhood in Homs city to manufacture wooden doors within the Doors and Windows project.| ©UNHCR/Aman Elwan | February 2018

One Window project

In order to apply for compensation for their damaged properties that was provided by the government, returnees, and in fact all citizens, had to seek services from several directorates spread all over the city. One of the primary problems articulated by the governorate was that an owner of a damaged house had to pass by several municipality directorates in order to return to the house and be enlisted for assistance either by the government or by aid organizations. Families shared their concerns about loss of documentation, and the long and cumbersome process. To address these challenges, UNHCR together with relevant ministries developed the existing "nafiza wahida" to include the necessary directorates involved in damage assessment that could be replicated in other governorates.

With the aim of consolidating executive services in one location to enable the population to access such services in an adequate manner, UNHCR Homs launched "One Window" project. The project has proved to have significant positive impact on many aspects of assistance to returnees in rehabilitation and documentation of returnees' damage shelters, especially with the different reiterated reasons for delays in authorizing their return.

UNHCR supported the Homs "One Window" project with two technical staff members: Information management expert whose main function is to support the activities through data base and mapping and Liaison Officer who facilitated a two-way mutual channel of data exchange between the one window office and national and international agencies.

Through the "One Window" project, UNHCR gained access to 23 districts in Homs governorate and enhanced the coordination with 15 national and international NGOs to expedite the process of applying for the compensation of damaged houses by the governorate or to the shelter assistance by UNHCR and partners. In addition, through the coordination mechanism in the "One Window", UNHCR prioritized the most vulnerable families. During 2018, a total of 1,476 houses were rehabilitated by UNHCR and partners through the coordination mechanism applied by the "One Window" in Homs governorate.

Qamar hopes to rehabilitate her house in Al Qaryaten

Qamar is a displaced woman from Al Qaryaten in Homs. After returning to her house with her husband and three children, they found it burnt from the inside "When I first heard about the One Window in Homs, I immediately approached the centre. I am so optimistic that we could be partially compensated so that we can partially rehabilitate our house". Said Qamar to the UNHCR team while waiting for her turn at the One Window in Dablan neighborhood in Homs.

The One Window project which is supported by UNHCR has been receiving applications since April 2018. To eliminate duplication of the compensation provided by the government and by UNHCR shelter assistance, the One Window provides the applicants with a withdrawal option allowing those who have already applied for the compensation but still have not received it to withdraw their application so that another service provider can rehabilitate their property.

Providing Protection through Solar Streetlights

Children excited as the lights lit up after sunset in Al Salheen district of east Aleppo.| ©UNHCR/Aman Elwan | October 2018

When residents of eastern Aleppo started to return to their homes beginning of 2017, the issue of street lighting came as one of their main protection concerns and on top of their priorities for 2018. The scale of damage and destruction in eastern Aleppo reached approximately 40 to 50 percent of the buildings which made the living conditions of these vulnerable people extremely challenging mainly for safety and security reasons. The community members repeatedly highlighted to UNHCR and its partners how the absence of lighting inhibited their ability to safely pursue daily or routine activities necessary for their own basic needs and life opportunities. Additionally, many community members stressed the importance of lighting for the reduction of social isolation. As long as the streets remain in darkness, people are reluctant to leave their homes and this limit not only the restoration of community ties but also the sense a more protective environment. Moreover, having lit streets will have a great impact on reducing the risks of gender-based violence and will allow men, women, boys and girls to walk safely in the streets.

As a response, UNHCR started with small-scale streetlight initiatives proposed by the community which proved successful. However, it was apparent that the magnitude of the challenge was too great to be covered by community initiatives. This is when UNHCR decided to expand this project to cover a wider area and benefit a higher number of families who were deprived from any source of lighting.

On 21 October 2018, the Representative and the Governor of Aleppo inaugurated the first phase of the installation of 2,650 solar streetlights in Aleppo to support men, women, children and elderlies, including returnees and host communities.

As of 31 December 2018, UNHCR installed 1,959 technically sophisticated solar street lights at a larger scale for the benefit of 54 neighbourhoods inhabited by 289,000 persons as well as 590 more in the Deir Hafer and Al Khafse villages for the benefit of 8,900 persons. The project involved multiple stakeholders including UNHCR multidisciplinary teams, UNHCR partner Nama'a, whose team of outreach volunteers assisted in the neighbourhood-level assessments of protection risks and the mobilization of community members. UNHCR also worked with the Governor's Office and Municipalities of Deir Hafer and Al Khafse which participated in setting the technical requirements, facilitated authorizations to carry out the work on the ground at various stages, and provided poles for the lights to be installed. In addition, UNHCR was always present to monitor the unloading, the delivery of the metal poles and the erection of the solar lights.

Bringing light to the streets of Aleppo is an essential part of UNHCR's protection work. UNHCR recognized that people did not feel safe walking in their own neighbourhoods after sunset because the streets were dark and realized that a tool to provide protection to people was by installing solar street lights in neighbourhoods in need. UNHCR hopes to be able to expand this project to other areas of Syria and continue its protection work on the ground to make people feel safer in their neighbourhoods.

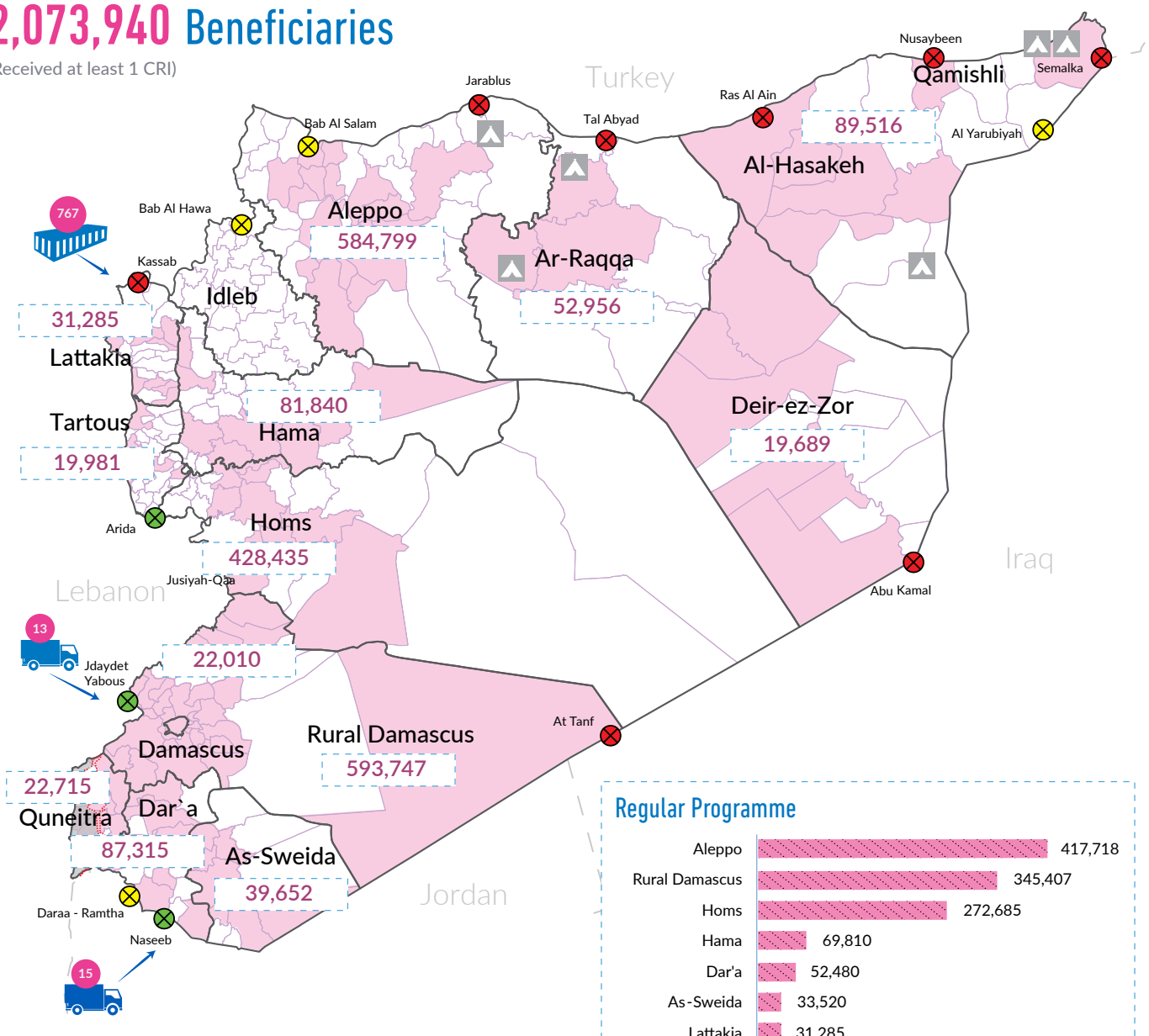
UNHCR with SARC distributing life-saving assistance to the newly returning families to Zaraa in southern rural Aleppo.
|©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | February 2018.

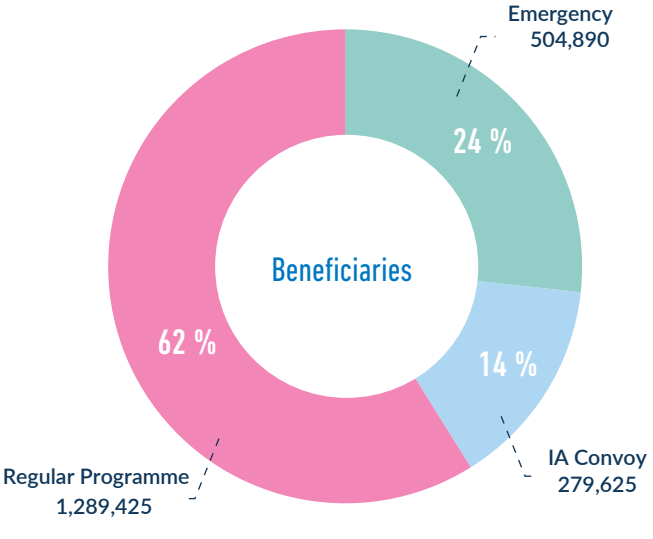
UNHCR
Providing Life-Saving Assistance

Core Relief Items (CRI) Assistance

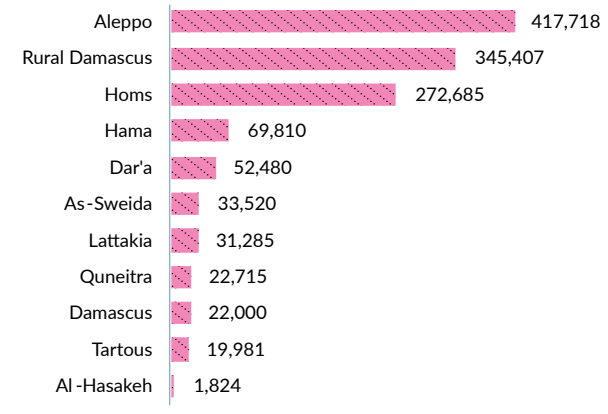
2,073,940 Beneficiaries

(Received at least 1 CRI)

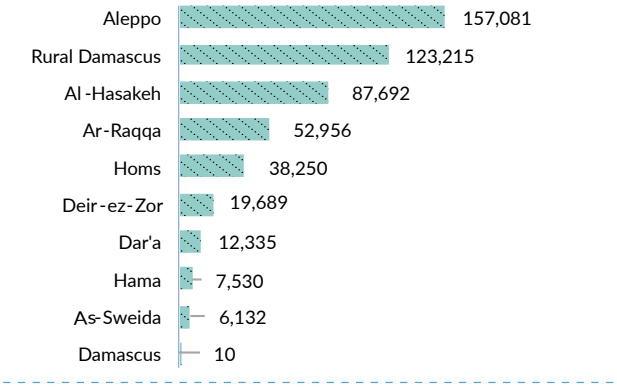




Regular Programme



Emergency



In crises, when people are displaced they often flee leaving their belongings behind, and when they return to their places of origin, they sometimes find their houses damaged. In both cases, these people need essential items to survive until their lives return to normal.
UNHCR aims to mitigate protection risks by providing Core Relief Items (CRIs) to these internally displaced persons and returnees as well as to vulnerable host community members.

Displaced four times but still smiling

Aref is originally from Baflune, a village near Azaz in northern rural Aleppo. When the clashes in Afrin began in January 2018, Aref and his family fled to a nearby village named Sinkarli and stayed a whole month in a cave avoiding the fighting. As clashes continued they moved to the village of Kibar where they stayed for 16 days at a friend's house. They then went through a third displacement fleeing this time to a village near Dayr Jamal called Gerbkeh where they stayed for five days on the streets. Finally they made it to Kafar Naya where they stayed in a collective shelter in one of the schools there.
UNHCR has assisted the family with core relief items with one item in particular bringing a huge smile to their faces being the gas cooker. "This will make a huge difference to us as the smoke from burning wood to cook used to make us all cough" Aref tells the UNHCR team. "I cannot wait to try the cooker out and for a treat I will make Frikeh (traditional Syrian dish) for lunch", Aref's wife said excited showing the team the raw ingredients.

CRI strategy in 2018

In 2018 in Syria, UNHCR's CRI programme had three main activities: 1) Emergency CRI response, including support to newly displaced persons and returnees, as well as deliveries to besieged and hard to reach areas through inter-agency convoys; 2) Distribution of seasonal/winter items; and 3) Voucher scheme where UNHCR aimed to issue vouchers to be exchanged for items produced by local manufactures. UNHCR's voucher project aims to contribute to partner agencies' efforts to increase job opportunities for the local population as well as to support the local economy. A pilot project could not be implemented due to the absence of the government approval and the list of beneficiaries for implementing the cash-based interventions in Syria. UNHCR Syria will advocate for implementing voucher scheme in 2019.

UNHCR with SARC distributing UNHCR core relief items to the internally displaced people in Tal Refaat. | ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | *September 2018.*

Achievements in 2018

As of end 2018, UNHCR assisted 2,073,940 individuals with at least one core relief item, while 1,636,883 individuals were adequately served (received more than four items). Of the total 504,890 individuals assisted through UNHCR's CRI emergency response, 309,400 individuals received summer seasonal items (rechargeable fans) in addition to the standard CRI kits. The CRI response in 2018 included emergencies in Afrin, Eastern Ghouta, and Dar'a.

Cross-line missions/inter-agency UN convoys

Besieged or hard-to-reach (HTR) areas required a special permission from the government and a de-confliction measures are essential before accessing these areas. De-confliction entails obtaining assurances and guarantees of the security of the convoy as well as the personnel from all the actors on the ground and en-route to the area. Missions to such areas are mostly carried out through an inter-agency mechanism and not by any individual agency response. There are no more besieged areas as defined by the UN as of August 2018, while 1,164,928 people still live in hard-to-reach areas. In 2018, UNHCR reached 279,625 individuals from inside Syria with CRIs in 20 hard-to-reach and besieged locations including Nashabiyeh, Dar Al Kabira, Tal Refaat,Talbiseh, Tlul Al-Humur, Douma, Yalda, Babila, Bait Sahem, Al Houla, Harbenafe, Hamra, Bait Jan, Dar'a Al Balad, Zamalka, Erbin, Busra Esh-Sham ,Al-Rastan and Rukban through 16 inter-agency convoy missions. This was achieved despite the many challenges facing UNHCR including access, lack or delay in securing necessary approvals, as well as the fragile security situation on the ground, and limited availability of local partners.

Cross-border mission / inter-agency UN convoys

Areas within Syria that cannot be accessed from inside the country, are accessed from across the border in line with the UNSC Resolution 2449. UNHCR's cross-border operation has been carried out from Turkey to the north-west of Syria and from Jordan to the south-west of Syria. The latter concluded since the Syrian government took control of the south-west region in August 2018.

In 2018, UNHCR assisted 444,890 persons of concern through cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan in four Syrian governorates; Aleppo, Idleb, Quneitra and Dar'a.

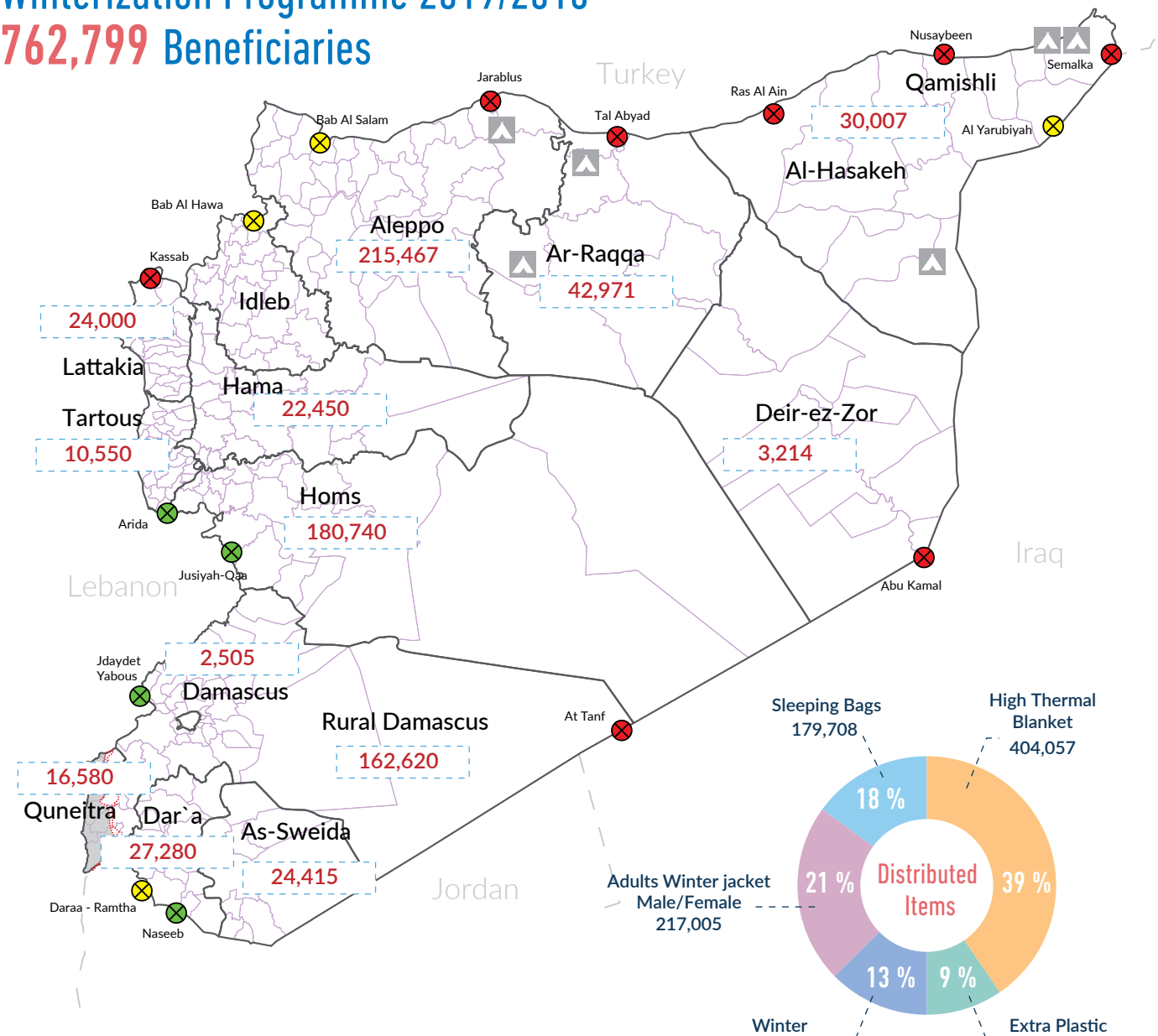
Winterization

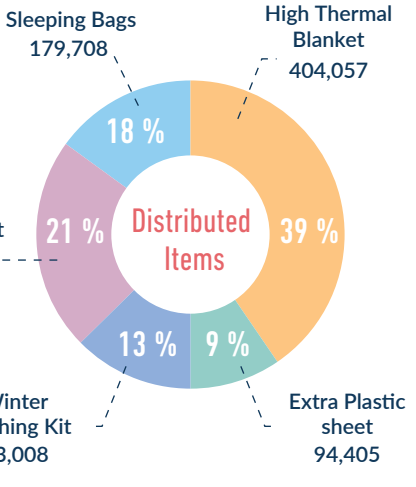
The winter conditions in Syria are very harsh with temperatures falling minus zero in many areas throughout the country causing suffering to many displaced Syrians.

