


Switzerland's commitment in the face of the migration crisis

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Switzerland is to increase its contribution to humanitarian operations in Syria and Iraq by CHF 30 million by the end of 2015.

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A variety of factors are driving thousands of people to seek refuge in safe and more stable regions: armed conflicts, human rights violations, deteriorating living conditions and a lack of prospects for the future. In response to these flows of migrants, Switzerland is providing aid at a number of levels. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is focusing its attention on the migrants' countries of origin in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. It is also active in the transit zones in the Mediterranean region and in the Balkans. Switzerland is adopting a coordinated approach to the migration crisis with collaboration between the SDC and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).

- Since the outbreak of the **Syrian conflict** in March 2011, the SDC has spent CHF 178 million on responding to the humanitarian needs identified in the region, in addition to the CHF 20 million spent on humanitarian projects in Iraq since 2014. Switzerland's contribution in the Syria region and Iraq will be increased by CHF 30 million by the end of the year, a decision taken by the Federal Council on 18 September. This will help fund the activities of partner humanitarian organisations. In light of the number of migrants arriving in a number of Balkan states, the SDC and the SEM are making additional resources available both to Serbia and to Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the migration partnerships concluded with these two countries some years ago. Furthermore,

following an appeal by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) an expert from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) will be sent to Greece.

- In **Morocco and Tunisia**, Switzerland is providing practical support for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who are facing precarious conditions there. At the same time, it is engaging in dialogue with the authorities in both of these countries in a bid to develop a sustainable long-term migration policy.
- In the **Horn of Africa**, the SDC, the FDFA's Human Security Division and the State Secretariat for Migration are working together to ensure the protection of migrants. On 18 September 2015, the Federal Council pledged an additional CHF 24 million to projects in the region.
- In general, as well as the humanitarian aid deployed on the ground, all the projects supported by the SDC to alleviate poverty and the root causes of conflict in developing countries and/or fragile states contribute to curbing transcontinental migration. In partnership with various units of the FDFA and the SEM, the SDC is also conducting a political dialogue at various levels, in particular through its global "Migration and Development" programme, which has an influence on international debate and rolls out innovative economic migration projects with diaspora communities.

Commitment on behalf of victims of the Syrian crisis

The intensity of the humanitarian crisis affecting Syria and its neighbours since the beginning of 2011 shows no signs of abating. For the peoples of the region, the consequences are proving catastrophic. In Syria alone, 12 million people are dependent on humanitarian aid, and more than 4 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries. The capability of Lebanon and Jordan to receive Syrian refugees has reached its limits, and with winter approaching there is a pressing need to get aid to the region.

On 18 September 2015, the Federal Council decided to give an additional CHF 30 million in humanitarian aid to the Syria region and Iraq by the end of the year. Of the CHF 178 million already allocated by Switzerland to the victims of the Syrian crisis since 2011, 57% of the funds have served to help people in need in Syria itself and the remainder has gone towards helping those neighbouring countries most affected by the wave of refugees.

THE CRISIS IN SYRIA – FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Out of the 18.2 million Syrians still living within their country's borders, 12.2 million are reliant on humanitarian aid** (7.6 million are internally displaced persons). Another 4 million Syrians have found refuge in neighbouring countries and North Africa.
- **Financial needs expressed by the United Nations and the ICRC:**
 - USD 2.9 billion (Syria Strategic Response Plan 2015), of which 32% is already covered;
 - USD 4.5 billion (Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016), of which 41% is already covered;
 - USD 164 million (ICRC appeal for Syria), of which 57% is already covered.
- **Switzerland's total budget for humanitarian aid in Syria and the neighbouring countries since the start of the crisis in March 2011** is CHF 215 million.
- **The SDC's presence on the ground**
 - Cooperation office in Amman, Jordan (coordinating all the projects implemented in the region)
 - Programme office in Beirut, Lebanon
 - Local office in Al Qoubaiyat, Lebanon
 - Liaison office in Ankara, Turkey

The SDC prioritises various forms of action.

- It is funding operations run by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a number of UN agencies (UNHCR, World Food Programme) and national and international NGOs active in Syria and the region as a whole.
- It is also running projects of its own in Lebanon and Jordan. In the field of education, for example, it is renovating schools being attended by Syrian children. By the end of 2015, 84 schools will have been renovated, benefiting 57,000 children.
- The SDC is also sending members of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) to the region. These technical experts, specialising in water and sanitation, protection, construction and assistance in the form of monetary transfers, are working for a number of specialised UN agencies and so far 22 have been deployed.
- In northern Iraq, it has delivered 170 tonnes of equipment to help internally displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees. In total, Switzerland has allocated CHF 20 million in humanitarian aid to the victims of the conflict in Iraq since 2014.

More generally, Switzerland is working to ensure effective international coordination of the response to the humanitarian crisis in the region and is involved in humanitarian diplomacy to improve access to aid for victims within Syria. It is also making active efforts to find a political solution to the conflict, ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and combat impunity for crimes committed against civilians.

