

This report is produced by OCHA Syria in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 24 August - 5 September, 2021.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 6 September, a conditional ceasefire is reportedly in place pending implementation of previously agreed terms between parties; the situation is reportedly relatively calm as of 7 September.
- Over 36,000 civilians remain displaced, of whom almost 1,300 people are living in seven collective shelters.
- The humanitarian situation in Dar'a Al-Balad remains concerning, with ongoing reports of limited access to basic food and services, including water and health.
- The humanitarian community continues to advocate with all parties to facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance to all affected areas and communities, including Dar'a Al-Balad.



**55,000**

people in Dar'a al Balad

**36,424**

internally displaced

**1,268**

living in collective shelters

**21,000**

people reached with food assistance

### SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 5 September, following reports of multiple breakdowns in ceasefire agreements and ongoing hostilities, further reports indicate a proposal was made to reinstate the previous reconciliation agreement. The deadline for all parties to agree to this proposal was reported as 6 September; as of 7 September, the situation on the ground remains relatively calm with no major outbreaks in hostilities reported.

Prior, on 29 August, heavy shelling in Tafas city and other areas in western Dar'a triggered another round of civilian displacement into areas in Al Yarmouk Basin, south-west of Dar'a near the Jordanian border. Some public infrastructures also reportedly sustained damage. Further, on 30 August, Al Shifa Hospital and the National Hospital of Dar'a were hit by mortars, reportedly resulting in minor structural damage, and a school in Dar'a Al-Balad was also reportedly damaged. On 31 August, a temporary ceasefire was reportedly agreed to and was followed by a period of relative calm, however, by 3 September ceasefire negotiations had collapsed and hostilities resumed within Dar'a Al-Balad until the morning of 5 September.

To date, 7,746 families (36,424 people) have been displaced, the majority of whom are living with host families while 1,268 people are living in five schools and two mosques converted into temporary collective shelters.

As hostilities have continued, humanitarian conditions in Dar'a Al-Balad have worsened, including severe disruption to critical commodities and basic services, including electricity, water supply and Internet. Food shortages, including staples such as flour, also reportedly continue. Only limited medical services are available

inside Dar'a Al-Balad with reports of shortages of medical supplies at the hospital and extremely high prices in the local market. The disruption to the supply chain has further affected the price of essential items in the local markets.

Access into and out of Dar'a Al-Balad also continues to be restricted except for 28 August when a few families reportedly left for Dar'a Al-Mahatta through Saraya crossing points. Protection partners are reporting that movement is further restricted in various parts of the governorate due to the presence of explosive hazards, some of which are reportedly around public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and community centers.

With the school year scheduled to start in September, local authorities have indicated initial plans to relocate IDPs temporarily living in the five schools to other areas. While the UN understands that such plans are yet to be finalized, a stadium with the capacity for 50 tents is being prepared as one alternative site.

Despite ongoing efforts to deliver assistance to the collective shelters, reports indicate concerning health and nutrition conditions. To date, at least five cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in two collective shelters, and partners report high rates of malnutrition. Partners further report protection concerns, with the most vulnerable especially women, children, the elderly, people with special needs and Palestine refugees exposed to multiple protection risks including family separation and unaccompanied children.

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Partners have adopted a multi-pronged approach: to assist IDPs and host communities in Dar'a city and surrounding areas; respond to the needs of populations remaining in Dar'a Al-Balad and advocate for sustained access to the whole of Dar'a governorate to enable humanitarian partners to implement planned programmes.

Humanitarian partners are assisting displaced families living in the collective shelters and among host communities including medical services provided through mobile teams, emergency food assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene activities, amongst other essential services. Rapid needs assessments in the collective shelters have highlighted some urgent needs such as lighting in public spaces, water tanks, non-food items (NFIs) such as blankets and mattresses, dignity kits, hygiene kits, diapers and some medical items. As part of the priority response, COVID-19 isolation spaces have been set up and nutrition programming is being scaled up.

Advocacy to resume humanitarian activities in all of Dar'a Governorate is ongoing. This includes requests to facilitate delivery of assistance inside Dar'a Al-Balad. Plans are underway for an inter-agency convoy to deliver critical items including ready-to-eat meals, flour, water, purification tablets, jerrycans and medical supplies.