UNHCR began its 2018 winterization programme in Syria on 01 September. As of 31 December, winterized items, including high thermal blankets, extra plastic sheeting, winter jackets, sleeping bags and winter clothes kits were distributed to 762,799 individuals in Homs, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Dar'a, As-Sweida, Aleppo, Hama, Tartous, Lattakia, Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh, Deir ez-Zor and Quneitra.

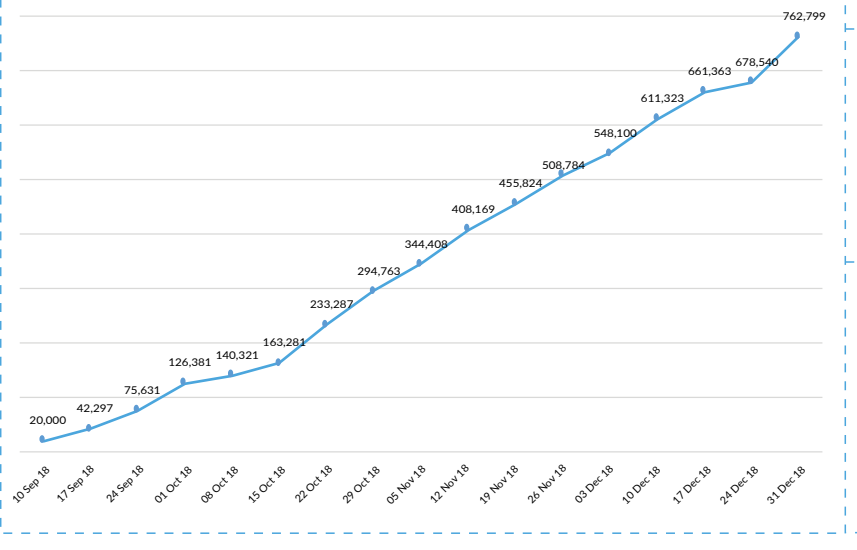
Jihan fled from Afrin and is currently in Al Aser camp. Conditions in the camp remain difficult and humanitarian needs are immense. UNHCR is working with its partners to ensure people are adequately supported as temperatures drop and weather worsen.
| ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | October 2018

Winterization Programme 2019/2018
762,799 Beneficiaries

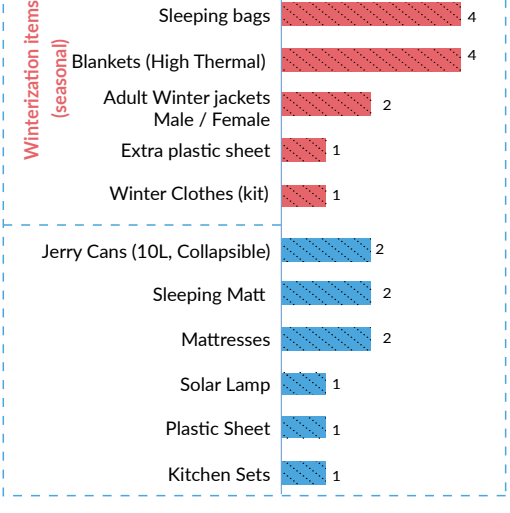




Winterization progress
total reached beneficiaries from 01 Sep 2018 until 31 Dec 2018

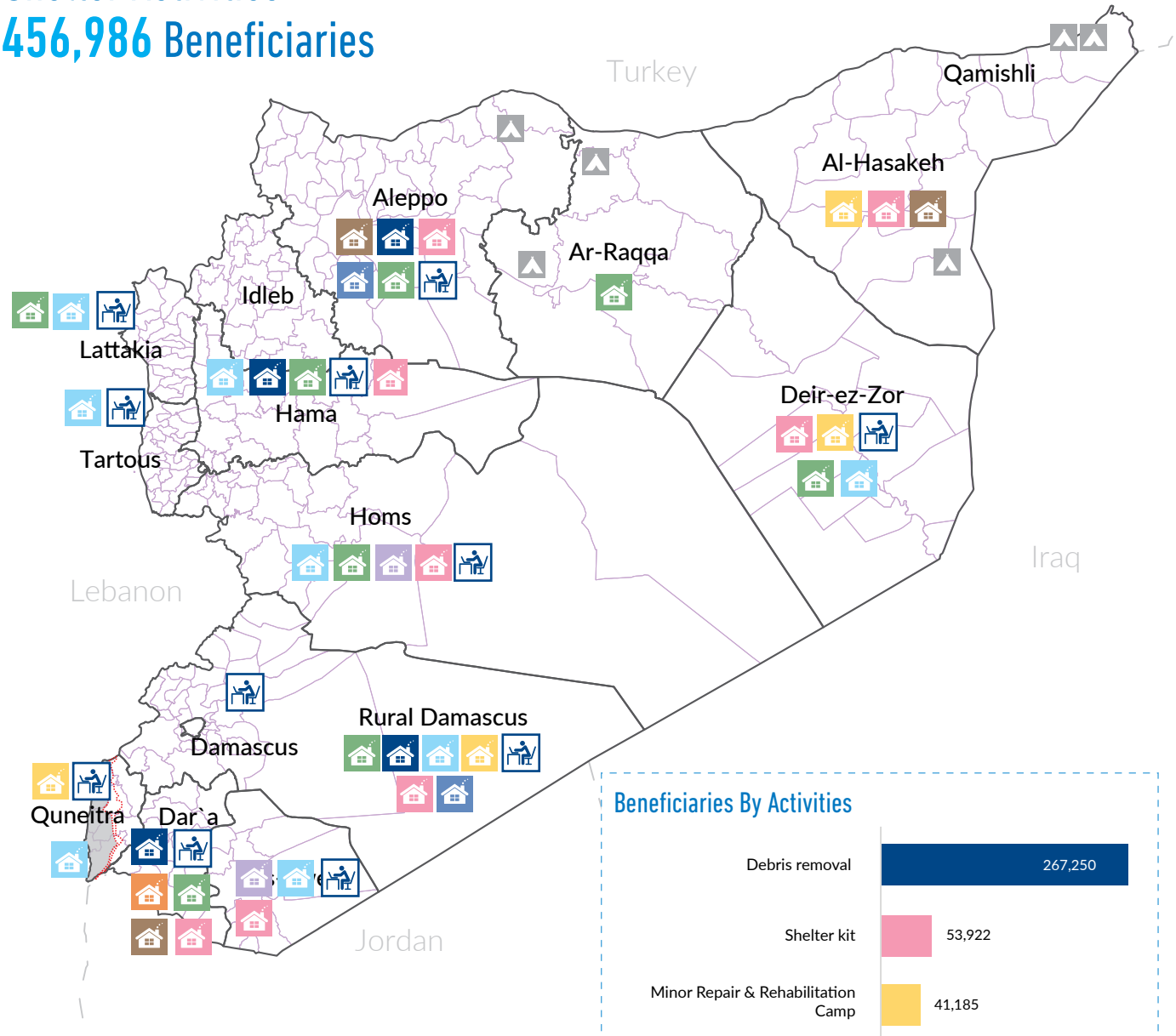


Item entitlements per family of 5 persons.



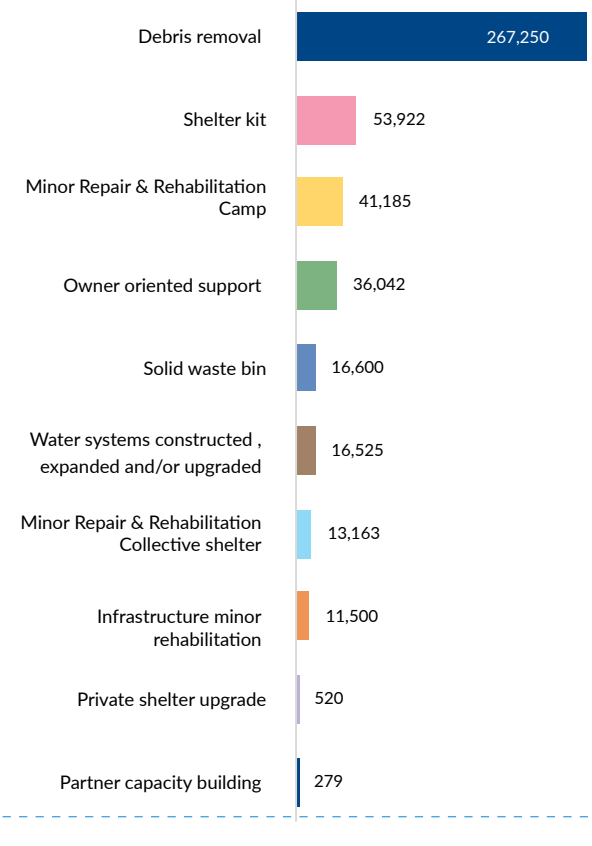
Shelter Assistance

Shelter Activities
456,986 Beneficiaries



- Infrastructure Minor Rehabilitation
- Owner Oriented Support
- Minor Repair & Rehabilitation Collective shelter
- Minor Repair & Rehabilitation Camp
- Shelter Kit
- Solid Waste Bin
- Debris Removal
- Water Systems Constructed, Expanded and/or Upgraded
- Private Shelter Upgrade
- Partner Capacity Building

Beneficiaries By Activities



A core part of UNHCR's protection mission is to guarantee access to adequate shelter in humanitarian emergencies. In 2018, UNHCR Syria provided shelter support for internally displaced people who fled hostilities as well as returnees who were back to completely or partially damaged houses in their areas of origin.

A displaced child from Afrin in one of the temporary IDP sites in Nubul, northern rural Aleppo | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | 2018

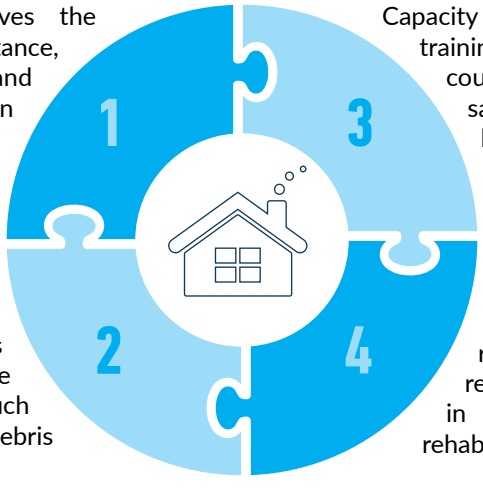
Shelter Strategy in 2018

UNHCR Syria's shelter strategy is aligned with the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan and UNHCR's Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2018-2014). The Strategy was implemented in partnership with 15 governmental and non-governmental organizations across 13 governorates in Syria.

UNHCR's Shelter Strategy focused on four main areas

Emergency shelter assistance involves the provision of immediate lifesaving assistance, such as the rehabilitation of public and private collective shelters, the provision of shelter kits, and establishment of camp related infrastructure, as well as the distribution of tents.

Long-term shelter assistance focuses on the provision of support to those returning to their places of origin, such as repair of damaged houses, and debris removal.



Capacity building of partners including through trainings and workshops aims to provide UNHCR counterparts with the skills to conduct safety structure assessments for damaged buildings, project management, and technical engineering in emergencies.

Infrastructure rehabilitation for returnee and host communities includes debris removal, solid waste distribution, minor rehabilitation for water and sanitation in returnee areas, in association with the rehabilitation of the damaged houses.

Achievements in 2018

Despite all challenges, UNHCR managed to reach 456,986 individuals with shelter assistance across the country in 2018. In 2018, 108,790 internally displaced persons were reached with emergency shelter assistance mainly in response to the Eastern Ghouta and Afrin emergencies, as well as in north-east Syria through the distribution and installation of 8,425 shelter kits, the provision of 6,085 tents, and the rehabilitation of 2,586 emergency rooms in collective shelters. In addition, 6,697 damaged houses were upgraded to support returnee families in rural Hama through the installation of doors and windows. Support to public infrastructure in returnee areas included the implementation of the following activities:

- Removal of 231,527 m^3 of debris and distribution of 276 solid waste bins;
- In Dar'a/ Izraa and Hrak, 5 Boreholes and 500 m pipe line were installed targeting 11,500 Persons of Concern (PoC); in the same areas the distribution of 1,105 water tanks was completed, targeting 5,525 PoC.
- Provision of 2,650 solar streetlights;
- Light maintenance for water and sewage networks;
- Enhanced partner capacity through training of 279 technical engineers to conduct technical assessments of damaged buildings.

Despite improved access in some governorates, access and safety, as well as issues relating to housing, land and property rights, structural safety assessments, and lengthy approval processes remained major challenges to implementing shelter projects, in addition to the level of destruction which is well beyond the capacity of humanitarian actors.

North-east Syria, where UNHCR established two water wells in Khamayel, Shaddadi and Al-Hasakeh and Qamishli cities. Solar panels with their electric sets were installed in the camps in Al-Hasakeh to help with the illumination of latrines and kitchens. In addition, streetlights were installed to serve the outdoor illumination in the camps. UNHCR established communal tented kitchens in the six camps.

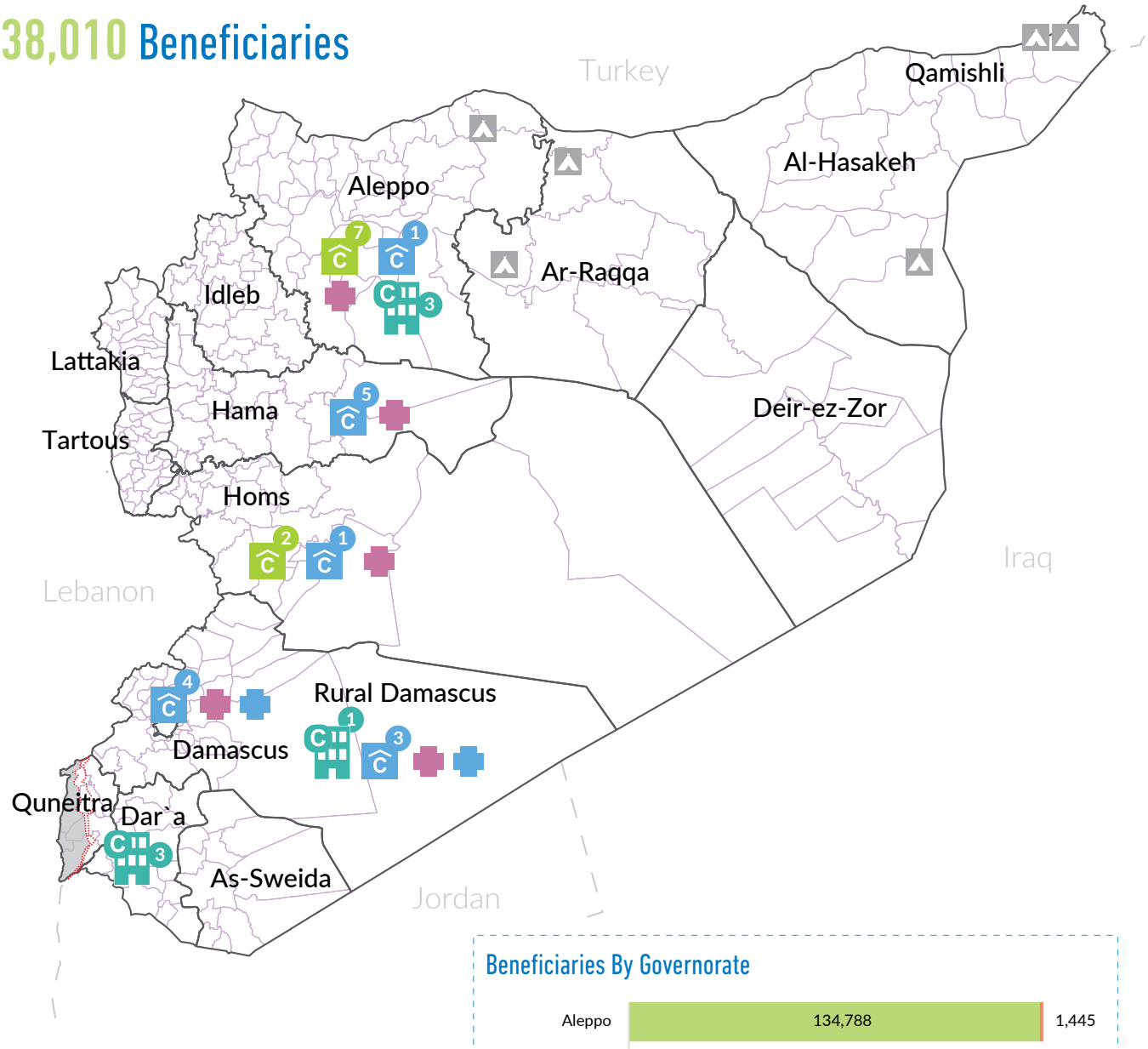
North-west Syria, where UNHCR established one water well project in Aleppo in Marhamieh.

