

This report is produced by OCHA Syria in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from [1 to 21 September 2021].

HIGHLIGHTS

- Following the 9 September ceasefire agreement, the security situation in Dar'a Al-Balad has reportedly stabilized.
- Since civilian movement to and from the area has opened, approximately 77 per cent of the 36,000 people displaced have returned to their homes, including all IDPs residing in shelters.
- Around 10 per cent of IDPs living in host communities have reported severe damage to their homes as a major barrier to return. Explosive hazard contamination has also reportedly hampered some returns.
- Schools in Dar'a which were utilized as collective shelters reopened for students for the new academic year on 12 September following COVID-19 measures and some maintenance.
- In Dar'a Al-Balad, restoration of public services such as water and electricity is ongoing.
- Some humanitarian partners have resumed regular programming in Dar'a Al-Balad. Some assessments have occurred; sector assessments are planned for Dar'a Al-Balad to identify priority needs and map reportedly extensive damage to public infrastructure and homes.



SITUATION OVERVIEW

As of 21 September, approximately 28,000 of the 36,000 people displaced from Dar'a Al-Balad and other areas have returned to their places of origin. This includes the estimated 1,400 IDPs in shelters in Dar'a Al-Mahatta and 2,000 residents of the camps in Dar'a Al-Balad. Movement restrictions on civilians have largely eased within Dar'a Al-Balad, the Nassib crossing to Jordan has reopened for civilian and commercial movement. The Sijneh and Saraya crossings were reopened on 6 September resulting in steady returns. Civilian movement is reportedly back to normal although explosive hazard contamination is hampering returns.

As access to Dar'a Al-Balad has been restored, several humanitarian partners are prioritizing rapid sectoral assessments, and most have resumed regular pre-existing programming. At present, there is no official information available on the damage to public and private infrastructure, however, early reports indicate significant destruction of public infrastructure and housing and restricted access due to explosive hazard contamination. Several explosive hazard incidents have been reported since IDPs have returned, including on 8 and 25 September in Dar'a Al-Balad and Dar'a camp, respectively.

Public services such as electricity, water and telecommunications networks have also resumed since hostilities ceased, and rehabilitation of schools and debris removal is also reported to be underway. After a three-month power cut, the General Electricity Company of Dar'a has started restoring electricity to Dar'a Al-Balad, the Palestine refugee camp and Al Sad road with 90 per cent of the main outputs and cells and 70 per cent of the low-voltage/secondary networks reported rehabilitated.

The Dar'a Directorate of Health has restarted medical services in Dar'a Al-Balad including delivery of emergency and therapeutic medicines to the area and increased medical staff capacity. Earlier, a mission by the Directorate of Health to the only medical center in Dar'a Al-Balad found the center badly damaged in shelling and vandalized with critical equipment and assets stolen. Health sector partners are rehabilitating the center and four mobile clinics are providing medical services till it can be reopened.

The schools in Dar'a city that had hosted IDPs reopened for a new academic year on 12 September, following sterilization measures and some maintenance. Directorate of Education technical teams assessed the state of schools in Dar'a Al-Balad and reported that five schools required from one to four weeks of repairs to be functional. Approximately 5,000 students from these schools have been temporarily transferred to other schools in Dar'a while rehabilitation is ongoing, however attendance is reportedly at low levels. Of the 34 schools in Dar'a Al-Balad only eight are fully functional and two are partially functional.

Further, the Dar'a al Balad and Tishreen bakeries have also resumed operations after two months, following repair by humanitarian partners and delivery of flour, yeast, and fuel. The bakeries service Dar'a Al-Balad, Tariq Al Sad, IDP/Palestine refugee camps and some neighbourhoods in Dar'a Al-Mahatta. After a two-month suspension, the Public Establishment for Drinking Water and Sanitation in Dar'a announced that water pumping is resuming to all neighbourhoods in Dar'a Al-Balad.