### Food Security

#### Needs and Gaps:

- Shortages of flour and other essential food items in Dar'a Al-Balad continue and the local market is unable to meet the population's needs.
- WFP's August cycle for the distribution of general food assistance delivery of food including ready-to-eat packages (RTE) to an estimated 445,000 people across Dar'a Governorate is delayed.

**21,000**

people reached

#### Response:

- WFP and other sector partners have provided ready-to-eat and regular food rations to IDPs residing in six collective centers or within the host community.
- About 21,000 people have been reached. Over 1,230 ready-to-eat packages were distributed to IDP families in the collective shelters as well as the IDPs in host communities of Um Al Mayadeen, Nimeh and Bosra Ash Sham. A further 3,121 food baskets from WFP and sector partner were provided to IDPs in

host communities. In total, the distributions benefitted approximately 21,000 people. In addition, partners have distributed about 44,000 bundles of bread to IDPs.

- WFP has pre-positioned an additional 5,004 RTE packages, benefitting about 25,000 people, to be delivered through the planned inter-agency convoy and additional RTE supplies are in the pipeline for distribution to further scale up the response.
- SARC resumed its pending July cycle distribution of food rations and wheat flour to several areas including areas hosting IDPs from Dar'a Al-Balad; these food rations were dispatched prior to the escalation of the insecurity in July. The distribution was initially scheduled from 25 to 31 July but was delayed due to security conditions on ground. Approximately 128,125 people in 21 locations will benefit from this cycle.

## Health

### Needs and Gaps:

- Health services in Dar'a Al-Balad and surrounding areas have been disrupted for almost two months due to movement restrictions and insecurity. Two hospitals Dar'a were hit by mortar bombs sustaining minor damage.
- Shortage of medicines and high prices of medical consumables in the local market continue. Additional funding is required to sustain health response especially critical surgical procedures.
- Partners are facing challenges in identifying IDPs living within host communities in order to provide adequate health services as many have been assimilated into the communities.

**5,283**  
people reached

### Response:

- WHO and partners, Nour Foundation and Al-Sham Association for Health, provided around 6,273 medical services. UNICEF-implementing partners Al-Birr, SFPA NGOs, and the Department of Health (DoH), have been providing health services via the static clinics and Medical Mobile Team (MMTs), targeting IDPs in host communities and collective shelters. UNICEF-supported local partners have provided ophthalmological services, 68 critical surgeries for women and children through private hospitals and outpatient consultations, and reproductive health services for around 2,900 children and 1,085 women.
- UNICEF provided its implementing partners, DoH and Al-Birr NGO, with 200 pediatric kits, two midwifery kits, equipment-renewable-drugs, and two acute watery diarrhea community kits. WHO is on standby to deliver medicines and surgical kits to cover 32,117 treatments and 110 trauma cases through a planned inter-agency convoy.
- WHO has set up new mobile teams to provide mental health and psychosocial support services in the coming weeks. There are also plans to set up a static medical point and deploy two more medical mobile teams. A response team from DoH with support from WHO launched an epidemiological surveillance system. UNICEF and WHO-supported mobile teams previously deployed in Dar'a also remain operational.
- DoH Dar'a, supported by UNICEF, has assessed the vaccination status of 756 children, provided vaccines at collective shelters and vaccinated 138 children in line with the national immunization schedule.
- Between 12 and 30 August, 58 COVID-19 suspected cases were reported in two IDP shelters, of which five tested positive and were relocated to isolation areas within the shelters. Health awareness sessions were conducted on hygiene promotion, and infection prevention control.

## Nutrition

### Needs and Gaps:

- The collective shelters hosting displaced families lack designated and private spaces for nutrition activities such as the measurement of mid-upper arm circumference and counseling for women.
- Partners have almost completed the nutritional screening for all children and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) however, lack of historical medical documentation is limiting partner's ability track progress or monitor their nutrition status.