Rural Damascus, where UNHCR provided long-term shelter assistance for returnees and displaced people living in their houses. Together with its partners, UNHCR worked on the rehabilitation of 947 houses in Moadamiya, Zabadani, Sbenih, Ziyabieh, Zakieh, Derkhabieh and Yalda, Babbila and Beit Sahem. 5,461 individuals/1,092 families are expected to live in their houses in good conditions as a result of UNHCR's work.

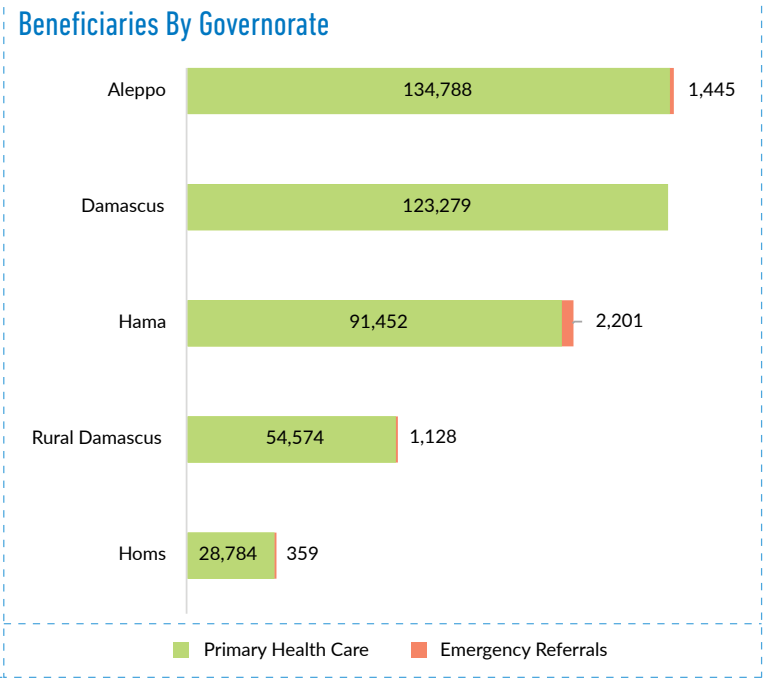
Moreover, minor school rehabilitation was very important in order to provide education to students in areas where schools were affected by the crisis.

Health assistance

Health Interventions
438,010 Beneficiaries



Beneficiaries By Governorate



Mobile clinic run by one of UNHCR partners in Al Assr camp, northern rural Aleppo providing medical services for people in the camp | Hameed Marouf©UNHCR | May 2018.

The combination of displacement with the lack of access to adequate shelter, sanitation, food and safe water undermined people's ability to prevent and respond to health-related risks. UNHCR continued its response to primary health care and emergency referrals, and reinforced community-based health services as part of its protection outreach network. Through a community-based approach, UNHCR and partners are not the only providers of health services, but the community is also becoming responsible for the health of its members.

Health strategy in 2018

While continuing its support for Pimary Health Care (PHC) clinics and emergency referrals, UNHCR also shifted to a community-based health approach aiming at improving the resilience of the community and building upon its capacity and participation in health services to prevent diseases and health complications and to enhance UNHCR's protection mandate.

In coordination with the Ministry of Health and WHO, and through an "area approach" that focused on key return areas, UNHCR integrated the response to the basic health needs of returnees into its overall response. In addition to primary health care services, including mental health, and support to emergency life-saving interventions, UNHCR continued its community-based health approach by establishing health points in the UNHCR-funded community centres. Through this approach, UNHCR aimed to raise awareness on health promotion and disease prevention, empower communities to actively influence their own health to efficiently prevent health problems, and identify diseases early to prevent serious complications, death and disability. Health workers also provided individual and family counselling, conducted focus group discussions and engaged the community in centres and through outreach volunteers and mobile teams.

Surgery saves Ibrahim's life

Ibrahim was born in a family of six members, the youngest brother of four siblings. The family is living in a dire situation where Ibrahim's father's earnings can barely cover some of the basic needs of the family.
Ibrahim suffered spina bifida- meningocele at the dorsal vertebra level. Such a case has potential serious life threatening neurologic and infectious complications which can have an impact on the quality of life of the child and his mobility. Surgery is the standard treatment for such a case, but Ibrahim's father was not able to afford it.
UNHCR partner Social Care Society in Hama, managed to reach the family in rural Hama, and through the emergency referral, the child was referred in his first week of life for a successful surgery in one of Hama city hospitals. "We are really grateful for this support which saved our child's life and eased our sufferings", said Ibrahim's parents happily while looking at their child.

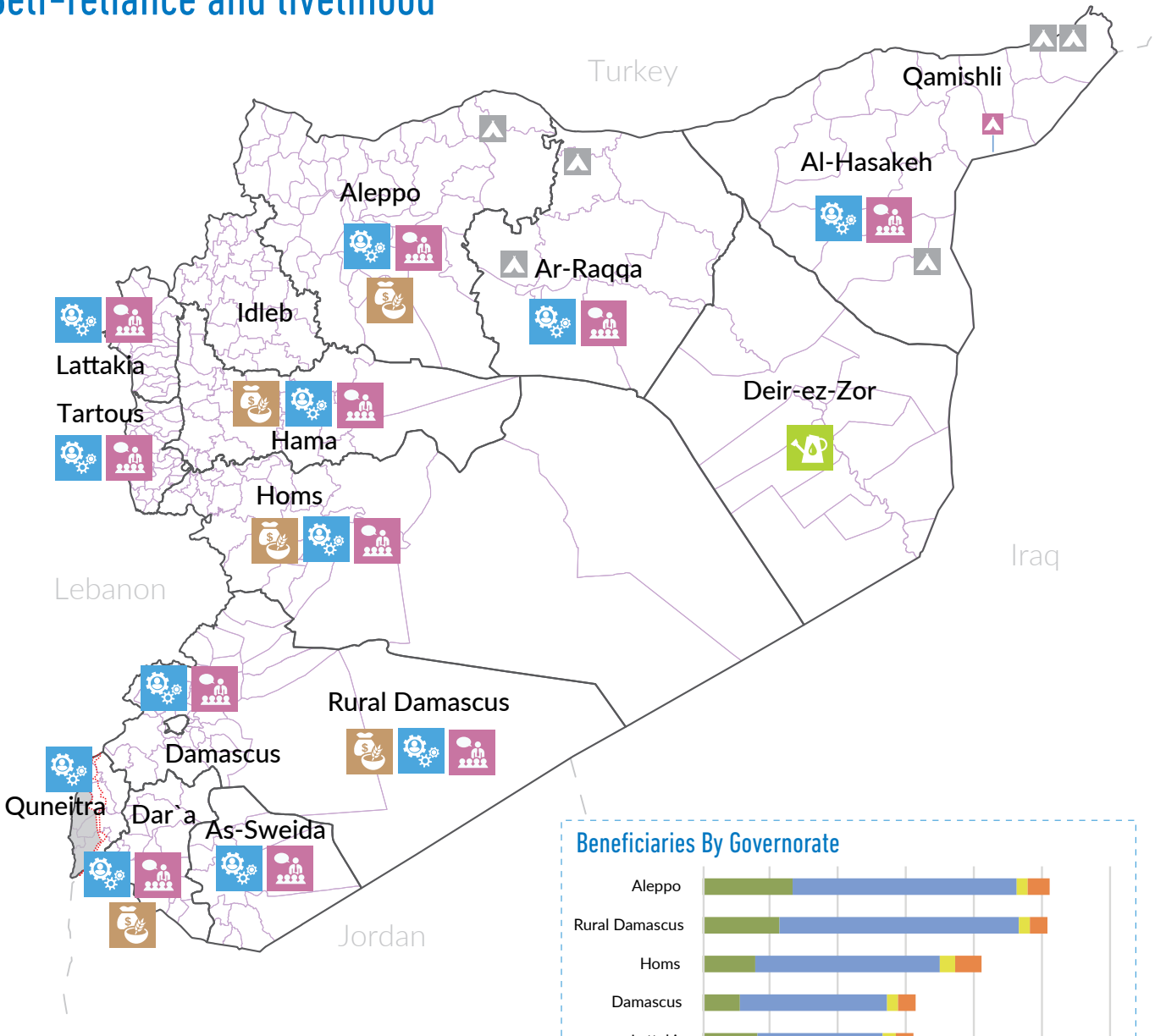
Achievements 2018

- 438,010 IDPs and 44,503 refugees were supported in accessing free of charge primary health care services including medical consultations, basic investigations and medicines.
- 11,192 specialized mental health services were provided by six mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) clinics integrated in SARC primary health facilities in Damascus and Rural Damascus.
- 11 health points in community centres provided 268 health awareness sessions, 11,859 individual health counselling, and 26,590 medical consultations in Aleppo, Quneitra, Tartous, and Homs.
- 5,133 IDPs and 2,891 refugees were assisted with referral to secondary care services in university hospitals and through partners.
- 34,579 IDPs and 108 refugees were assisted through primary health clinics and community centres with medical assistive devices such as crutches, wheelchairs, and medical glasses for their temporary or permanent disability.
- 6,536 outreach health services were provided to refugees and IDPs through a team of seven outreach medical volunteers in Damascus and Rural Damascus. The services mainly included phone counselling, home visits and follow-ups in hospitals.
- Five public primary health care facilities in the returnee areas in Dar'a (Dael, Jasim, Al Hrak), Aleppo (Al Sukkari DoH clinic), and Rural Damascus (Deir Khabieh), and one SARC primary health clinic in Al Sakhour in east Aleppo were rehabilitated. The procurement of furniture and equipment was finalized in December 2018 to allow for the delivery early 2019. Once achieved, the six primary health facilities will ensure the access of no less than 150,000 individuals in their catchment areas to free of charge primary health care services.
- University hospitals were supported with 3,200 injections of "Amiodarone" which urgently treats certain types of serious irregular heartbeat, covering the need of this medicine in critical care and emergency wards.

Saeed and Zaki smiling thanks to a community-led initiative supported by UNHCR in Saif Al Doula Aleppo where 300 children received free dental care services.
©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *January 2018.*

Livelihoods, Economic Inclusion and Self-reliance

Self-reliance and livelihood



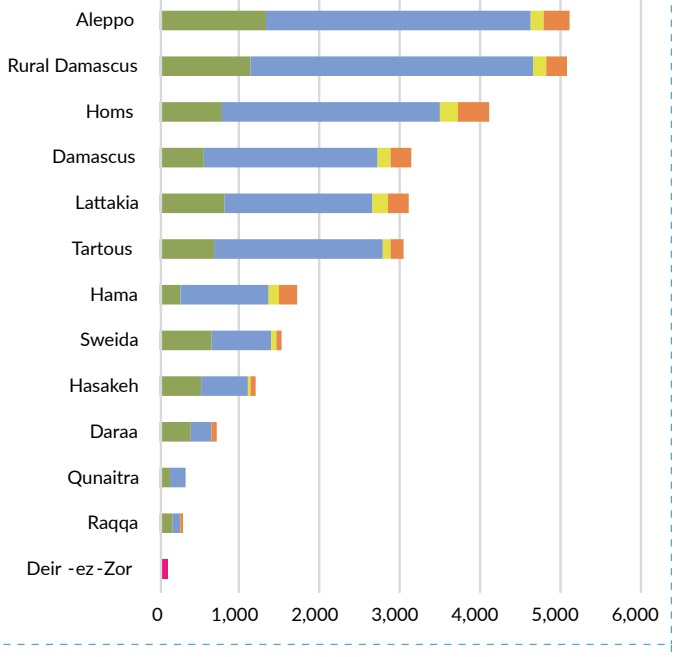
Minor Bakery Rehabilitation (5,000 HHs benefited each + 70 new Jobs)

Maintenance of Irrigation channels
Installation of Irrigation pumps

Vocational Training /Livelihood toolkits

SSBP / Entrepreneurship/ business training

Beneficiaries By Governorate



Livelihood toolkits	Vocational Training	SSBP	Entrepreneurship/ Business training	Agricultural Assets & Diversification Programme
7,323	18,663	1291	2,065	3,000

Livelihood Toolkits | Vocational Training | Short Term Employment | Start-up Small Business Programme | Entrepreneurship/ Business Training

The crisis in Syria has had a severe impact on livelihoods including on the incomes of a significant proportion of the population. There remains an urgent need for improved access to basic social and economic services as well as livelihood opportunities including through income generating activities.[1]

Delivering improved livelihoods for UNHCR persons of concern in Syria is a complex challenge not least on account of the security situation, the difficulties that arise in relation to certain Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues as well as climatic-related impacts (e.g. drought) which have been exacerbated by damage to key agriculture- related infrastructure, including irrigation, in many rural areas. For example, a number of areas, including parts of Deir-ez-Zor and Rural Damascus were only recently accessible in 2018 - before which they were largely inaccessible other than through emergency interventions.

In 2018, the number of internally displaced persons residing outside their areas of origin remained very high (estimated at 6.2 million persons). At the same time, some 56,000 refugees returned voluntarily from their countries of asylum and their numbers are expected to grow significantly in the future. A not insignificant number of refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs lived in camps in north-east Syria, where they continued to experience varying degrees of restriction on their movement and have limited opportunities to apply their full range of skills and capabilities.

The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2018 emphasized the requirement for multiple livelihoods-related interventions ranging from creating short-term jobs through cash-for-work activities, to supporting entrepreneurship and small business as well as providing vocational training and start up kits. It also emphasized the importance of support for livestock and agriculture activities in rural communities where farmers and pastoralists are particularly vulnerable. The rehabilitation of basic infrastructure that was critical to boost local economic activity and thus livelihood activities were also deemed a priority.

The UNHCR Syria Livelihoods Strategy (2019/2018) set out four key objectives:

- Strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of UNHCR persons of concern through enhanced livelihood opportunities.
- Fostering the smooth reintegration of vulnerable displaced persons, including returnees into their respective communities.
- Mitigating the risk of negative coping mechanisms by IDPs, returnees and host communities.
- Achieving more coherent and coordinated action between UNHCR and other key stakeholders involved in the implementation of livelihoods and resilience building programmes.

The Livelihoods Strategy also set out a number of programmes to be implemented, including through the UNHCR-funded community centres and satellite centres located across the country, in cooperation with a wide range of partners and other key stakeholders.

One step closer to a better future

Batoul, a displaced single mother of four children received a start-up small business grant to establish her own hairdressing salon in Jableh in Lattakia governorate.
After a tiring day spent at working and cleaning-up the salon, Batoul described to UNHCR staff her painful journey after fleeing Ar-Raqqa four years ago and her struggle to provide for her family, “My income was never sufficient, but after receiving UNHCR grant I am working non-stop here. I see my future in this salon,” said Batoul with a smile on her face.
Batoul’s project expanded lately and now she is offering a variety of services including simple trimming to highlighting, dying, styling and perming. She even became a professional trainer in GOPA’s vocational training programme transferring both her personal and professional experience to other people.

Om Abdul Rahman supports her family

During the visit to the joint UNHCR-FAO poultry livelihood project in Homs, the UNHCR team met Om Abdul Rahman, a 45 - year old single mother who benefited from this project.

“I lost my husband in the crisis. Having five children, life has become very difficult to endure”, said Om Abdul Rahman who explained that after her husband went missing, she moved to live with her parents in law. Her two eldest children had to drop out of school to work and help provide for the family. She continued “The hens are laying eggs daily and the work is getting better. At the beginning there were a few eggs only, so I kept them for the house, but now I can sell eggs in the neighbourhood and earn income”.

1The UN-led Early Recovery and Livelihoods Sector reported that, at the end of 2017, over 50 per cent of Syrians were unemployed, with the youth unemployment rate as high as 78 per cent. Owing to displacement and family separation linked to the crisis many persons with disability, older persons and females-heading households increasingly bear the burden as the main income earners.

The poultry livelihood project aims to provide the displaced and affected families lacking a source of income with a means to generate income and live in dignity. The project is addressing displaced families who were forced to flee their houses due to the crisis. 450 families/ 2,700 individuals have benefited from the project. The Syrian Veterinary Association is providing technical assistance to the families so they can sell their products in the market as well.

Achievements in 2018

As of end of December 2018, a total of 18,663 individuals benefited from UNHCR's vocational training, life skills and on-the-job training opportunities across 12 governorates. The training was relevant to those seeking to work in a range of professions including domestic electrical installation and maintenance, painting, plumbing and carpentry.

UNHCR also supported 2,065 individuals with entrepreneurship/ business training across eleven governorates, of whom 1,321 received an award to enable them to establish or operate a small business. Moreover, 7,323 individuals in 12 governorates benefited from receipt of livelihood toolkits intended to help them recover their livelihoods. The toolkits included sewing, blacksmithing, hairdressing, air conditioning maintenance, and mobile maintenance and computer maintenance kits. Productive inputs (wheat seeds) and small livestock were distributed to 120 vulnerable returnee farming families in Deir-ez-Zor.

Greenhouse project supports famers in Tartous

Ahmed is a 50 - year old displaced man from Ras Al Ein, Al-Hasakeh who fled with his wife and eight children to Al Bayda village in Banias, Tartous. During a monitoring visit of UNHCR staff to the greenhouse project Ahmed said, "Our family's only skill is farming, therefore we stayed here with another family who works in a greenhouse project and we share the income with the owner".

The increase in farming production cost to buy plastic rolls, seeds and fertilizers represents a real challenge for Ahmed and other farmers who sell the vegetables in low prices which affects their income. "I am so thankful for the plastic rolls and tomato seeds that I received through the greenhouse project. This has supported me a lot in light of the financial challenges I am facing. I am so happy now that I am able to maintain the only work that I am good at", Ahmed said with a sigh of relief.

UNHCR also supported the minor rehabilitation of eight public bakeries across five governorates (Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Homs, Hama and Dar'a). These bakeries not only provided important local employment opportunities (e.g. each rehabilitated bakery is expected to create up to 70 new jobs) but they also served thousands of IDPs, returnees and host community members who rely on the bakeries for the production of subsidised bread. Other provided infrastructure-related support included the installation of four irrigation pumps for the benefit of at least 3,200 local farmers in Deir-ez-Zor.

A number of cash for work initiatives were also supported. 99 persons including 77 females were engaged to clear community irrigation channels in Deir-ez-Zor. A tent repair workshop in Al-Hol camp, Al-Hasakeh governorate, provided 64 refugees and returnees (all female heads of household) with temporary work and on-the-job training opportunities.