Since the ceasefire agreement, sporadic violence had been reported in parts of the governorate with artillery shelling in Tassil town, western Dar'a, on 9 September resulting in injuries to several people, including two children and security concerns around Mzeireb between 5 and 13 September led to the temporary closure of a health centre. The temporary closure of some roads connecting western Dar'a is impacting humanitarian access and assistance, including critical health services.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

As the security situation has stabilized, partners have mobilized immediate assistance to Dar'a Al-Balad, including via a SARC convoy which delivered NFIs and food assistance on 14 September. Four Medical Mobile Teams (MMTS) have provided nutrition and health services, and a temporary static medical point was set up in Dar'a Al-Mahatta as the health center in Dar'a Al-Balad has been damaged. The water networks, which also sustained damage, are being repaired by government authorities and water trucking continues for those unable to access safe water sources. Partners also continue to provide critical assistance in other areas of Dar'a, including at host communities in Dar'a city and the sub-districts of Ash Shajarah, Hrak and Busra Al-Sham.

Food Security

Needs and Gaps:

- Following the return of the majority of IDPs to Dar'a Al-Balad, the sector has primarily focused on resuming regular operations based on needs identified before the crisis (approximately 60 per cent of the population considered food insecure). However, due to the impact of hostilities including lack of humanitarian access, lack of access to markets and livelihoods, in addition to an increase in food and fuel prices, needs have further increased
- Shops have reopened in Dar'a Al-Balad and supplies such as dry and fresh food, including vegetables, are arriving at the markets, although in limited quantities. Additionally, shops that were damaged in the fighting are unable to fully function.
- WFP's August general food distribution (GFD) for Dar'a, which targets 440,555 people (88,111 families), has resumed. For the September cycle, the monthly allocation was increased from 88,111 to 98,511 food rations, which translates to approximately half a million people reached per cycle.

172,825

People reached

Response:

- On 10 September, WFP's August GFD resumed for Dar'a Governorate targeting 440,555 people, with 52,610 food rations sufficient for around 263,050 people dispatched so far and more expected in the coming days. WFP is providing food assistance to returnees through this regular cycle. So far, around

172,825 people received their food rations in 11 locations in the governorate, and of them around 36,325 were returnees to Dar'a Al-Balad. The latest distributions were on 23 September by WFP's cooperating partner on the ground, SARC Dar'a.

- Approximately 6,000 food rations and 3,000 ready-to-eat rations (RTE) were dispatched by sector partners as additional assistance, including for returnees to Dar'a Al-Balad.
- On 13 September, WFP rehabilitated Tishreen Bakery and the Dar'a Al-Balad Bakery both of which have resumed operations. This comes after the allocations of flour, yeast and fuel, which were previously reassigned to cover the additional needs of displaced families in Dar'a city.

Health

Needs and Gaps:

- Sector partners dispatched 1,928 kg of medical supplies to alleviate shortages of medicines in the local market (sufficient to provide 46,683 treatments and support 110 trauma cases).
- A DoH health center in Dar'a Al-Balad was reported damaged, with some assets vandalized with windows, doors, water tanks and solar heating equipment damaged, and assets stolen, including fuel and essential equipment such as the electrical regulator, router and solar electric system.

10,676

People reached

Response:

- To date, health partners reached an estimated 10,676 people, with a range of medical services, including reproductive health, ophthalmological services, child health, gynecology, internal diseases, mental health and psychological services. Health awareness sessions continued, including hygiene promotion, infection prevention and control, primary health care and psycho-social support. Critical surgeries in private hospitals were supported along with surgical operations and provision of assistive devices to persons with disabilities. With support from UNICEF, the Dar'a Directorate of Health (DoH) evaluated the vaccination status of 1,074 children and vaccinated around 136 children.
- Health partners continued providing services to IDPs in collective shelters till all IDPs had left the shelters. UNICEF partners (Al-Birr Association, Syrian Family Planning Association and the DoH) provided health services via fixed health centers and MMYs to IDPs and host communities in Dar'a. WHO partners Nour Foundation and Al Sham Association for Health provided health services to IDPs in shelters and the host communities in Ash Shajarah, Hrak and Busra Al Sham sub-districts in Dar'a through five MMTs. As the health center in Dar'a Al-Balad was damaged, WHO partner Nour Foundation established a temporary static medical point in Dar'a Al-Mahatta for continuity of health services. UNFPA provided over 1,640 reproductive health services to 387 women.
- Three new mobile teams were deployed by Al Sham Association for Health to provide mental health and psycho-social support services. As of 21 September, WHO launched a community support initiative at the governorate level, in partnership with Al-Birr Association, DoH and the Department of Social Affairs to provide medical consultations and medications related to child health, gynecology, internal diseases and mental health and psychosocial support services to residents of Rural Dar'a.
- Health assessments in Dar'a Al-Balad are scheduled to assess the functionality of available health facilities. Additional supplies have been sent by WHO to Dar'a DOH and Dar'a National Hospital, consisting of medicines and surgical kits (with a total weight of 1,928 kg, sufficient to provide 46,683 treatments and 110 trauma cases).