# 595

people reached

### Response:

- UNICEF partners, Al-Birr, SFPA, and the DoH have provided nutrition services in static clinics and through mobile medical teams. UNICEF provided implementing partners with 400 cartons of high energy biscuits, 7,600 sachets of multiple micronutrient powder, 300 micronutrient tablets for pregnancy, and 200 cartons of therapeutic spread for 587 children and PLW. Al-Birr is distributing meals and food baskets from the host community to IDPs in the collective shelters as part of the nutrition response.
- UNICEF partners screened 595 children under the age of five for malnutrition. 10 cases of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and one severe acute malnutrition (SAM) case were detected and admitted for treatment. About 171 PLW were screened for malnutrition and 12 MAM cases were detected and admitted for treatment. 482 PLW and children under the age of five were reached with nutrition items. 171 PLW received individual counseling for infant and young child feeding services.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

### Needs and Gaps:

- Hygiene supplies are a priority need, especially hygiene kits and diapers for 350 families in collective shelters and around 5,000 families in Dar'a al-Balad.

# 1,750

people reached

### Response:

- SARC and partners have rehabilitated water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities at all collective shelters and are carrying out maintenance of the main potable water line which feeds Dar'a al Balad and other areas in the governorate.
- SARC and partners have provided hygiene items including family hygiene kits (FHK), baby diapers and cleaning materials. UNICEF will provide 350 FHKs, 1,400 packages of baby diapers, 8,000 packages of sanitary napkins, and 500 buckets to IDPs at the collective shelters. UNICEF will also provide FHKs to families in Dar'a Al Balad through the planned inter-agency convoy.

## Protection

### Needs and Gaps:

- A high proportion of the displaced are from vulnerable groups (women, children, elderly, people with special needs, Palestinian refugees), exposing them to multiple protection risks in shelters and within host communities.
- The host community is receiving very limited humanitarian assistance, including a small amount of NFIs and food aid. This is likely to lead to tensions between the host communities and displaced families should the displacement continue for a long time.
- Partners have identified sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) as the most severe protection risk for IDPs, followed by landmines and explosive remnants of war and separation of minors from their

# 1,573

people reached

caregivers. However, services such as GBV case management are difficult to implement, mainly due to social norms and stigma.

- Child Protection partners are experiencing challenges to reach IDPs living in host communities due to insecurity. Lack of specialist services (physical and speech therapy etc.) are limiting effective case management.
- The volatile security situation is affecting partners' operational capacities. On 30 August, UNHCR partner GOPA closed its community center in Dar'a city. Other partners are overstretched and have adopted remote modalities for protection services.

### Response:

- UNHCR, and partners, have conducted rapid assessments and home visits through the network of outreach volunteers (ORVs) and mobile teams. UNHCR, through SARC and GOPA, maintain a stock of risk reduction kits and general and medical in-kind assistance items.
- Additionally, UNHCR partners SARC and Syria Trust have provided legal assistance to over 890 persons of concern (PoCs), counselling, administrative and court interventions for 765 PoCs and awareness-raising sessions targeting around 540 individuals.
- GOPA implemented PSS awareness sessions for 300 adults on psychological stress through 20 sessions. Additionally, 20 recreational activities were conducted for 300 people, 31 people benefitted from case management services. UNHCR and UNICEF child protection (CP) partners are continuing to conduct awareness sessions on family separation, COVID-19 legal services, referral and case management. CP partners identified 22 unaccompanied and separated children through SARC and GoPA and are following these cases. Partners delivered CP activities to more than 5,000 children.
- SARC HSP provided the displaced families in the Khirbet Ghazala with food and shelter aid.
- UNICEF partners, including SARC, completed explosive ordnance risk education at six schools and two mosques for 2,600 people.
- The UNFPA-supported reproductive health static clinic in Konrish Alsabil neighborhood in Dar'a city and three women and girls' safe spaces remained functional in Dara'a. UNFPA mobile teams continued to serve collective shelters. UNFPA, through its implementing partners has provided 772 reproductive health services, 11 GBV services, including psychosocial support and case management, distributed 106 dignity kits to adolescent girls, women and men. UNFPA has pre-positioned 111 female dignity kits, 77 winterized protection kits as well as 8,100 sanitary napkins for the planned inter-agency convoy. Dar'a National Hospital will receive 20 beds, 10 examination tables with ladders, 10 gynecological beds with ladders and 15 wheelchairs.