Fadia, from a housewife to a cook

Originally from Bab Dreib in Homs city, Fadia was displaced with her husband, five children, and old mother in 2012. Since then, the family has been enduring years of multiple displacements renting different houses in Homs city.
Fadia's husband used to work on loom, producing traditional fabrics, however being sick he could no longer bear the long working hours. "When my husband fell ill, I started thinking about our financial situation. The only thing I was good at is cooking for my family", said Fadia who finally decided to work as a cook. She continued "I faced many challenges especially that I have very limited equipment due to our multiple displacements".
With the assistance of UNHCR community centre in Al Sakan Al Shabiby in Homs city run by Aoun, Fadia was advised to apply for a start-up small business grant in order to help her expand her project and generate more income. Through the grant, Fadia managed to receive cooking equipment including a freezer, a mixer, an oven and cookers.

Ghazala, 105 years old, internally displaced from Afrin kisses Saad, a UNHCR staff member expressing her happiness to receive UNHCR's assistance. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *October 2018.*

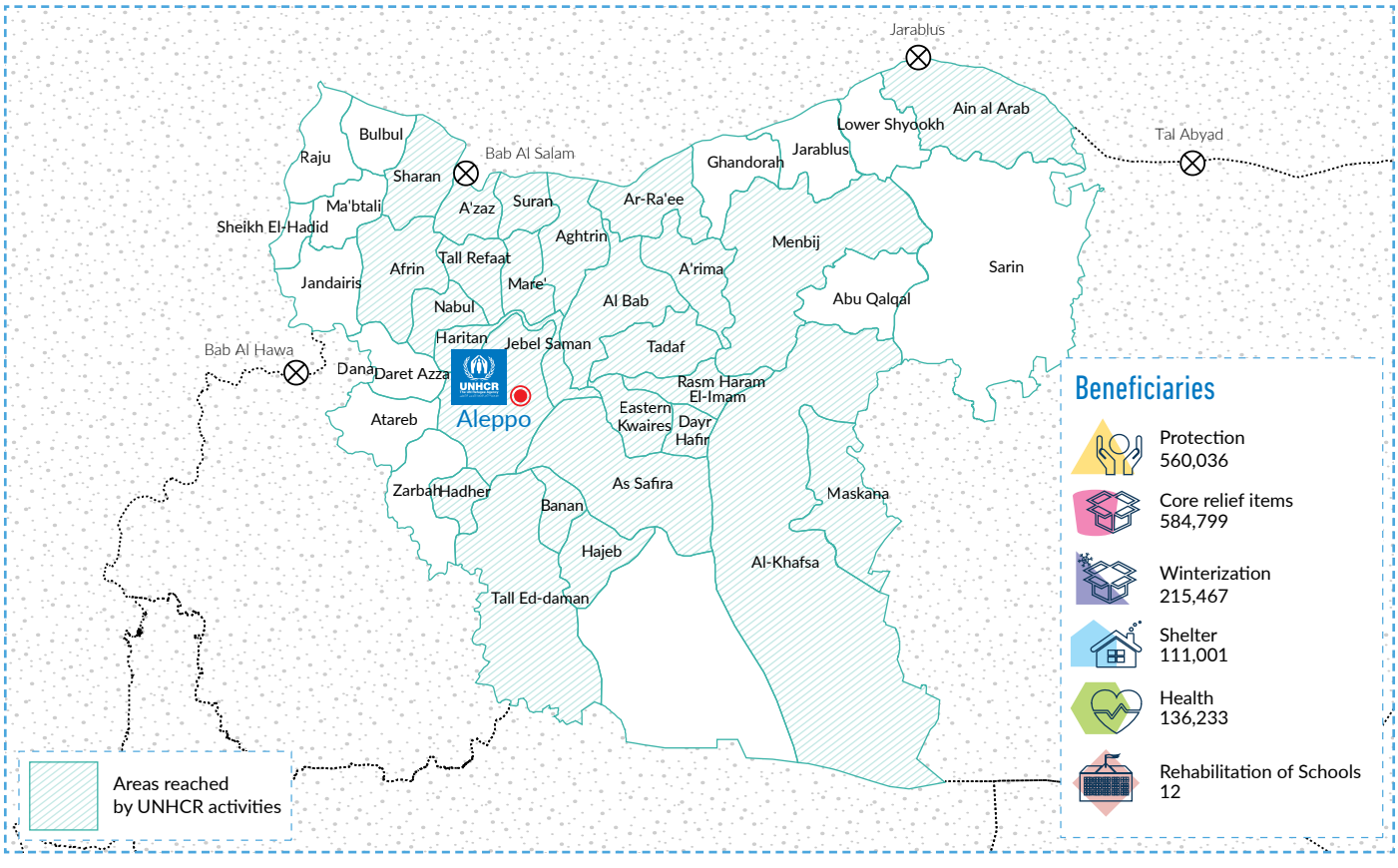
UNHCR
Offices in Syria

Aleppo Sub Office

Covering north-west Syria

Access in north-west Syria remained a challenge in 2018 due to the volatile security situation and ongoing military operations. The UNHCR Sub Office in Aleppo worked extensively on the UNHCR emergency response to the displacement from Afrin and also in the key areas of return.

UNHCR with SARC distributing UNHCR core relief items to the returnees of Rasem Alharmal.| ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | *September 2018.*



Community mobilization

- 22 community centres, 10 satellite centres and 28 mobile teams were fully functioning in Aleppo.
- Five community-based organizations were implemented in the field of protection.
- 217 community-led initiatives and six group community-led initiatives were completed.
- 566 outreach volunteers were selected from the local communities.

Protection

- 562,981 individuals were reached with protection services.
- 728 protection workers were trained on protection issues.
- 10 schools were rehabilitated in returnee areas serving 6,000 students.
- 36 lawyers provided counselling and legal support.

Core relief items

- 431,755 people/86,351 families received CRIs/ Winterization items in Aleppo.
- UNHCR distributed innovative items such as foldable mattresses, in-house solar system kits and gas cookers to 5,000 vulnerable families.
- 22,000 mosquito nets and 20,000 rechargeable fans were allocated to IDPs in Aleppo.

Shelter

- 18,953 displaced persons and returnees received 2,400 shelter kits.
- 75,000 returnees benefited from the removal of 129,800 m^3 of debris.
- 6,500 returnees benefited from 154 solid waste bins.
- 4,263 returnees benefited from the rehabilitation of 860 damaged houses.
- 6,000 returnees benefited from the rehabilitation of a bore hole in southern rural Aleppo.
- Shelter capacity building was provided to 30 persons from the staff of the Ministry of Local Administration.

Self-reliance and livelihoods

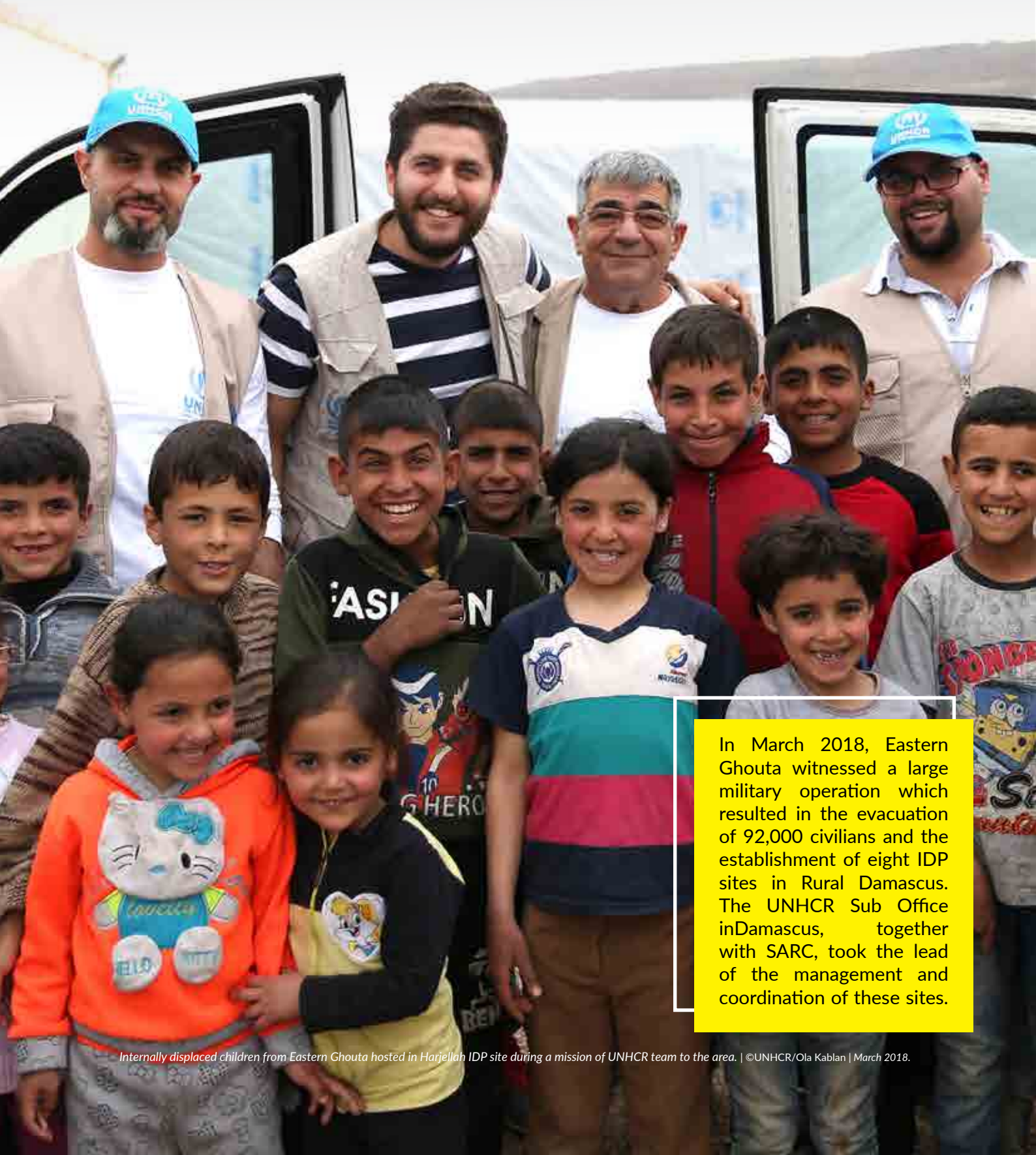
- 3,307 individuals received vocational training and 339 received entrepreneurship training.
- 165 individuals were provided with start-up small business grants.
- 3,459 different types of toolkits were distributed.
- 10,741 people benefited from laundry services.

Health

- 139,937 individuals received free-of-charge primary healthcare services.

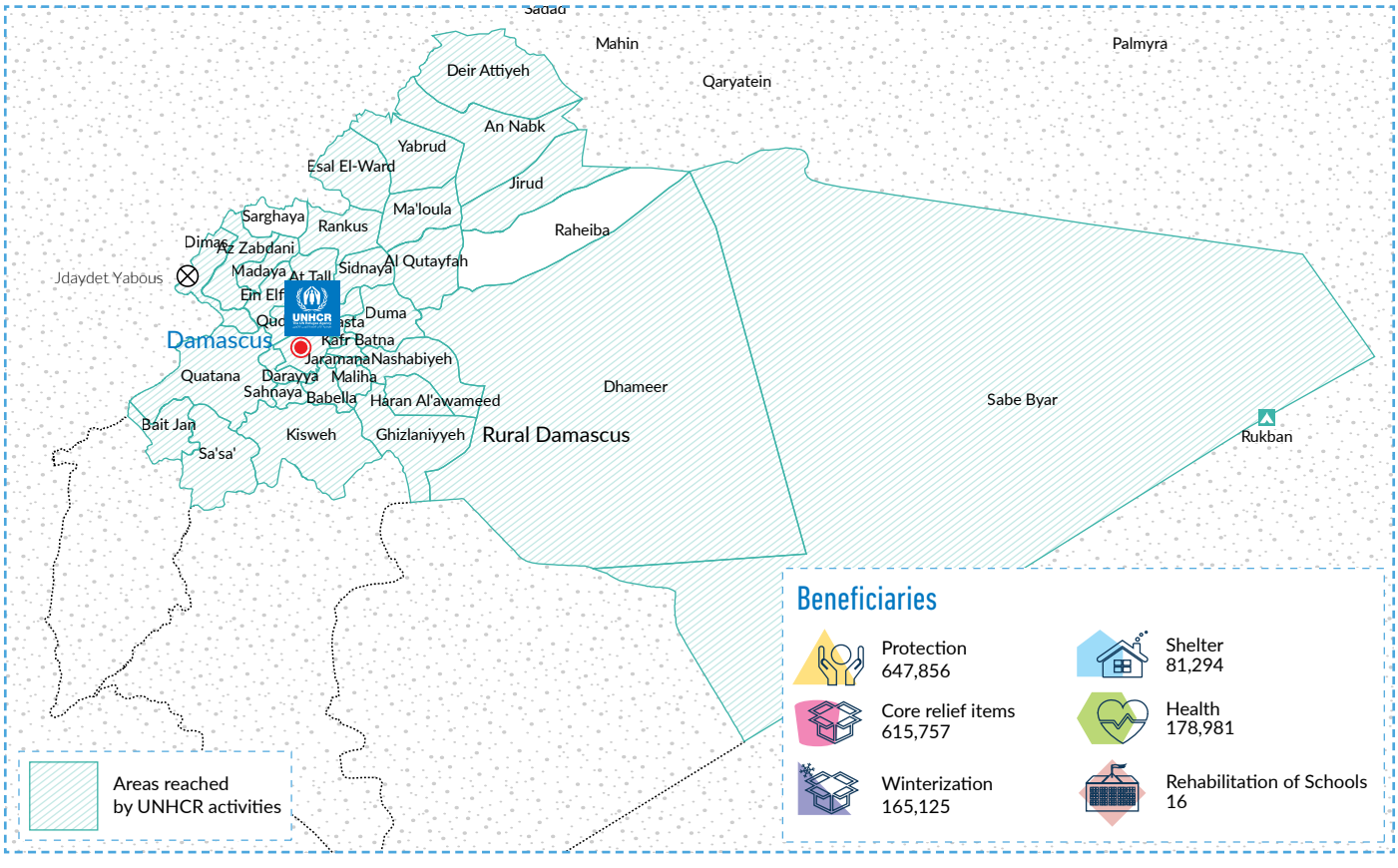
Damascus Sub Office

Covering the capital and surroundings



In March 2018, Eastern Ghouta witnessed a large military operation which resulted in the evacuation of 92,000 civilians and the establishment of eight IDP sites in Rural Damascus. The UNHCR Sub Office inDamascus, together with SARC, took the lead of the management and coordination of these sites.

Internally displaced children from Eastern Ghouta hosted in Harjellah IDP site during a mission of UNHCR team to the area. | ©UNHCR/Ola Kablan | *March 2018.*



Community mobilization

- 435 outreach volunteers linked with 24 community centres and six satellite centres were supported in Damascus and Rural Damascus.
- 187 community-led initiatives and 13 group community-led initiatives were supported in Damascus and Rural Damascus.
- 24 community centres, 6 satellite centres and 19 mobile teams were supported by UNHCR in Damascus and Rural Damascus.
- UNHCR supported nine community-based organizations in Damascus and Rural Damascus.

Protection

- 549,474 protection interventions were provided to IDPs and vulnerable host community members, including legal assistance.
- Legal assistance was provided to 134,263 individuals in Damascus and Rural Damascus.

Core relief items

- 493,260 core relief items were provided in response to the Eastern Ghouta emergency.
- As end of 2018, UNHCR managed to reach 35,327 families with winterization response in Damascus and Rural Damascus.

Shelter

- 21,827 IDPs from Eastern Ghouta benefited from specific shelter interventions.
- Sub Office Damascus distributed 122 solid waste bin and completed the removal of 53,500 m^3 of debris in Rural Damascus.

Self-reliance and livelihoods

- A new production line in the public bakery of Erbin, Eastern Ghouta was installed leading to 40 % increase on production capacity and the creation of ten jobs for workers from the area.
- 5,726 persons of concern received Vocational Training in 2018.
- 1,659 toolkits of various types were distributed.
- 520 individuals undertook Entrepreneurship Business Training of whom 328 received Small Start-Up Business grants.

Refugee response

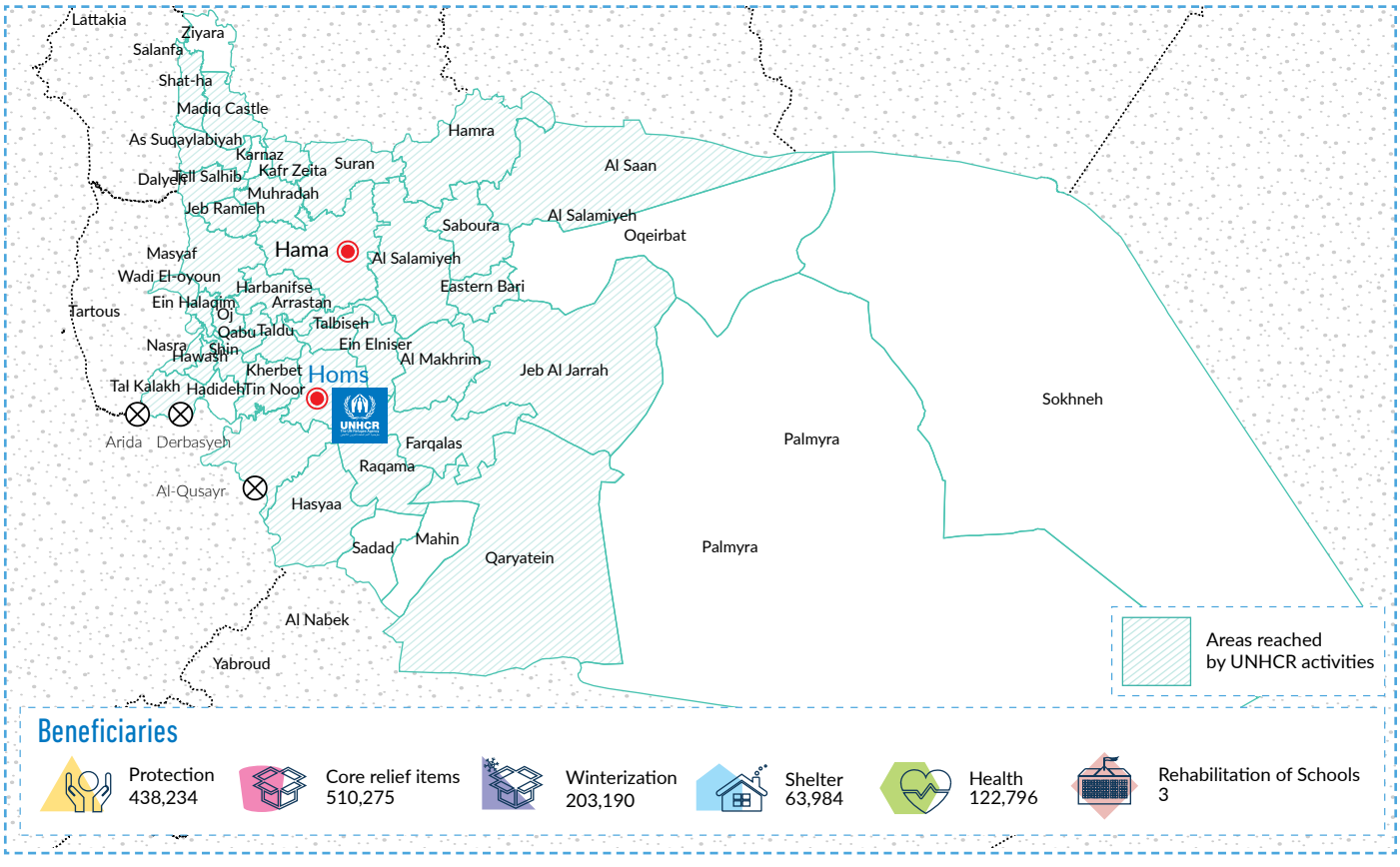
- 3,556 protection assessments, counselling and follow-up sessions in addition to 3,082 legal counselling sessions were provided.