Nutrition

Needs and Gaps:

- Between 1 and 10 September, collective shelters offering nutrition activities lacked private, designated areas to ensure the dignity of IDPs, such as the measurement of Mid-Upper Arm Circumference and counseling for women.
- A significant rise of nine per cent in moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) was recorded among pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and is being monitored.

2,285

People reached

Response:

- Between 1 and 10 September, UNICEF partners, Al-Birr, SFPAs NGOs, and DoH, provided nutrition services via fixed health centers and MMTs targeting 300 IDP families in host communities and collective shelters in Dar'a city. Since 11 September, medical teams from Al Birr NGO provided nutrition services in the fixed health center and through a medical mobile team in Dar'a Al-Balad, targeting returnees and IDPs living in host communities. Since 12 September SFPAs and DoH have also provided medical services. Till 10 September, Al-Birr distributed meals and food baskets from the host community to IDPs in the collective shelters.
- In response to the increasing MAM rates among PLW, partners will conduct regular visits to the identified women to track their health and provide additional nutrition items.
- UNICEF partners screened 1,854 children under the age of five for malnutrition, of them 26 children were admitted for treatment for MAM and three for severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Of the 396 PLW screened for malnutrition, 37 were identified with MAM and admitted for treatment. In total, 2,285 PLW and children under the age of five received nutrition items and 391 PLW received individual counseling for Infant and Young Child Feeding services.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs and Gaps:

- The water network is partially damaged and requires rehabilitation, including the installation of spare parts necessary to network maintenance.
- Household water tanks need to be replaced after many sustained damage.

24,500

People reached

Response:

- The Dar'a Water Board has done light maintenance on sections of the damaged water network in Dar'a Al-Balad, including replacing or fixing damaged pipes, restoring potable water access to 24,500 people. In areas that require further network maintenance or to areas without a water network, the Water Board continues to provide 100 m³ potable water through water trucking services for around 5,000 people.
- UNICEF has delivered 5,000 family hygiene kits, 1,400 packages of baby diapers and 8,000 packages of sanitary napkins to Dar'a al Balad, to be distributed by SARC. These distributions are complemented by hygiene awareness campaigns for returnees to Dar'a al Balad.

Protection

Needs and Gaps:

- The rapid displacement due to hostilities exposed already vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly and people with special needs, to additional protection risks including family separation, separated or unaccompanied children and loss of income sources leaving them exposed to exploitation, violence or abuse.
- A SARC mission to Dar'a Al-Balad on 14 September reported that approximately 11,000 families require a range of critical services, including food, shelter, legal interventions, educational services and health services.
- Protection partners are yet to undertake assessments inside Dar'a Al-Balad. Widespread explosive ordnance hazard is a significant risk to civilians inside Dar'a Al-Balad, Tariq Al Sad, and Dar'a camp. Protection activities and assessments in these areas are on hold, pending security approval.
- Several child protection risks such as family separation and child disability further require psychosocial support, case management and other referral services, including for specialist support, are not available.
- Official documentation is a priority, including marriage and birth certificates towards secure civilian movement, returns and accessing public services.

3,948

People reached

Response:

- SARC has provided legal interventions to IDPs in the collective shelters of That Al-Nutaqain and Hittin schools, including legal counselling for 114 families. SARC will allocate a dedicated space and will provide transport for returnee families from Dar'a Al-Balad to access legal services.
- GOPA's community center in Dar'a city provided a range of services including psycho-social services, in-kind medical assistance and distribution of adult diapers. A Community Center hotline is available for urgent calls and other services were also provided including awareness-raising sessions (e.g. mine risk education, SGBV, etc.), case management and recreational activities for around 265 beneficiaries.
- UNMAS has mine/UXO risk education materials specifically aimed at civilian movement to reinforce safe behaviors and identify signs of mine and UXO contamination. These are readily available to partners on request. Around 138 children and 18 teachers were trained on mine risk.
- Child protection activities continued at collective shelters, learning points, community centers and remotely through mobile services by UNICEF partners such as GOPA and SARC. Eight children were assessed through case management services and those requiring further assistance were referred for legal, health and education services. Mobile teams provided psycho-social services for 92 children through structured activities, child protection awareness and parenting programmes through mobile teams.
- Approximately 150 women benefitted from 797 reproductive health (RH) services through a UNFPA supported RH static clinic in Konrish Alsabil neighbourhood, Dar'a city, and a specialist RH/GBV mobile team. UNFPA also provided 848 RH services to 237 women in Dar'a Al-Balad, Tariq Al Sad and the Palestine refugee camp.