Switzerland's long-term activities in the Middle East are based on the new 2015-2018 Cooperation Strategy, which aims to strengthen the security of local populations and reduce their vulnerability. The SDC is working to improve access to basic services and jobs for people living in the region. The Federal Council has pledged to increase by CHF 5 million the 2016 budget for two of the SDC's global programmes – on the sustainable management of water resources (Blue Peace Middle East) and on labour migration.

In response to the **flow of migrants through Greece and the Balkans**, the SDC and the SEM are providing Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with CHF 1.2 million under migration partnerships concluded with these two countries. In response to an appeal by the UNHCR, Switzerland plans to earmark CHF 800,000 for looking after refugees in Macedonia and Greece. It will also send an SHA expert on water and sanitation to Greece.

Protecting migrants in North Africa

As part of Switzerland's coordinated action programme in North Africa, the SDC is also operating in Morocco and Tunisia on behalf of the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants staying there, many of whom are in a vulnerable position with no access to essential goods and services. The SDC is working to consolidate their rights by financing the activities of UN agencies (IOM, UNHCR, UN Women) and NGOs on the ground and by establishing a dialogue with the relevant national authorities.

Since 2011, there have been a number of encouraging results.

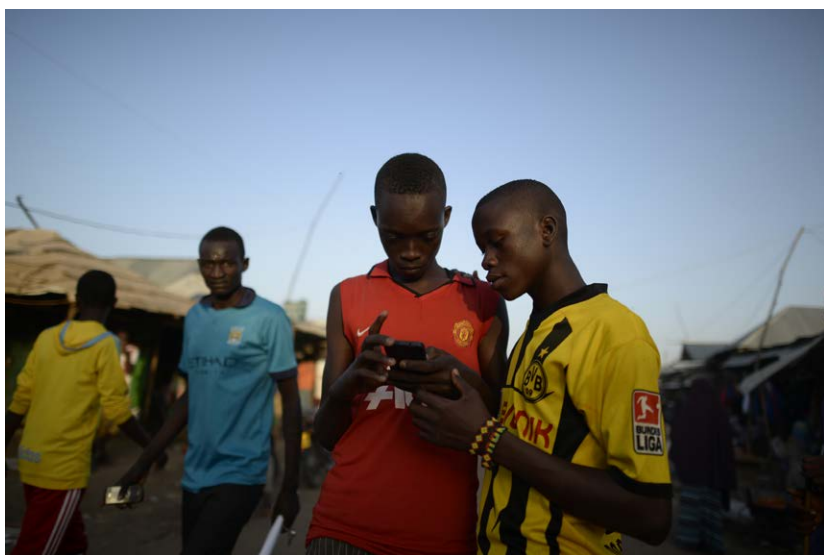
- More than 150,000 refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and migrants have been given medical care, better access to basic services and, where needed, psychosocial assistance and legal aid. Targeted initiatives have successfully raised the awareness of the authorities and general public in Morocco as to the needs and rights of the migrants there.
- More than 4,000 people under particular threat in Libya and Morocco (victims of forced labour, the sick, unaccompanied children) were sent back to their country of origin thanks to assistance received under a voluntary return programme.
- In Tunisia, boosting the rescue capabilities of fishermen and local authorities has meant that more than 400 migrants have been saved at sea and ensured that they receive humanitarian aid.
- In Morocco, ongoing efforts by Switzerland and its partners in the areas of human rights and immigration directly contributed to the country's adoption of a new asylum and immigration policy.

As part of the migration partnership agreed with Tunisia, the SEM has supported this country's integrated border management and funded the voluntary return home of stranded nationals.

Horn of Africa: protecting refugees and combating human trafficking

The Horn of Africa has been a priority region in Switzerland's international cooperation since 2013. In parallel with its involvement in the domains of food security, health, good governance and peacebuilding, Switzerland is working to protect vulnerable people in the region. The SDC, the FDFA's Human Security Division and the SEM are jointly providing support for projects devoted to refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons. These protective measures, provided on the ground at the earliest opportunity, and the assistance granted to first host countries are intended to reduce the influx of migrants from the Horn of Africa to Europe, a journey that is very often fraught with danger for those involved.

For several years now, Switzerland has been working alongside the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Switzerland is also a stakeholder in the Khartoum Process, a joint initiative by the European Union and countries in the Horn of Africa designed to combat human trafficking. Moreover, it contributes to a European programme designed to boost protection and foster development in the Horn of Africa. Between now and the end of 2015, Switzerland will increase its support for multilateral partner organisations by CHF 19 million and in 2016, it will allocate CHF 5 million to an SDC pilot project to provide vocational training modules for young refugees in north-east Kenya.



In 2016, the SDC will spend CHF 5 million on a pilot project to provide vocational training modules for young refugees in north-east Kenya. © UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

For more information, see:

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