Homs Sub Office

Covering central Syria

Access in Homs and Hama governorates improved this year, after military operations in the area subsided in May. As a result, UNHCR started implementing regular programming in newly accessible areas, and scaled up its response in areas of return. The Sub Office in Homs also maintained preparedness efforts in the event of a sudden influx of returnees or IDPs from north-west Syria.

UNHCR protection staff meeting a refugee returnee family in the newly-accessible A'qrab in southern rural Hama. The family is living with their relatives as their house is destroyed. | ©UNHCR/Aman Elwan | 2018



Beneficiaries

Protection	Core relief items	Winterization	Shelter	Health	Rehabilitation of Schools
438,234	510,275	203,190	63,984	122,796	3

Community mobilization

- 24 community centres, three satellite centres and 25 mobile teams were supported by UNHCR in Homs and Hama.
- UNHCR supported eight community-based organizations.
- 165 community-led initiatives in Homs and Hama were implemented.
- Through implementing partners, UNHCR supported community leadership and decision-making through 674 outreach volunteers in Homs and Hama.

Self-reliance and livelihoods

- 4,857 beneficiaries were reached with livelihood toolkits and vocational training.
- Through partners, UNHCR supported 401 families with start-up small business grants in Homs and Hama.

Core relief items

- 420,640 individuals received core relief items in Homs and Hama.
- Sub-Office Homs assisted 21,180 families with rechargeable fans in summer and 40,548 families with winterized items.

Protection

- 16,030 individuals received legal counselling in Homs and Hama.
- UNHCR provided child protection services to 2,774 individuals in Homs and Hama as well as 3,309 child-protection awareness sessions.
- UNHCR provided SGBV activities and awareness sessions to 54,232 individuals in Homs and Hama.

Shelter

- 35,813 individuals were reached with shelter interventions.
- UNHCR completed the rehabilitation of 1,477 apartments in areas of return, benefiting 8,421 individuals.
- UNHCR provided 2,614 doors and windows for the benefit of 14,067 individuals.
- UNHCR installed 1,300 shelter kits for 11,335 individuals.
- 34,000 m^3 of debris were removed and 90 waste-containers were distributed in return areas.

Health

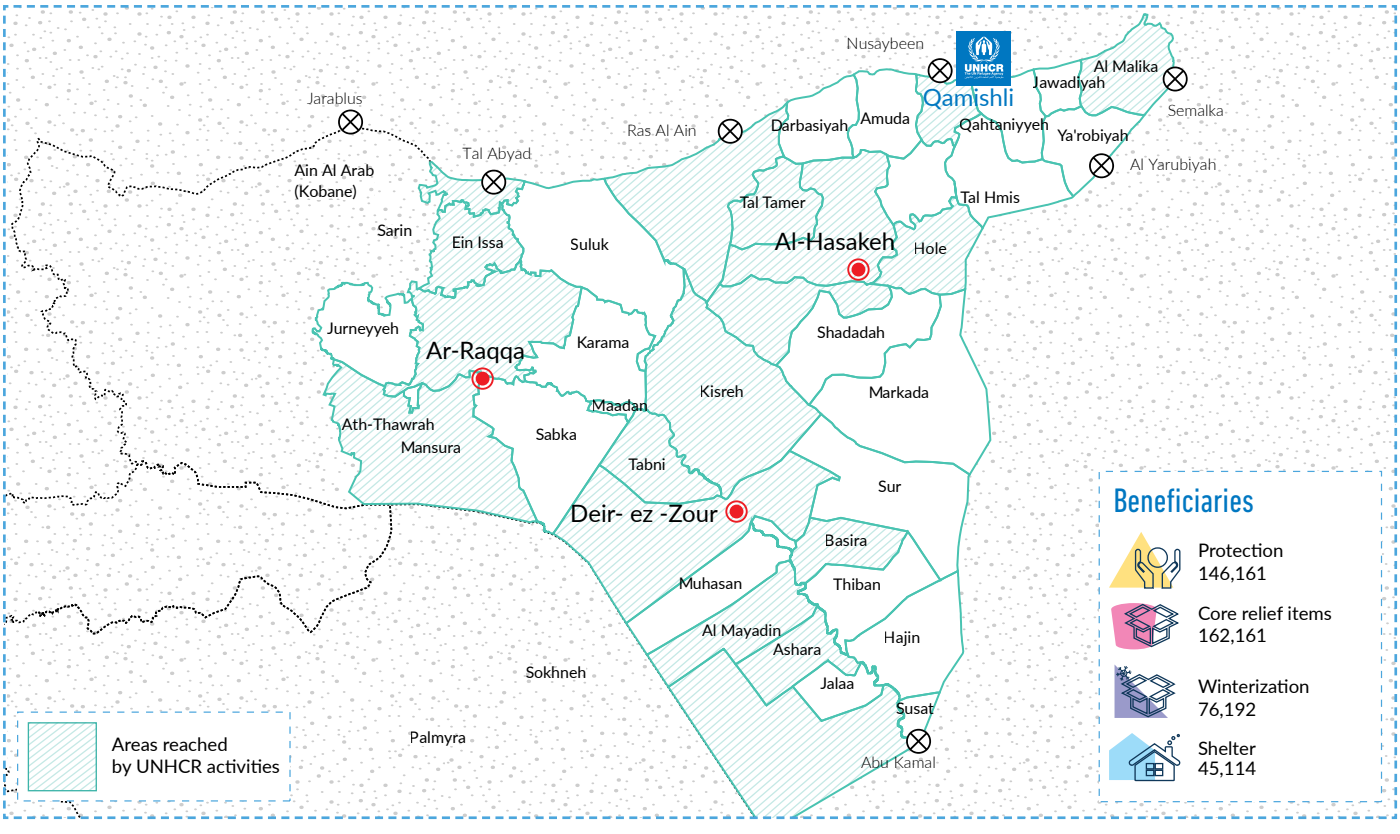
- 125,668 beneficiaries had access to primary health care services in Homs and Hama.

Qamishli Sub Office

Covering north-east Syria

North East Syria is still dealing with the impact of ISIS rule. UNHCR expanded its operation and upgraded its staffing covering the governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa representing a third of the whole country.

Registration for an Iraqi asylum seeker in Newroz camp, Al-Hasakeh | ©UNHCR | *November 2018.*



Community mobilization

- Five community centres and three mobile units were offering protection services.
- 40 community-led initiatives were implemented.

Self-reliance and livelihoods

- Over 3,000 persons were supported from the drought-affected communities in Deir-ez-Zor.
- More than 60 female headed household benefited from cash-for-work by repairing tents for 3,000 individuals.
- 686 livelihoods toolkits were distributed in Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh.
- 964 individuals benefited from livelihoods vocational training.
- 57 persons of concern benefited from start-up small business grants.

Core relief items

- UNHCR distributed seasonal items to 110,603 individuals in the three governorates.
- UNHCR distributed CRIs to 87,408 individuals.

Health

- UNHCR partner Al Birr provided free of charge primary health care sercvices and medications to 30,392 refugees and asylum seekers in both urban and camp settings.

Shelter

- UNHCR offered infrastructure improvement in the camps including rechargeable stations, communal kitchens, metal benches, solar illumination, fencing, roads maintenance, drainage system, solar lighting, and fumigation.
- New production line for Al Awal Al-Hasakeh bakery was created.
- 1,000 school desks were distributed to schools in Qamishli and Al-Hasakeh.
- 100 shelter kits in Shaddadeh were provided and installed.
- In Deir-ez-Zor, 350 shelter kits were installed, 150 damaged houses were rehabilitated, and 60 rooms in collective shelters were rehabilitated.
- In Ar-Raqqa, 150 damaged houses were rehabilitated.
- 22 water wells in Al-Hasakeh and Qamishli became ready for use.

Protection

- UNHCR provided legal counselling to 833 cases of urban refugees and asylum seekers. UNHCR partner SARC provided legal services for IDPs, urban refugees and asylum seekers in Al-Hasakeh and Qamishli including 188 awarness sessions for 3504 beneficiaries.
- Technical support was provided to Al-Hasakeh, Qamishli and Deir-ez-Zor Civil Registry Offices in the form of ICT equipment, furniture and generators.
- 3,383 children were enrolled in accelerated learning programme, 351 drop-out of school students were integrated into the formal education.

As-Sweida Field Office

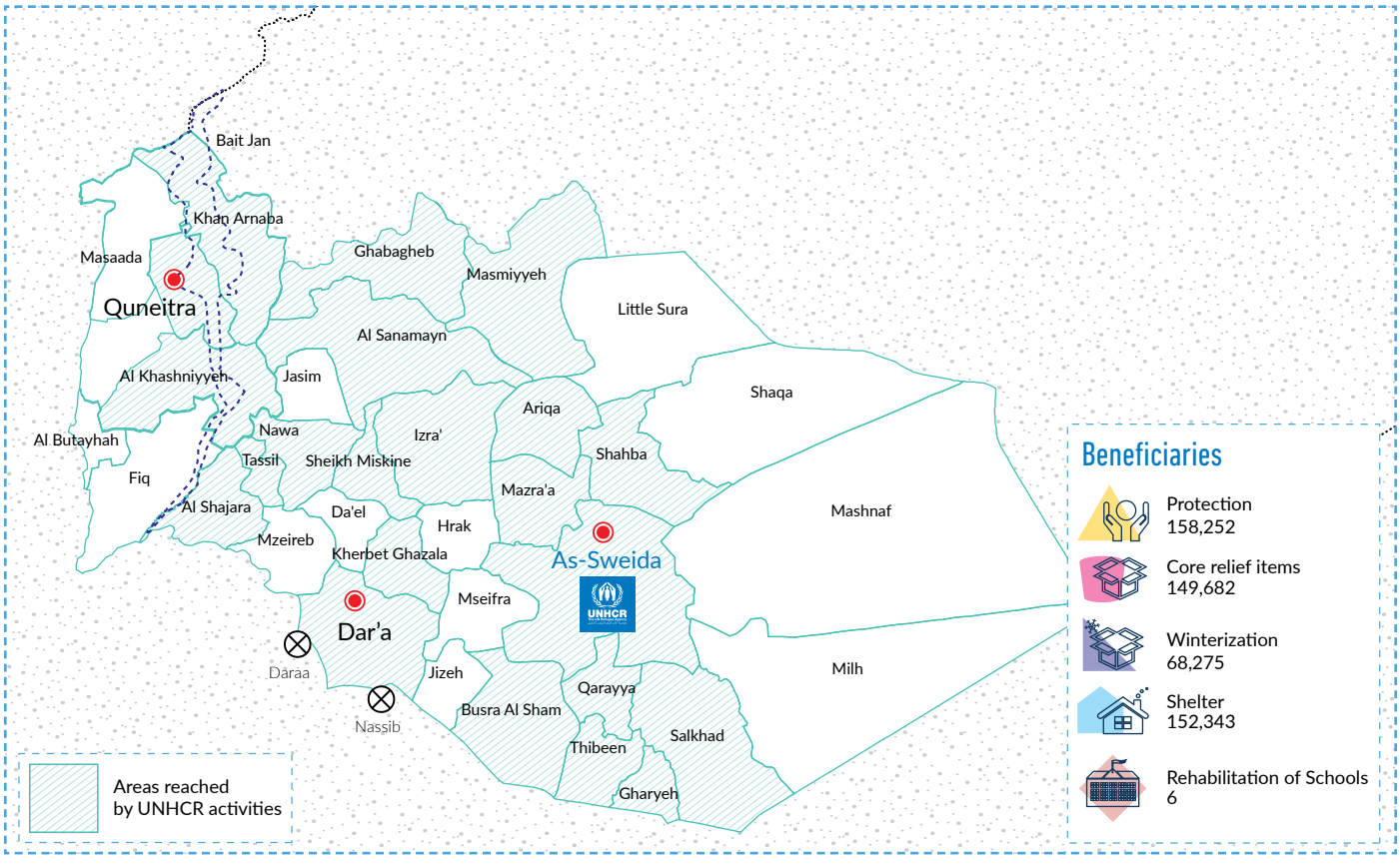
Covering south-west Syria

UNHCR is the only UN agency having presence in As-Sweida covering Syria's three southern governorates namely: Dar'a, As-Sweida and Quneitra.

By the beginning of 2018, it was estimated that around 90,000 IDP families were living within its area of responsibility and UNHCR responded to their needs since the opening of the office.

Intensive military operations in June 2018 led to fresh displacement in south-west Syria. Moreover, wide return movement of displaced people started to take place in Dar'a and Quneitra starting from September 2018.

Activities for children by UNHCR partner GOPA in the child friendly space in As-Sweida ©UNHCR | *2018.*



Community mobilization

- Four community centres, one satellite centre and five mobile units were supported.
- 85 community-led initiatives benefiting more than 145,957 persons were implemented as well as four group community-led initiatives benefiting 1,401 individuals.
- 125 outreach volunteers supported the community centres.

Shelter

- Shelter activities including shelter kits and shelter rehabilitation benefited 2,968 individuals.
- 130,000 individuals benefited from debris removal.
- 5,525 individuals benefited from water tanks distribution.
- 11,500 individuals benefited from the restoration of five Boreholes and 500 m Pipeline.

Protection

- 73,588 beneficiaries were reached with protection interventions, including legal assistance.

Self-reliance and livelihoods

- 2,523 benefited individuals from livelihood programme including vocational training, start-up small business grants, entrepreneurship courses, and livelihood toolkit distribution.

Core relief items

- 54,500 individuals were reached with core relief items, including the response to the south-west Syria emergency.
- 68,275 individuals were reached with the winterization programme starting from September 2018.

Health

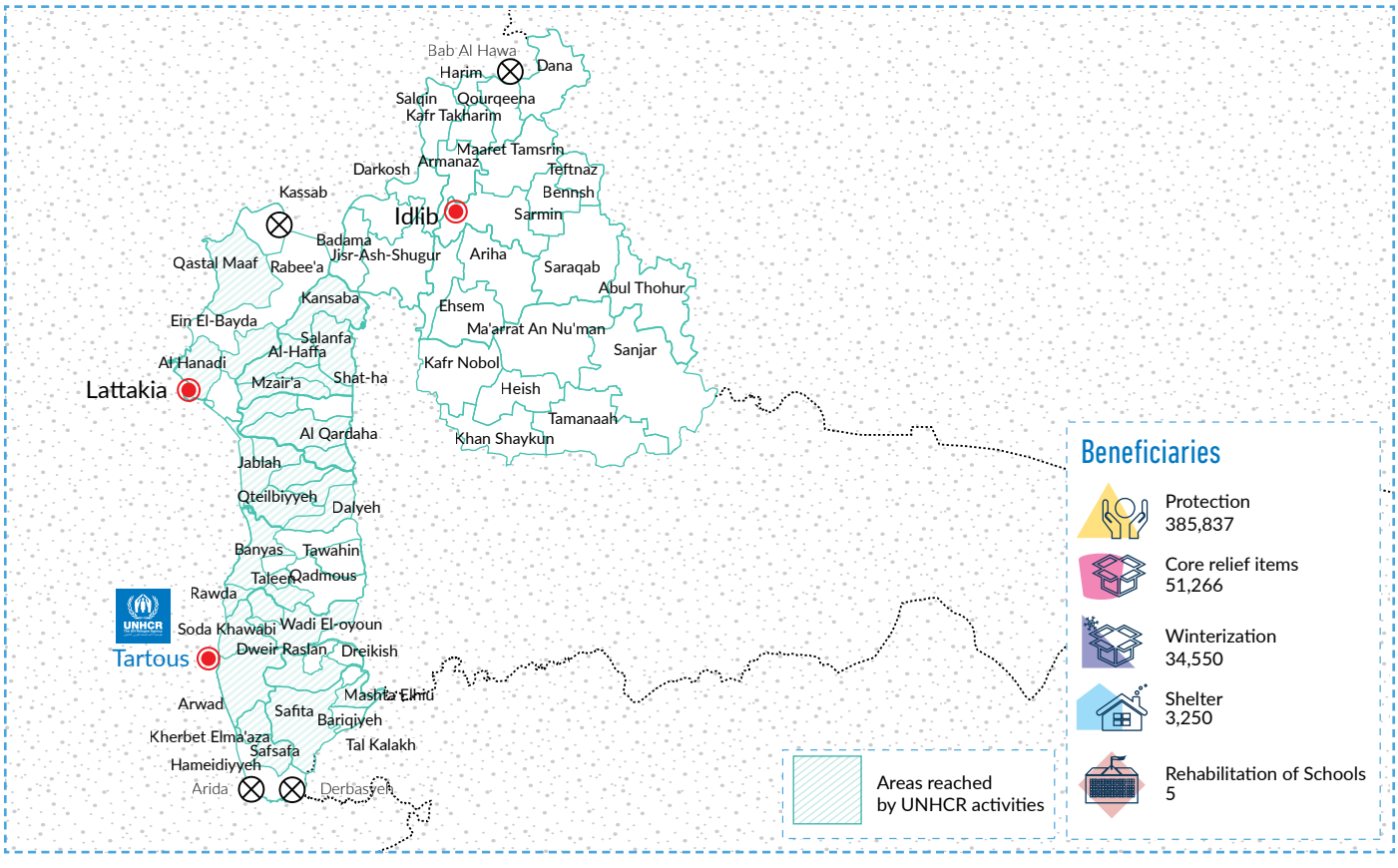
- Two new health points were established in the community centres in Dar'a.
- Three Primary Health Care facilities were rehabilitated in Dar'a.