## Education

### Needs and Gaps:

- Five functioning schools are currently being used as collective shelters with another school (Ahmad Al Refai school) designated as a backup shelter recently. Local authorities plan to relocate IDPs and clear out the shelters ahead of the start of the new school year on 5 September. It is imperative that the situation is resolved to enable 2,000 students (including 60 early childhood education students) who are enrolled in these schools to return for the school year. The relocation plans are not yet finalized, however, a stadium with the capacity for 50 tents is being prepared as one alternative site.
- Additionally, the schools will require rehabilitation and cleaning in accordance with COVID-19 protocols before they re-open. Education partners are ready to rehabilitate the five schools, which serve 2,000 students, so as to conform to COVID-19 protocols as soon as displaced families are relocated.
- Due to the lack of adequate and appropriate space, children are being transported daily to two informal education locations which is risky, considering the current security situation. UNICEF, SSSD and SIF

**500**

people reached

partners committed to provide tents with the necessary equipment and education supplies which offer a safer educational environment for these 500 IDP children. This project has been delayed due to a lack of approval to transport supplies and other internal issues

- Inside Dar'a al-Balad, all education activities are suspended. A school in Dar'a Al-Balad, which remains inaccessible, was reportedly damaged in the hostilities.

#### Response:

- Al Birr Association, supported by the DoE and UNICEF, continues to provide non-formal education (NFE) interventions for 500 IDP children including out-of-school children, children at risk of dropping out, as well as candidates for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade national exams.
- The Education sector is advocating that the five schools serving as shelters be vacated and rehabilitated to resume normal educational activities for 2,000 students.
- The Education sector continues to coordinate with relevant sectors to provide integrated support for vulnerable children in the NFE programme, including with the Protection sector to provide case management and recreational activities and the Health and Nutrition sectors to offer children haircuts to minimize lice infection.
- In case of possible delays to the start of the school year, UNICEF and DoE have prepared self-learning materials as part of a convoy planned for Dar'a Al Balad.

## Shelter and Non-Food Items

#### Needs and Gaps:

- There is no accurate assessment on NFI needs for the IDPs who are living in host communities in Dar'a city and surrounding areas.

**10,152**

People reached

#### Response:

- SARC distributed core relief items to 3,437 people (611 families) at collective shelters and NFIs to approximately 6,715 people (1,343 IDP households) in Hrak sub-district.
- Shelter partners assessed the shelter/NFI/WASH conditions in six collective shelters and relevant activities will begin once there is more clarity on the relocation of IDPs from the collective shelters.
- 1,200 shelter packages are pre-positioned by UNHCR and ready to be used once needs are identified.

## Early Recovery

#### Needs and Gaps:

- Early Recovery and Livelihoods interventions are expected to increase due to significant levels of destruction to essential infrastructure and local livelihoods. The sector does not have access to enable partners undertake and monitor ERL activities which is also hampering the ability to scale up activities, including restoring access to basic essential services.

#### Response:

- Once access to the affected areas is possible, the sector will restart suspended activities and focus on rehabilitating public services that are damaged and create job opportunities through cash for work projects. The sector plans to remove 10 tonnes of solid waste, remove 10 m<sup>3</sup> of debris, provide about 200 solar units as public lighting for the main street in Dar'a Al-Balad and Dar'a al Mahata, support 50-100 damaged workshops, support youth-led initiatives and rehabilitate public infrastructure.

## Logistics

### Needs and Gaps:

- Implementing partners require access to a reliable and responsive truck fleet for the transport of humanitarian assistance to Dar'a, access permitting.
- Close coordination with OCHA, SARC and partners, as well as robust information management are critical in ensuring timely sharing of logistics updates and information with all involved partners and sectors.

**5**

organizations supported

### Response:

- A dedicated fleet of 20 trucks for Dar'a governorate has been contracted to facilitate mobilization within 24 hours. The Logistics sector will mobilize the trucks once approvals for convoys are obtained. Five of these trucks are on standby at the Logistics sector's warehouse in Rural Damascus.
- The sector is in daily communication with SARC, OCHA and partners to ensure any logistics gaps and needs are addressed.

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