Education

Needs and Gaps:

- As some schools were damaged in hostilities, over 5,000 children were temporarily transferred to attend the second shift in schools in Dar'a city. However, very low attendance was recorded amongst these students as they waited to return to their schools following unofficial reports of a reconciliation agreement. Additionally, the daily non-formal education activities for IDP children in Al Nasawya school stopped as the school resumed its regular functions.
- Of the 34 schools in Dar'a al Balad, two are partially functioning, eight are fully functioning and 24 are non-functional (23 were non-functional pre-hostilities). Some schools are also damaged, reporting large amounts of debris, a lack of equipment and water and a shortage of teachers.

589

People reached

Response:

- In the first week of September, and prior to the start of the academic year, the sector's priorities were establishing emergency education initiatives, primarily, non-formal education (NFE) in two learning centers supported by UNICEF partner, Al Birr NGO. These programmes are the only source of learning for children affected by the crisis and provide a safe and positive learning environment to improve access to education. Through the NFE activity, school bags were distributed to 502 children and 200 sets of stationery and 16 whiteboards were delivered to learning centers. In addition, UNICEF coordinated with Child Protection partners, GOPA and SARC, on 12 mine risk awareness sessions for 316 children and teachers. DoE has conducted emergency rehabilitation in six functioning schools and one functioning school is under rehabilitation by UNICEF. Both partially functioning schools are under rehabilitation, one by DoE and one by UNICEF.

Shelter

Needs and Gaps:

- The sector requires information on NFI needs for recent returnees in Dar'a Al-Balad as well as host communities.
- The sector is advocating for relevant permission to carry out an assessment and reorganization of the temporary IDP site at the stadium, in the event it may be utilized in the future.
- Approximately 10 per cent of IDPs living in host communities have reported that severe damage to their homes is a major barrier to their return.

27,130

People reached

Response:

- SARC distributed core relief items to 618 IDP households (approximately 3,475 individuals) from Dar'a Al-Balad living in the collective shelters.
- Regular programming has resumed with SARC providing NFIs to 3,736 households in Hrak sub-district.

GENERAL COORDINATION

As the security situation has largely stabilized and IDPs have returned to their homes, agency and sectoral partners are planning, and in some cases carried out, assessments, especially in Dar'a Al-Balad. However, permissions are still required in some cases and explosive hazard contamination poses a risk to returnees and to assessment and implementation teams.

On 13 September, WFP rehabilitated Tishreen bakery and conducted a technical assessment of Dar'a Al-Balad bakery; further assessments are planned for both bakeries to assess the scale of damage and the need for new production lines. The Shelter sector is preparing to conduct a rapid damage assessment of residential housing across nine neighbourhoods in Dar'a Al-Balad. The assessment will classify damage levels by severity, identify appropriate and prioritized interventions and estimate required funding. The Shelter sector is coordinating with UNMAS to ensure that assessment teams are trained on mine risk education, given the high explosive hazard contamination in the area. The Health sector has planned an assessment at the end of September and is awaiting approvals. Earlier, the Ministry of Health approved a WHO convoy carrying medical supplies and surgical kits for the Directorate of Health in Dar'a and Dar'a National Hospital.

The Area Humanitarian Country Team, Inter-Sector Coordination group and the Humanitarian Country Team continue to refine and align inter-sector and agency operational plans through the joint response matrix to avoid duplication or major gaps in assistance. Sectors are also coordinating with relevant government counterparts. On 19 September, 30 Education sector partners participated in a sub-national meeting to discuss needs identified by school principals from Dar'a Al-Balad. On 22 September, the WASH sector held a sub-national sector coordination meeting to review the response so far and identify gaps and emerging needs.

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