Tartous Field Office

Covering west Syria

The prevailing relative stability in the coastal region has attracted IDPs and refugees from other Syrian governorates, mainly Idleb, Aleppo and Homs. The area has witnessed limited security incidents, except for the northern rural Lattakia.

UNHCR Protection and Shelter staff during an assessment visit to Jabal Al-Nobeh, northern rural Lattakia | ©UNHCR/ Reem Al Raie | October 2018.



Community mobilization

- Two new community centres and a new satellite centre were opened.
- The number of outreach volunteers in the coastal area increased to 472.
- 163 community-led initiatives were supported including nine group community-led initiatives.

Shelter

- Shelter was provided to 3,227 vulnerable displaced and returnee people/640 families.
- 1,852 displaced individuals/ 365 families were assisted through maintaining five collective shelters in Tartous and Lattakia.
- 1,375 returnees/275 families were assisted through the rehabilitation of their damaged houses.

Protection

- 41 lawyers and 21 legal outreach volunteers, reached 50,878 individuals in return locations.
- 43,410 individuals benefited from SGBV awareness sessions during 2018.
- Four schools were rehabilitated in return areas in Lattakia for the benefit of 757 students.
- 41 community-based structures were established consisting of 31 Child Protection Clubs and 10 Child Welfare Committees.

Self-reliance and livelihoods

- 6,130 individuals benefited from UNHCR livelihood interventions in the coastal area including 1,500 toolkits.
- The entrepreneurship and business training reached 395 individuals. Whereas, the number of people who benefited from the start-up small business grants reached 287 in addition to 3,948 people who benefited from UNHCR vocational training.

Core relief items

- 39,550 individuals/7,910 families received winterized items and 13,000 individuals/2,600 families received regular relief items.
- 11 new return locations were reached in 2018 in addition to remote areas which were blocked during the harsh weather conditions in winter.

Health

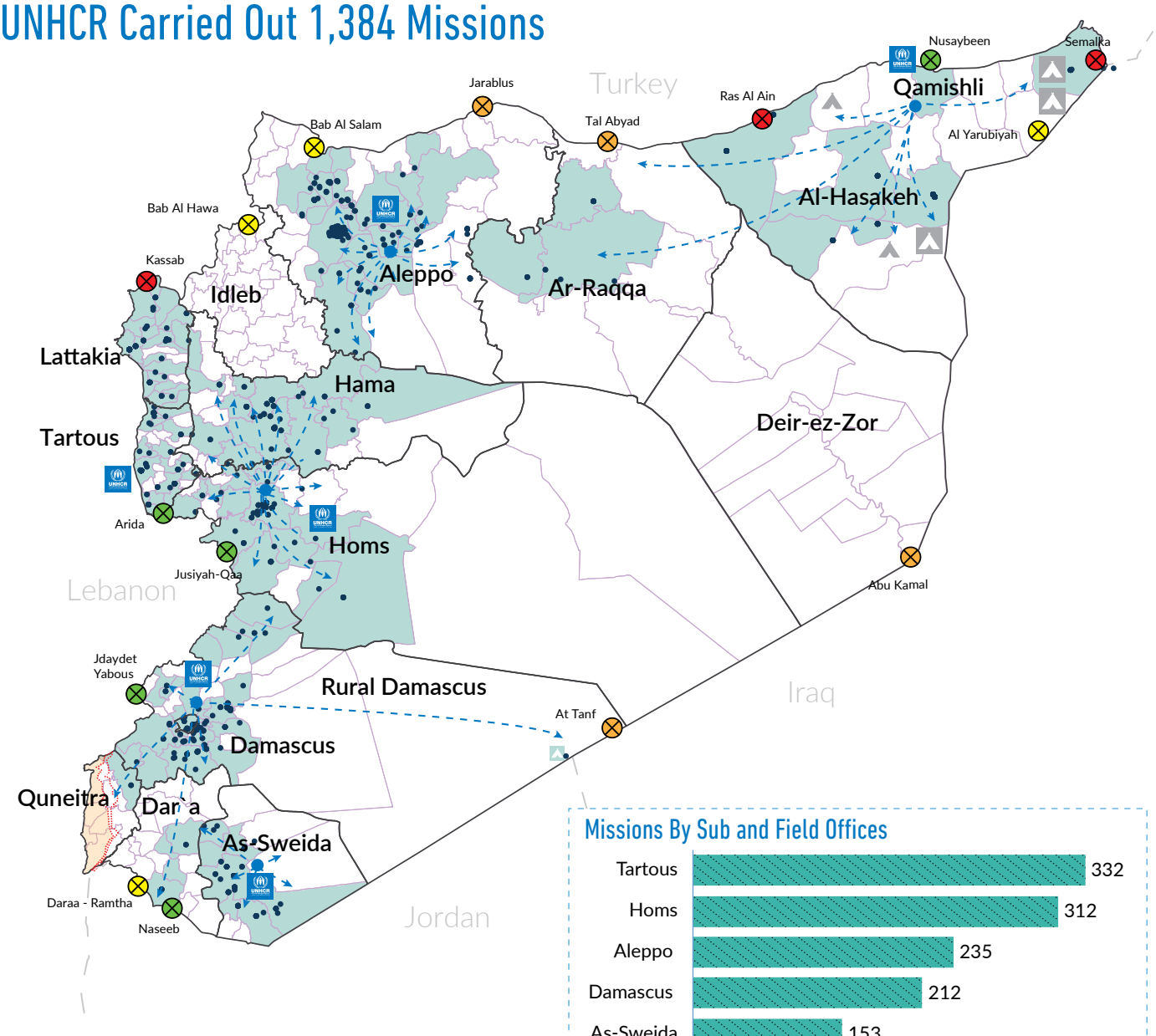
- Two health points were launched in Tartous city and Alton Al-Jered in 2018 for the benefit of 1,135 persons.

First UN convoy to Tal Refaat, northern rural Aleppo to support the newly displaced people from Afrin. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *November 2018.*

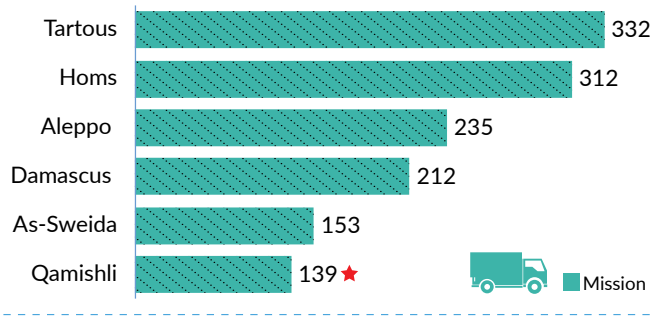
UNHCR
Access in Syria

UNHCR Syria's Missions in 2018

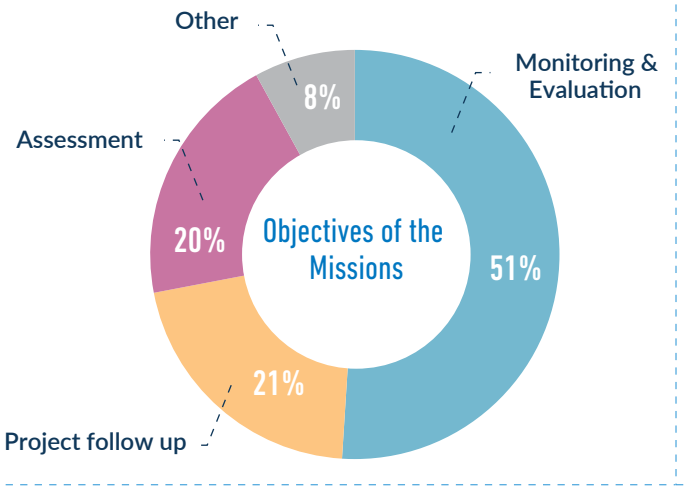
UNHCR Carried Out 1,384 Missions

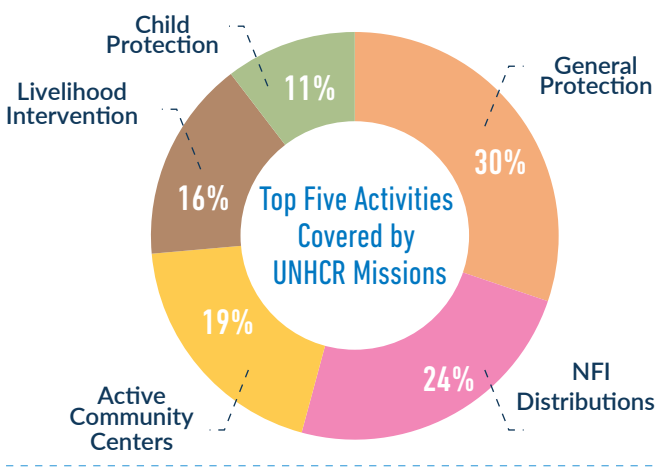


Missions By Sub and Field Offices



★ *Excluding daily missions to IDP/refugee camps*





Inter-agency Missions in 2018

During the year 2018, UNHCR participated in many inter-agency missions to help the most vulnerable people in Syria. Each of these missions had its own challenges. Some of these missions were the following:

On 14 January,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to Handarat Camp, in the north rural Aleppo city and the surrounding villages to assess the humanitarian needs of the 3,000 returnees to the area.

On 15 January,

An inter-agency assessment mission was conducted to the town of Souran, in Hama governorate, which revealed that around 1,200 families had returned to Souran town from Idleb in two weeks' time.

On 29 January,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency assessment mission to two locations in rural Aleppo; Nubol and Mayer. The mission observed the need for core relief items in the two locations.

On 14 February,

After 78 days without any access to Eastern Ghouta in Rural Damascus, an inter-agency convoy of the UN and SARC delivered life-saving food, nutrition and health assistance to 7,200 people in Nashabiyeh.

On 05 March,

An inter-agency convoy with the participation of the UNHCR Representative was conducted to the besieged town of Douma, in Eastern Ghouta. Although a humanitarian pause was promised by all parties, the fire exchange continued unabated. The mission remained inside Douma for nearly 9 hours to off-load 48 trucks of badly needed humanitarian assistance as well as to conduct need assessments.

On 09 April,

UNHCR together with other UN agencies conducted an inter-agency mission to Tal Refaat surroundings, including the villages of Kechtaar, Deir Jmal and Zyara and Shahbaa camp. The mission revealed that the displaced people were not allowed to move freely outside of the villages/ camp in addition to other protection concerns.

On 14 May,

After humanitarian access was granted to some areas in Eastern Ghouta which shifted control, a high-level inter-agency mission was conducted to Saqba and Kafar Batna with the participation of UNHCR. A number of protection and other issues and needs were identified as priority such as the need for core relief items and shelter rehabilitation support.

On 22 May,

An inter-agency mission reached Al Qaryatein in Homs. The mission assessed the population's access to civil and property documents, persons with specific needs and the protection response capacity of partners on the ground.

On 30 May,

An inter-agency convoy delivered much needed humanitarian assistance to Talbisah and Tlul AlHomur in Homs. The convoy included 8 UNHCR trucks carrying 30,000 core relief items.

On 26 June,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to Arrastan district in northern Homs for the first time since the reconciliation agreement took place in the area. Three trucks out of the 38 were loaded with UNHCR core relief items including 2,500 mattresses and 8,500 solar lamps in the absence of electricity in Arrastan. UNHCR also conducted a focus group discussion in order to identify the current protection challenges of the population.

On 01 July,

UNHCR provided core relief items to the population of Douma, Eastern Ghouta through an inter-agency mission to the area. The assistance included 8,250 high thermal blankets, 5,000 kitchen sets, 3,330 plastic sheets and 5,000 solar lamps.

On 12 July,

The first inter-agency humanitarian assistance and assessment mission reached eastern rural Dar'a. Three UNHCR Protection and Operation staff accompanied the convoy to assess the situation in the area.

On 15 July,

A UN/SARC/ICRC team visited Naseeb border crossing between Syria and Jordan and Um Elmayathen in a high-level mission to assess the humanitarian situation in southern Dar'a. The mission delivered food assistance for 15,000 persons/3,000 families in need and was accompanied by the Representative of UNHCR in Syria, with other Heads of Agencies to identify the needs on the ground.

On 15 July,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to the hard-to-reach Al Houla and Hourbenafsah in Homs on 15 July. The convoy included seven UNHCR trucks loaded with plastic sheets, blankets, and mattresses for 6,000 individuals/1,200 families in Al Houla and for 1,500 individuals/300 families in Hourbenafsah.

In 2018, 686,000 people were reached through 19 UN inter-agency convoys. UNHCR participated in 16 convoys.

UNHCR also participated in inter-agency needs assessment missions and deliveries;

On 18 July,

UNHCR together with other UN agencies and SARC conducted the first humanitarian mission to Beit Jan, Rural Damascus since the start of the crisis eight years ago. The convoy delivered humanitarian aid, including core relief items, food, medicine and hygiene kits to three areas in Beit Jan and Beitima reaching 19,500 individuals.

On 24 July,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency assessment mission to newly accessible areas in the southwest of Hama, including Jarjeesa, Zara, Harbanifse, Telf, Aqrab, and Khorbt Jamaa, and Aqrab. The mission team met with the relevant local governmental authorities, identified the population's protection concerns, monitored the distribution of humanitarian assistance delivered in the area as well as assessed the shelter conditions.

On 26 July,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission to Al Hamraa district north-eastern rural Hama. The team visited the towns of Shihat Al Hamraa and Serouj, where they held a meeting with the local community leaders and conducted a focus group discussion with women.

On 26 July,

UNHCR's health and field team took part in the inter-agency mission to Douma. Medical aid was distributed together with core relief items through UNHCR partner SARC. UNHCR's response on the ground was conducted through health and core relief items' assessments to identify the needs.

On 09 August,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Zamalka and Erbin in Eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus to deliver humanitarian assistance to 35,000 individuals as well as to conduct needs assessment for future interventions.

On 16 August,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency convoy to Busra Al-Sham, Dar'a governorate. UNHCR contribution was mainly 1,500 plastic sheets, 3,000 mattresses, 1,500 kitchen sets, 3,000 jerry cans, 1,500 solar lamps, 3,000 sleeping mats, and 1,500 hygiene kits.

on 15 October ,

An inter-agency team accompanied a convoy that delivered food assistance to around 2,800 families in 10 communities in Dar'a governorate. The UNHCR team identified several protection concerns.

On 16 October,

UNHCR participated in an inter-agency mission in cooperation with SARC to Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood in Aleppo to assess the needs of the displaced people there as well as the needs of returnees.

On 18 October,

An inter-agency convoy accompanied the food delivery assistance to cover the needs of around 2,700 families living in 13 communities in Dar'a governorate; Al-Taraa, Al Metalla, Al Jisri, Mazraat Al Abed, Qirata, Western Masika, Eastern Masika, Al Mzeraa, Al Khawabi, Al Bareqta, Al Madares, Al Ballana and Kom Al Rumman.

On 03 November,

UNHCR participated in a joint aid convoy with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and other UN agencies to Al Rukban makeshift settlement, in south-east Syria near the Jordanian border to deliver lifesaving humanitarian assistance to 50,000 individuals. It consisted of 78 trucks delivering 10,475 food parcels and flour bags, clothes for 18,000 children, 10,075 hygiene kits and plastic sheets, new-born baby kits for 1,200 children, as well as medicines, medical supplies and nutritional supplements for children and women.

On 03 November,

A joint humanitarian mission in Deir-ez-Zor governorate was subject to an attack during which a Syrian driver from a local NGO was injured. The mission had intended to carry out an assessment in advance of a UN inter-agency distribution of assistance to thousands of displaced persons in the governorate.

On 05 November,

UNHCR's team led by UNHCR Deputy Representative (Protection) went inside Rukban makeshift settlement and met with people who expressed the lack of basic needs including; security, water, food, education, livelihoods and freedom of movement. The majority of the population are women and children, living in makeshift and scattered shelters, without any privacy nor protection from the harsh weather conditions. With little to no access to health facilities and medicine inside Rukban, and with the harsh desert winter approaching, the health conditions will worsen and so will the suffering of the civilians. UNHCR provided 10,000 plastic sheets for protection from the harsh weather.

UNHCR's partner Namaa's mobile unit is playing with children in a child friendly space in Tal Shair in Aleppo.| ©UNHCR/Antwan Chnkdji | September 2018.

UNHCR-Led **Sectors**

Protection and Community Services Sector (PCSS)

Syrian Arab Republic: Syria hub Protection and Community Services Sector (PCSS)
Overview of interventions provided by Sector's partners as of End 2018

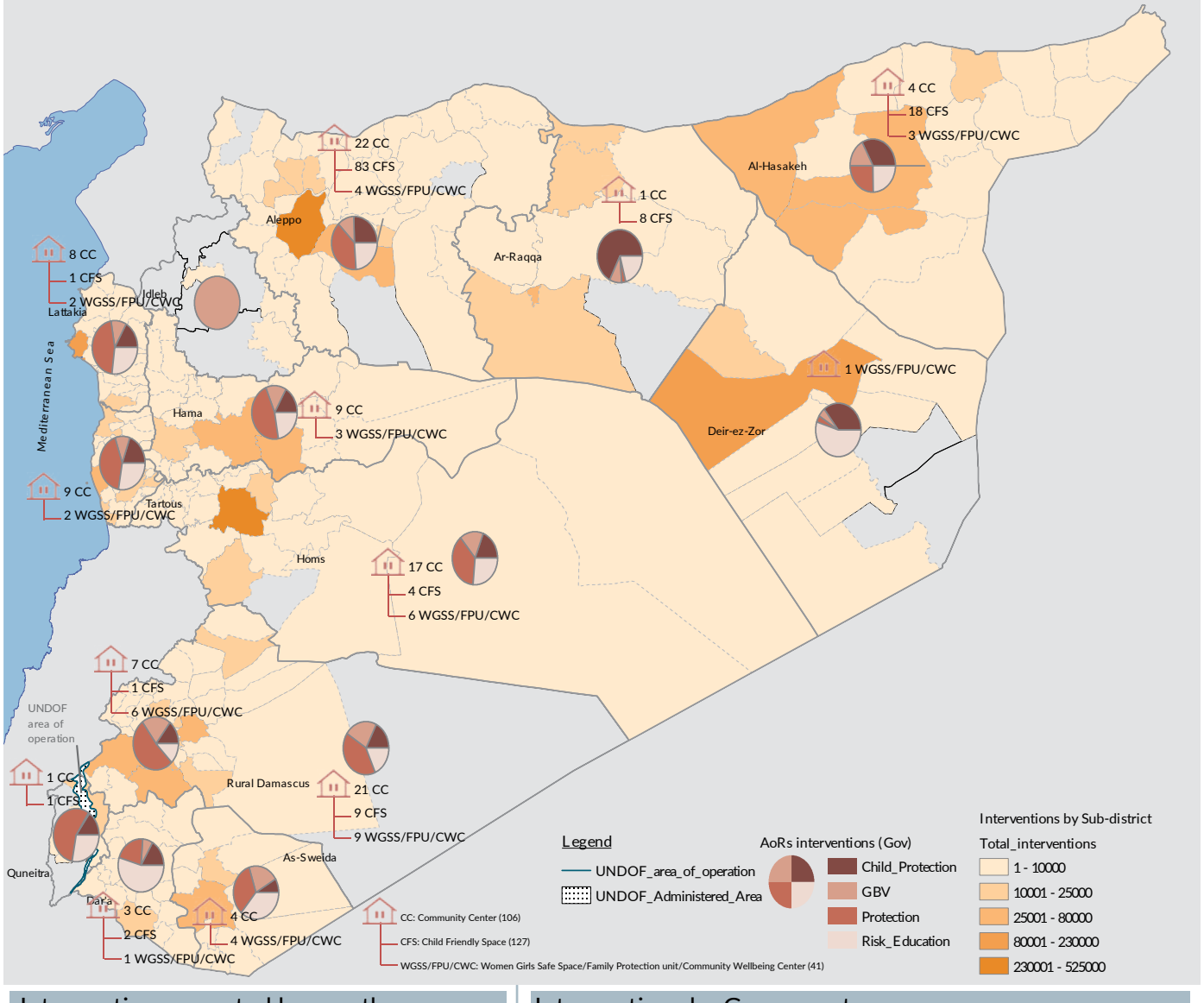
قطاع الحمايه و الرعايه الاجتماعيه في سوريا
Protection and Community Services Sector inside Syria

5,524,766* interventions provided

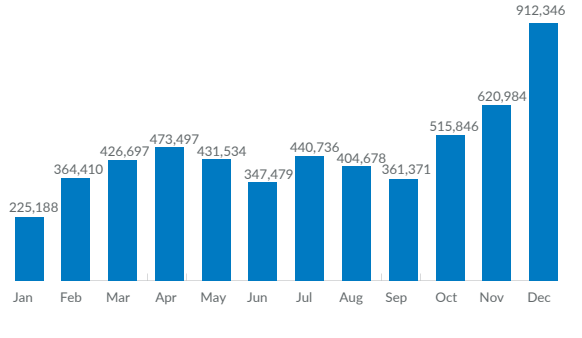
- Protection 1,984,451 %36
- Risk education 1,413,670 %26
- GBV 829,072 %15
- Child protection 1,297,573 %24

1,662,676	Women	542,498	Men
1,707,682	Girls	1,535,390	Boys
49,714	Female elderly	26,806	Male elderly

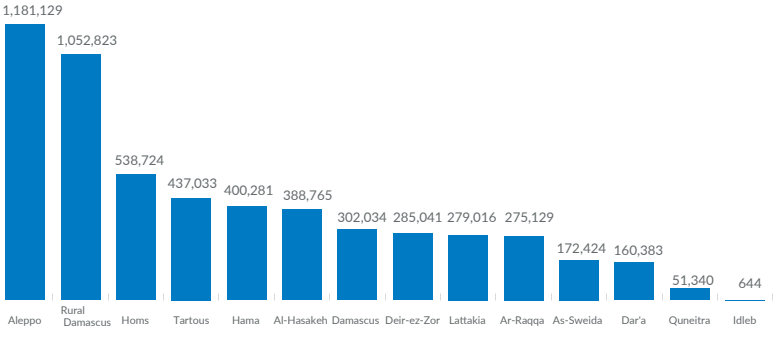
- 233 Sub-districts reached
- 1,600 Communities reached
- 166 Hard-to-reach areas reached



Interventions reported by month



Interventions by Governorate



The Protection and Community Services Sector (PCSS) brings together protection and community services actors in Syria to ensure an effective response to the protection needs of affected population, by coordinating preparedness, needs assessments, response activities and by sharing best practices and harmonized approaches to address protection challenges. The Sector promotes the centrality of protection through interventions and advocacy within the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and with the humanitarian leadership and assists other sectors to mainstream protection principles and standards in their humanitarian response.

Two-month course in fashion design and sewing organized by UNHCR partners in Al Waer community centre. | ©UNHCR | December 2018.

By end of 2018, the Sector had 70 partners reporting activities, including seven UN agencies, 14 international and 45 national NGOs including SARC. The structure of the sector mirrors the global framework, with a Child Protection Areas of Responsibility (AoR)/ Sub-Sector, led by UNICEF, and a Gender Based Violence Sub-Sector, led by UNFPA. A newly activated Risk Education Working Group under the Child Protection AoR was established in the course of 2018. While a Mine Action AoR has not yet been activated within Syria, during the course of 2018, UNMAS has established a presence in Syria and is progressively expanding its activities.

Given the progressive expansion of its coverage due to the evolution of the Syria crisis, the Sector continued to strengthen operational coordination at sub-national level, with protection operational Working Groups (WGs) in major areas of operation within Syria, notably Aleppo, Homs/Hama, Lattakia/Tartous, As- Sweida/South and Qamishli/North East Syria and Damascus/ Rural Damascus. These fora facilitate coordination at field level and have been critical in working with the national Sector during localised emergency responses (e.g. North East Syria, Afrin, Idleb).

While not reporting to the Sector, technical / cross-cutting coordination fora are connected to the PCSS:

Technical Working Group on Housing Land and Property (HLP) co-chaired by UNHCR, UN-Habitat and NRC gathers expert actors from the Protection, Shelter, and Early Recovery Sectors to identify, analyse and provide advice and technical support on the emerging HLP issues and concerns.

Psychosocial Support and Mental Health (MHPSS) Task Force co-chaired by UNHCR, WHO and IMC addresses specific aspects in this technical domain.

Activities in 2018

In 2018, 70 sector partners provided more than 5.5 million protection interventions/ services to support persons in need in 233 sub-districts including 1,600 communities/ neighbourhoods and 133 hard-to-reach areas. Aleppo (21 %), Rural Damascus (19 %), Homs (10 %), Tartous (9 %), Hama and Al-Hasakeh (7 % respectively) have been the major geographical areas of intervention. More than 66 % of all interventions/services provided by the protection Sector partners were carried out in sub-districts with high severity of needs (severity scale 4 to 6) [1].

Out of the provided services, 36 % were comprehensive protection services [2]; about 24 % were child protection services/ activities [3]; 15 % were services related to GBV [4]; and 26 % were risk education activities on explosive hazards. 31 % of intervention/ activities benefited girls, 28 % benefited boys, 31 % benefited women, and 10 % benefited men.

Modalities of Interventions

Protection interventions and services are following the community-based and participatory approaches and are delivered through a network of static facilities and mobile/ outreach interventions. The Sector strategy envisaged the capacity to respond to emergency situations, which characterised most of the year 2018, particularly in north Aleppo (Afrin), Eastern Ghouta, South Syria, and North East Syria. This was largely carried out through the deployment of mobile resources, ensuring presence,

1 The protection Sector Severity analysis indicates sector-specific level of needs severity across the sub-districts of the country according to sector specific indicators.

2 Including awareness on protection risks, legal assistance, psychosocial support, targeted material support for persons with specific protection needs to avoid harmful coping mechanisms, community mobilization initiatives and capacity building of partners and duty bearers.

3Including psychosocial support specifically targeted to children, information and awareness on child protection issues, specialized child protection services including case management, capacity building on child protection topics with partners and duty bearers.

4Including awareness on prevention of GBV with male and female community members, small scale social and economic support directed particularly to women and adolescent girls, psychological and other forms of support to survivors of GBV, also integrated with Reproductive health interventions.

addressing urgent protection needs and providing initial measures to support adequate protection for the civilian population. In parallel, the Sector maintained and expanded its regular coverage in areas of severe needs, characterised by protracted displacement, return movements and the presence of overburdened communities. This part of the response relied largely on static facilities such as Community Centres, Child Friendly Spaces/ Child services, Women and Girls Safe Spaces/ Family Protection Units aimed at responding through more structured protection interventions, promote inclusion and community participation as well as a safe space for community interaction.

Static facilities

105 [1] community centres (98 run by UNHCR and partners, seven supported by other sector partners), and 27 satellite centres (UNHCR) offering integrated protection services;

42 Women and Girls Safe Spaces (run by UNFPA and partners), Family Protection Units offering various services for women and girls;

125 child friendly spaces and 2 drop-in centres (run by UNICEF and partners) as a first response to children's needs with integrated programming.

Mobile resources

Outreach mobile resources ensured emergency interventions and contributed to expand reach and coverage. They included 2,849 ORVs (UNHCR), Mobile Units/ Teams (125 Units by UNHCR, 120 CP Teams by UNICEF) and 103 integrated GBV/ Reproductive Health mobile teams (UNFPA) to connect with communities, assess needs, inform about available services and support individual referrals to services as required.

Key Sector activities / Achievements

In 2018, the activities of the Sector have been shaped by the multiple and unfolding humanitarian crisis in Syria. Emergency interventions were carried out in additions to the established and expanded response to situations of protracted displacement and return, which continued to generate protection needs.

As part of the overall humanitarian response, the Sector engaged in multiple preparedness and response activities to meet the acute protection needs during multiple humanitarian emergencies that unfolded in various areas of Syria, notably Eastern Ghouta, North Aleppo/ Afrin, South Syria, outflows from Idleb. The Sector partners met the most urgent needs of the displaced population by providing initial presence on the ground to identify needs, refer cases, mitigate situations of involuntary family separation, provide initial forms of psychological first aid, and inform population on available services. The Sector partners then expanded services in locations where IDP sites were established, despite access challenges in certain situations. The range of services was further expanded with more structured interventions and with the establishment of additional protection facilities.

UNHCR partner Al-Ihsan in an activity in the newly inaugurated community centre in Qaterji, eastern Aleppo city serving around 38,000 residents and returnees as well as displaced persons from Afrin. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | May 2018.

The Sector continued its response in North-East Syria, with particular emphasis on strengthening protection presence, minimum standards and gender-sensitive measures in IDP sites hosting Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor IDPs, as well as on expanding presence in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor city. During the last months of 2018, a coordinated scale-up of protection activities in some IDP sites was necessary to meet the acute needs of IDPs fleeing hostilities in South East Deir-ez-Zor and relocated northwards after a perilous and extenuating journey.

Since September, the Sector has been engaged in the collective inter-agency dialogue with the Government of Syria aimed at ensuring the conduction sector-specific needs assessment adhering to humanitarian standards to inform the Humanitarian Planning Cycle. During the last month of the year, the Sector resumed consultations with technical line ministries with some progress in defining tools and methodologies. The dialogue is expected to continue in 2019.

The Sector continued to provide various information management tools and products to its partners, to favour planning, coordination and gap analysis. This included a periodical mapping of static and mobile resources countrywide (also accessible on-line); detailed analysis of activity reporting; as well as a new version of the interactive dashboard on 4W reported activities (pcss.syriadata.org).

The Sector/ Sub-Sector Coordinators increasingly invested in promoting protection and GBV mainstreaming in the humanitarian response, through sensitisation sessions at national and sub-national levels directed to humanitarian partners from amongst other technical sectors. More than 500 frontline workers within Syria have been trained.

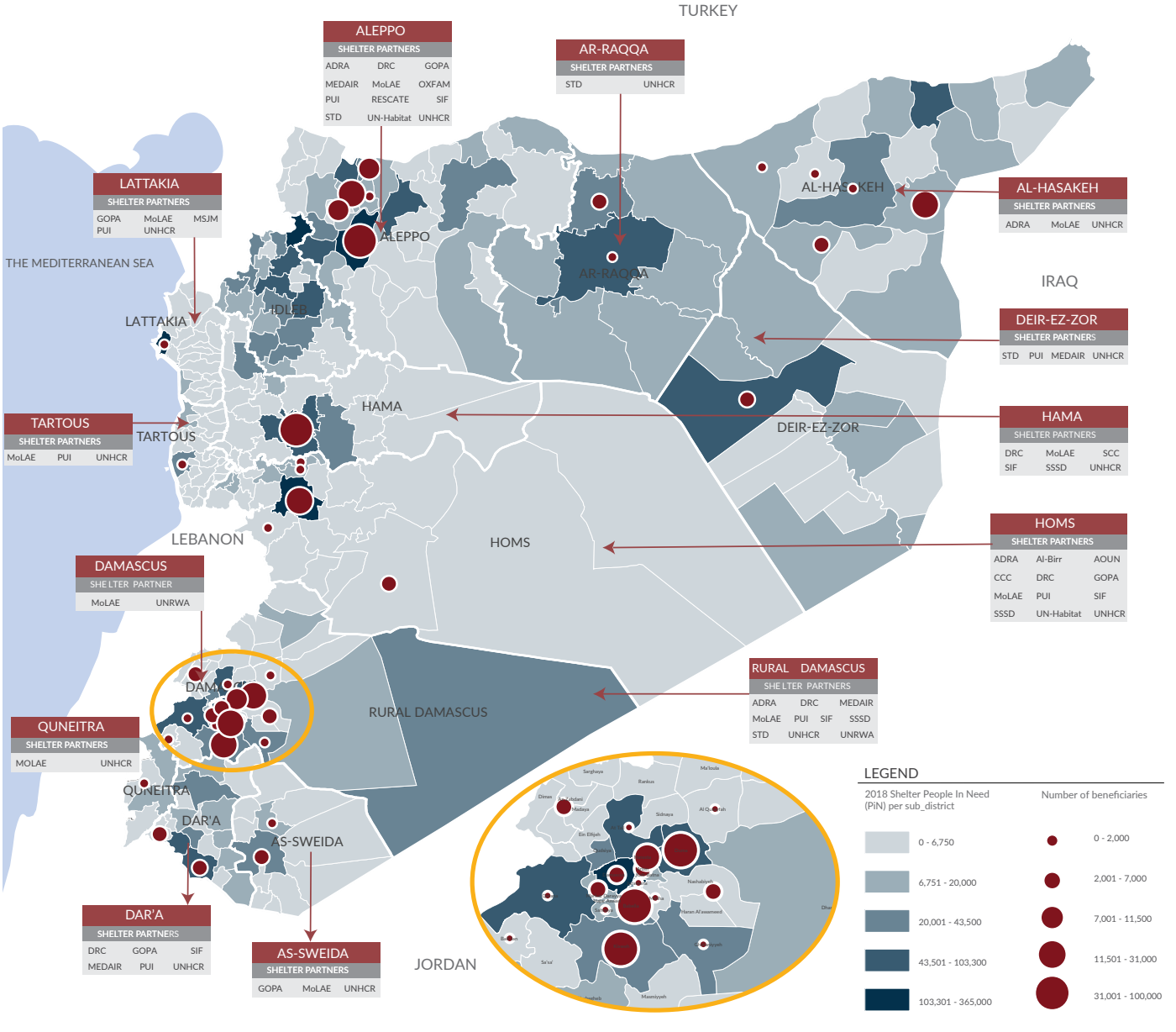
In line with the responsibility to foster the Centrality of Protection, the Sector Coordinators provided advice to the Humanitarian Country Team and to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) on critical protection issues.

1 Based on partners' information

Shelter Sector

SYRIA: SHELTER SECTOR RESPONSE SNAPSHOT

Shelter Sector
Syria Hub
Sheltercluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



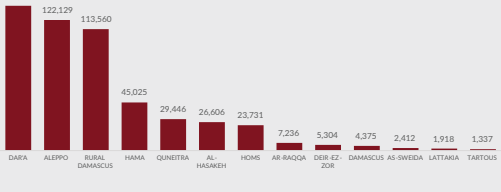
TOTAL BENEFICIARIES COVERED

518,529

4.3 M OVERALL PEOPLE IN NEED (PIN)
1.4 M TARGETED PIN / HRP 2018

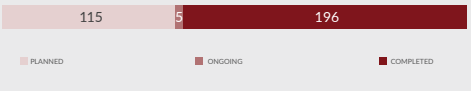
60% OF 864,296 TARGETED PIN BY SYRIA HUB

BENEFICIARIES COVERED PER GOVERNORATE



NO. OF SHELTER PROJECTS PER STAGE

316 TOTAL NUMBER OF PLANNED / IMPLEMENTED SHELTER PROJECTS



SHELTER SECTOR PARTNERS

CO-LEAD AGENCIES

ACF	ADRA	Al-Birr	AL Ihsan
Al Taalouf	AOUN	CCC	DRC
GOPA	IOM	MEDAIR	MSJM
NRC	OXFAM	PUI	RESCATE
RSRP	SARC	SCC	SIF
SSSD	STD	UN-Habitat	UNRWA

Four siblings looking at the camera after coming home from school and finding doors and windows installed for their house in Souran, northern rural Hama. | ©UNHCR/SSSD | February 2018.

The Shelter sector is co-led by UNHCR and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE). The sector partners include ACF, ADRA, Aoun, Al Birr, Al Ihsan, Al Taalouf, Child Care Society, DRC, GOPA, IOM, MEDAIR, MoLAE, MSJM, NRC, Oxfam, PUI, RSRP, Rescate, SARC, SIF, The Syria Trust, UN-Habitat, UNHCR and UNRWA.

Facts and Figures (2018)

- 13 million people in Syria required humanitarian assistance.
- 4.3 million people were in need of shelter assistance.
- 1.4 million people were targeted for shelter assistance by all hubs out of which 864,296 people were targeted for shelter assistance by Syria Hub.
- 518,529 people have been assisted with different shelter interventions by Syria hub partners.

Response

The shelter sector partners respond to the identified shelter and infrastructure needs of different population groups such as IDPs, returnees and non-displaced population according to the agreed standards and guidelines and depending on the availability of funds, access and approvals.

The Shelter Sector interventions include:

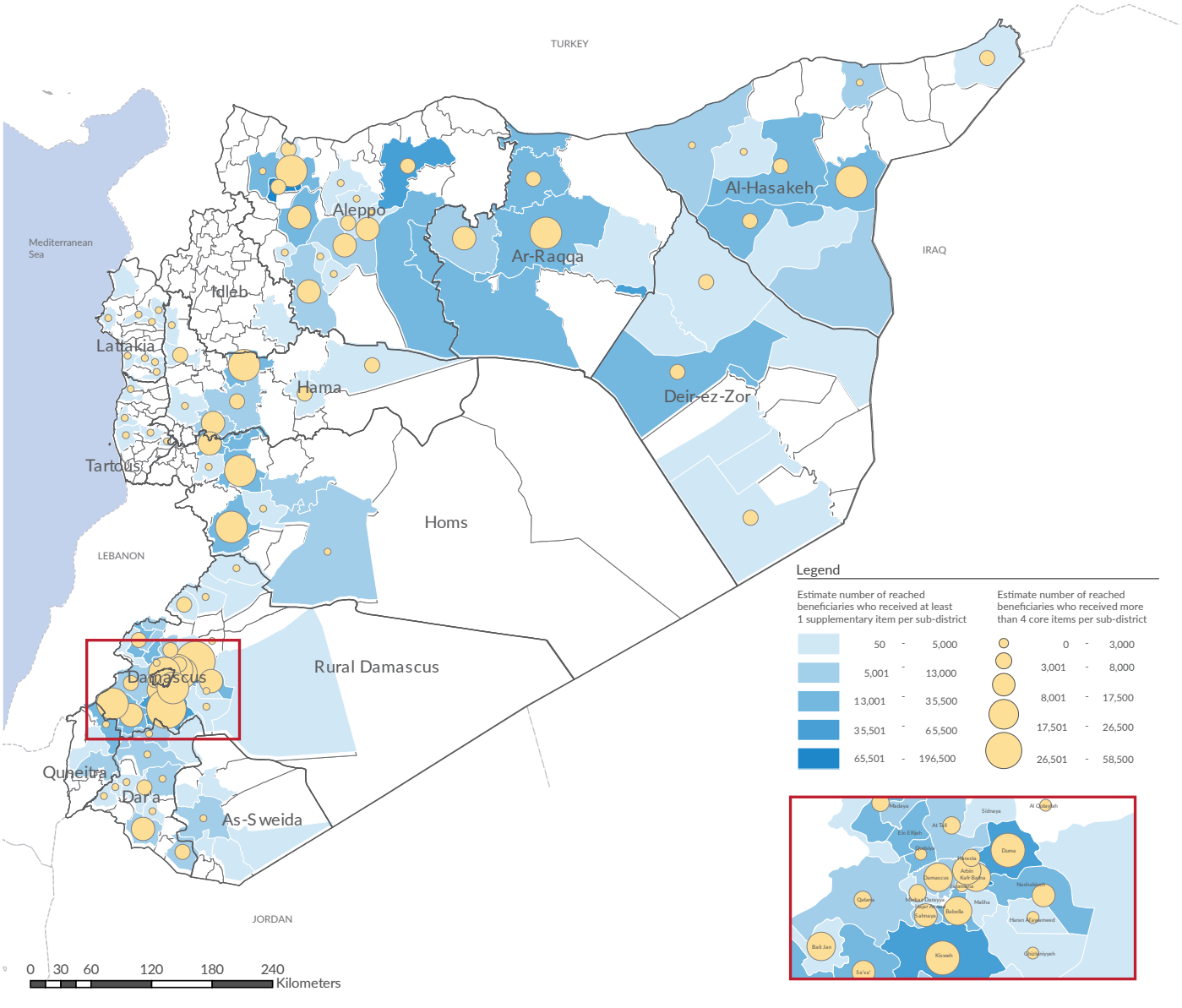
- Provision of emergency shelter (installation of tents with infrastructure / shelter kits / winter kits).
- Rehabilitation of public buildings that are used as collective shelters such as schools.
- Upgrading of unfinished private buildings.
- Durable shelter support such as rehabilitation of partially damaged houses and public infrastructures including consideration of housing, land and property (HLP) issues.
- Capacity building support.

Activity	Individuals Reached
Provision of Emergency Shelter	132,719
Rehabilitation of Collective Shelters	40,467
Private Shelter Upgrade	9,216
Rehabilitation of Damaged Houses and Public Infrastructures	335,848
Capacity Building	279
Grand Total	**518,529**

Non-Food Items (NFI) Sector

SYRIA: NFI RESPONSE

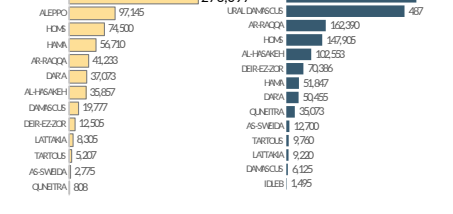
NFI Sector
Syria Hub



BENEFICIARIES SERVED

CORE ITEMS	SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS
664,990	1,683,483
PEOPLE WHOSE NEEDS WERE ADEQUATELY MET FOR RECEIVING MORE THAN 4 CORE NFI (%37 OF THE 1.8M TOTAL TARGET PEOPLE IN NEED OF NFI IN SYRIA)	PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED AT LEAST 1 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM (%89 OF THE 1.9M TOTAL TARGET PEOPLE IN NEED OF SUPPLEMENTARY NFI IN SYRIA)

BENEFICIARIES SERVED PER GOVERNORATE



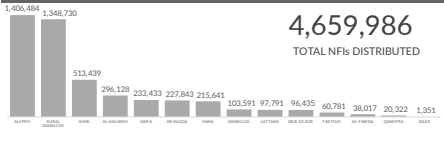
BENEFICIARIES SERVED BY TYPE OF SUPPORT

632K IN-KIND ASSISTANCE	ESTIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS INSIDE SYRIA WHO RECEIVED IN-KIND ASSISTANCE FROM REGULAR PROGRAMMES OF THE SECTOR	1.6M IN-KIND ASSISTANCE
115K * INTER-AGENCY CONVOY	ESTIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS FROM HARD-TO-REACH AND BESIEGED AREAS WHO RECEIVED IN-KIND ASSISTANCE THROUGH INTER-AGENCY CONVOY	52K * INTER-AGENCY CONVOY
62K CASH SUPPORT	ESTIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO RECEIVED CASH ASSISTANCE FROM UNRWA	0 CASH SUPPORT

NOTE: Breakdown of beneficiaries per type of support does not necessarily sum up to the reported number of beneficiaries as some communities may have received more than one type of assistance.

*: The IA- convoy reached figures are corrected

TOTAL NFI DISTRIBUTED PER GOVERNORATE



4,659,986
TOTAL NFIs DISTRIBUTED

TOTAL NFI DISTRIBUTED PER TYPE

1.9M	2M	762K
STANDARD NFIs	WINTERIZATION NFIs	SUPPLEMENTARY NFIs
composed of blankets, quilts, mattresses/ sleeping mats, kitchen sets, plastic sheets, jerry cans, solar lamps, hygiene kit, diapers, and rechargeable fans	composed of additional plastic sheet for waterproof flooring, sweater, underwear, baby clothing set, children hats and socks	composed of carpet, dignity kits, heater stoves house cleaning kits, kids clothes, mosquito nets, new-born baby kits, sanitary napkin, student hygiene kit, summer clothes, and sleeping bag

TOTAL NFI DISTRIBUTION PER MONTH

TOTAL BENEFICIARIES SERVED

4,585,594

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE / PART OF NON-FOOD ITEM AS OF DECEMBER 2018

Tens of thousands of people fled Afrin to surrounding areas including Nubul. Many families were sheltered in three hangars where UNHCR's shelter kits were applied as separators creating temporary rooms to enhance privacy and protection. | ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | *November 2018.*

The Non-Food Items (NFI) sector is led by UNHCR. The Sector partners include ACF, Ahel El Khair, Al Ghadeer NGO, Al-Birr, Al Hadi NGO, Al Ihsan Charity, Al Mawada, Aoun, Arminian Charity, Ataa, Blumont, Caritas, CCS, Darb, DRC, EPDC, For Aleppo, GOPA, ICMC, OXFAM, SARC, SCS, Syria Al Yamama Association, The Syria Trust, Al Taalouf, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNRWA.

Facts and Figures (2018)

- 11.7 million people in Syria required humanitarian assistance.
- 4.7 million people were in need of shelter assistance.
- 2.6 million people were reached with core NFI assistance by all hubs out of which 1.8 million people were reached by Syria Hub.
- 3.2 million people were reached by all hubs for supplementary items including winter items out of which 1.9 million people were reached by Syria Hub.
- 4.5 million people were reached with different NFIs.

Response

The Non-Food Items (NFI) Sector partners respond to the identified NFI needs of different population groups such as IDPs, hosting communities, returnees and other affected people inside Syria through the distribution of core NFIs, supplementary including winter items. The sector partners continue to provide life-saving and sustaining assistance through a flexible and targeted approach while adhering to appropriate standards of humanitarian support. There are three modalities of NFI delivery that are in-kind, cash and vouchers.

- 4.6 million NFIs were distributed. Out of which 1.9 million items were core NFI and remaining 1.9 million items were supplementary items including winter items.
- 665,000 individuals have been reached with core items.
- 1.68 million people have been reached with supplementary items including winter items.
- About 300,000 people have been reached through 16 inter-agency convoys with core NFIs and supplementary items including winter items.

On 11 December, UNHCR was accompanied by a delegation from the Nordic countries including; the Chargé d'Affaires of Sweden, Norway and Finland together with the humanitarian counselor from Denmark to a mission in Eastern Ghouta. The delegation witnessed firsthand the hardship people are facing and the impact of UNHCR's work on the ground. The delegation together with UNHCR and its partners' staff visited a bakery in Erbin, which is being rehabilitated by UNHCR in partnership with Premier Urgence International (PUI). Once the bakery opens it will provide job opportunities to the community as well as will serve 34,000 vulnerable Syrians with bread. | ©UNHCR | *2018.*

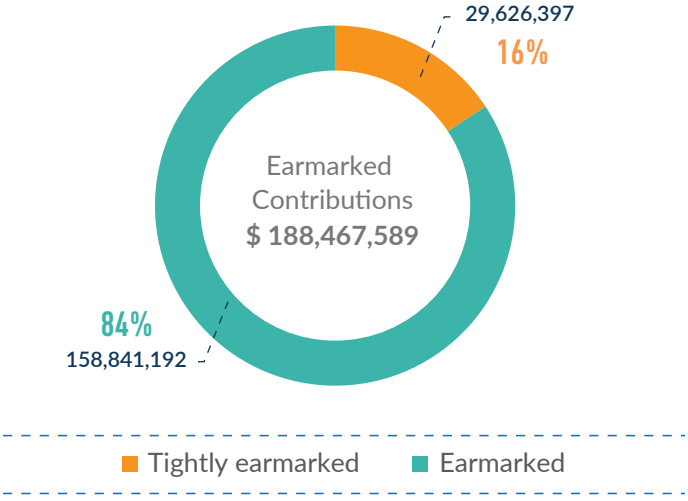
Funding
UNHCR's Programmes

Funding Level

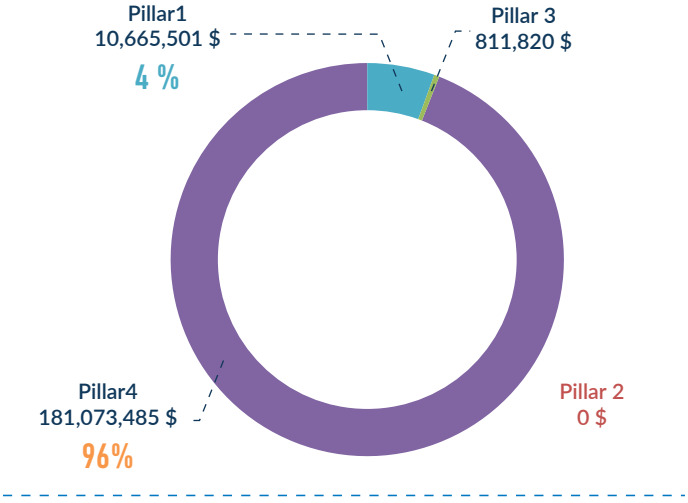
Funding needs and priorities

The humanitarian needs inside Syria remained enormous, and to be able to respond to the needs, UNHCR Syria raised a total funding amount of (192,550,806$) with a funded percentage of (31 %) by end of 2018. This left an indicative funding gap of (419,638,194$) representing (69 %) of the financial requirements. UNHCR was, nevertheless, able to sustain funding for its prioritized response across all its prioritized objectives, namely life-saving and community-based protection activities for internally displaced, refugees and returnees.

Earmarking Breakdown



Pillars Breakdown



UNHCR's strategic directions and operational priorities for resource mobilization in 2018 focused on providing life-saving assistance, strengthening emergency response to new displacements, mitigating protection risks and responding to protection needs as well as responding to seasonal needs through the winterization programme. In addition, improving self-reliance, livelihoods and access to basic services, and also preparing for the shift towards returns through providing community based protection services and assistance support to returnees. UNHCR also maintained capacity and ran programmes for the protection and assistance of refugees and asylum-seekers in Syria, who still face a range of protection risks and are fully reliant on UNHCR's assistance.

The territorial gains made by the Government of Syria in 2018 significantly changed the operational outlook, propelling the topic of returns to the top of the debate with direct impact on resource mobilization. UNHCR expanded its current response to address the needs of self-organized voluntarily IDP and refugee returnees and supported their initial reintegration, including through advocacy and protection frameworks, village support programmes community-based initiatives, shelter programmes, small-scale community infrastructure minor rehabilitation and repair as well as livelihoods support.

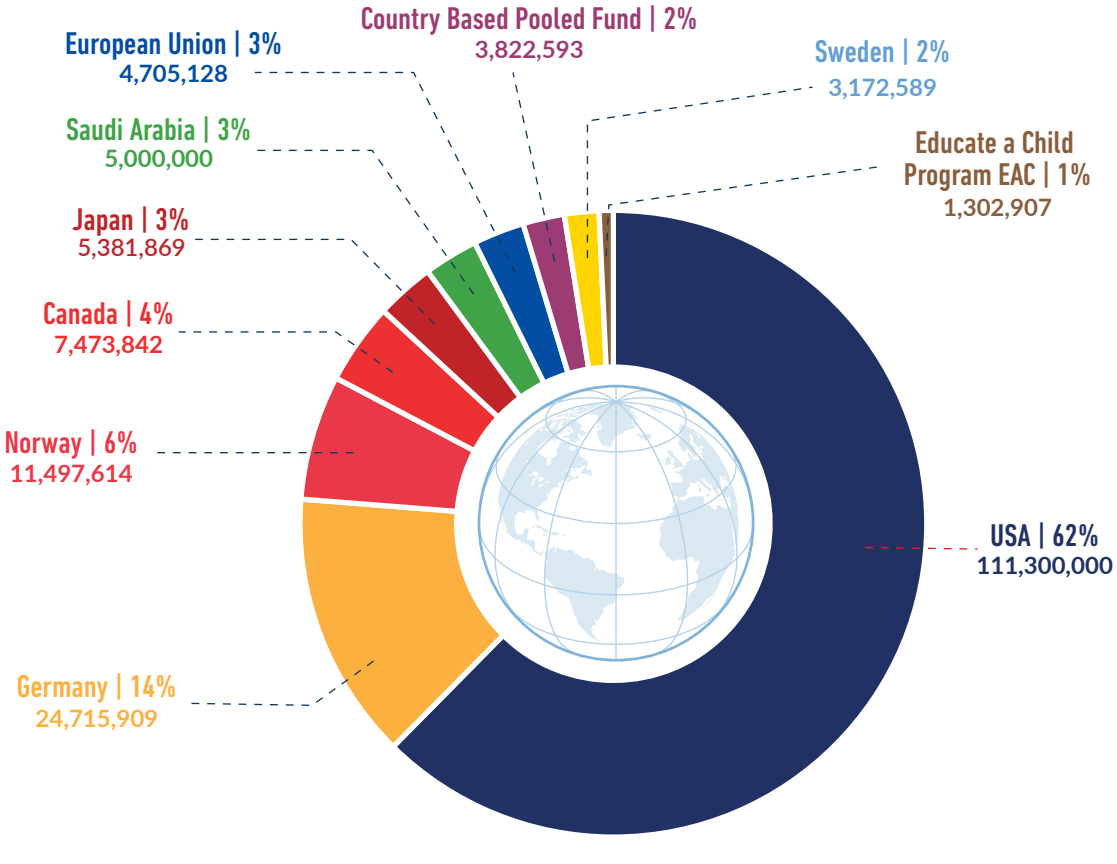
Donor relations

The interaction and relationship between UNHCR Syria and its donors was positive and constructive. As the year progressed, so did the amount of donors meetings and visits to the field. This is mostly due to the shift in the security and political landscape inside the country. It enabled more dialogue between UNHCR and its donors which created an opportunity for UNHCR to dispel donor concerns, show the reality on the ground, improve communication, and provide solid evidence to the donor community of the persistent needs of the crisis affected Syrians. UNHCR expanded a solid and sustainable partnership with key donor countries and kept them informed of major developments and key changes regarding the situation of refugees, IDPs and returnees in Syria.

Fund-raising and donor reporting were enhanced through the submission of quality and timely donor proposals and donor reports along with regular meetings and briefings, as well as dissemination of up-to-date information from inside Syria through various channels. Another aspect that was highlighted in 2018 was the visibility for donors through social media platforms. It enabled UNHCR to give credit to the continuous support of donors over the year and it also enabled donors to spot the targets that were aimed at using their kind contributions and share it through their social media accounts and websites.

Similar to previous years, some contributions offered earmarked funds to certain locations and activities inside Syria. At the same time, traditional governmental donors supporting UNHCR globally, such as Canada, ECHO, Japan, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the United States of America, continued to provide the largest share of contributions to UNHCR's operation in Syria. In addition to the continuous support of the private sector which is still highly appreciated.

Top Ten Donors



We Thank our Donors for their Continuous Support

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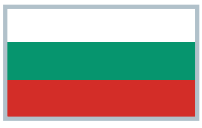
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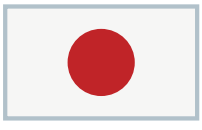
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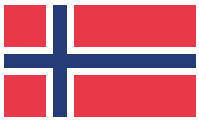
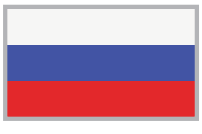

Norway

Republic of Korea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Spain

Sweden

Switzerland

United Kingdom

United States
of America

Syria Humanitarian Fund

Educate A Child Programme
(EAC/EAA)

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- Danish Refugee Council
- Deir Mar Yacoub
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- International Medical Corps
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Ministry of Local Administration
- Namaa
- Première Urgence
- Secours Islamique France
- Social Care Society
- Syrian Arab Red Crescent
- Syrian Society for Social Development
- The Syria Trust for Development
- United Nations Population Fund
- United Nations Office of Project Services

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Credits

UNHCR Syria wishes to acknowledge the contributions of all staff in the country office as well as in the field who have participated in the preparation of the narrative and the graphic components of this document.

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Jawad, 71 years old internally displaced from Afrin, receiving non-food items and winterization items in Keshtar, northern rural Aleppo,
| ©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf | September 2018.