

Facts and figures

Number of people in need of humanitarian aid:

(OCHA 2022)

- 14.6 million in Syria (including 6.9 million IDPs) out of a current population of 21.7 million
- 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees in the region

Swiss humanitarian budget for the Syria crisis since it began in March 2011

- over CHF 610 million
- 51% in Syria
- 49% in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey

Swiss pledge 2022 for the Syrian crisis:

- CHF 60 Mio

SDC presence in the region

- Embassy in Amman, Jordan
- Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon
- Project Office in Zahlé, Lebanon
- Embassy in Ankara, Turkey
- Humanitarian Office in Damascus, Syria



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Switzerland's humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis

The Syrian conflict, which has been ongoing since 2011, has caused one of the largest humanitarian crises of our time. The civilian population continues to suffer from the devastating consequences of the armed conflict and the associated serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Restricted access to drinking water, food and basic healthcare compounds the suffering of the population. Medical facilities and humanitarian aid workers are routinely targeted by the parties to the conflict, in serious contravention of international humanitarian law. Besides the security risks, bureaucratic hurdles hamper the provision of humanitarian aid. Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has further deteriorated the situation in the region.

In the face of the devastating effects of the conflict on the entire region and the enormous burden shouldered by Syria's neighbouring countries, Switzerland has defined a Regional Cooperation Program for 2019–2024 in order to respond to the crisis. This cooperation program encompasses Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey and aims to protect the people affected by the conflict and alleviate their suffering and respond to the needs of communities hosting them; it also supports the development efforts of Switzerland's partner countries in the region, notably in Jordan and Lebanon. The program links international cooperation with migration policy and highlights Switzerland's active engagement in conflict prevention and peace promotion.

Since 2011, Switzerland has provided over CHF 610 million (over CHF 50 million per year on average) for the affected population in the region. Switzerland is actively responding to the immense humanitarian needs and is working to strengthen the resilience of the people of Syria and the region. It is engaged in four priority areas: protection and migration; education and income; conflict prevention and peace promotion; water and sanitation. In addition, emergency assistance is provided in cases of acute humanitarian crisis (health, shelter, food etc.). Gender equality and good governance continue to be transversal themes. SDC pursues the following approach to achieve its humanitarian objectives:

- Direct implementation (projects implemented by Switzerland)
- Support to multilateral and bilateral partners (UN agencies, International Committee of the Red Cross, I/NGOs)
- Experts deployments from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) to partner organisations (specialists in construction, protection, water and sanitation and cash assistance etc.)
- Humanitarian diplomacy

Through Swiss Humanitarian Aid, Switzerland is supporting various projects in Syria and the neighboring countries. Examples of projects supported by Switzerland include:

Direct action by Switzerland

Access to quality water for vulnerable communities in Lebanon

Displacement as a result of the war in Syria has accentuated already existing challenges in water management in Lebanon, with adverse effects on safe access to drinking water, water quality, and waste water management. The Bekaa Water Establishment (BWE), a regional arm of the Ministry of Energy and Water, has the mandate to provide water and sanitation services to the population. Switzerland supports the BWE to improve public water management and distribution in Lebanon to better serve the most vulnerable people in the Bekaa valley.

Assistance via humanitarian partners

Provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance for crisis-affected populations

Around 14.6 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation in the health sector is deteriorating rapidly, also as a result of attacks on health facilities, the destruction of infrastructure and a critical shortage of medical supplies and health personnel. Recent years have seen an increase in food insecurity with 12 million people facing acute food insecurity and 1.9 million people at risk of sliding into food insecurity. Switzerland supports the projects of various INGOs, such as Medair, which provide multisectoral assistance, including, access to medical services to the conflict-affected population.

Improving the lives of conflict-affected children

In Al Hol Camp and Ar-Raqqa area in Northeast Syria, Save the Children (SC) aims to improve the lives of conflict-affected children, youth and their families through the provision of strengthened child protection services, mental health and psychosocial support activities and education initiatives. Children are enrolled into basic literacy and numeracy classes with structured socio-emotional learning sessions that have proven to promote children's holistic development and wellbeing in these contexts. Alongside, SC provides child-led recreational activities and protection services in Child Friendly Spaces through children and adolescent clubs designed to strengthen positive coping strategies, creative expression, peer support and problem-solving skills.

Protection and economic resilience for survivors of gender-based violence (Turkey)

Turkey hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees, among whom gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread. Our partner NGO Danish Refugee Council (DRC) connects people threatened by GBV with protection services and offers them opportunities to generate their own income.

Linking basic education and vocational training with community-based education activities for children and youth

With the support and training from our partner, the Aga Khan Foundation, Syrian local organizations implement community-based education activities for children and youth, especially girls, in selected districts of Hama, Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, and Homs governorates. With employment, vocational skills training and apprenticeship opportunities, adolescents and youth are able to make decisions about their life and educational opportunities, secure future work and contribute to society.

Supporting the resilience efforts of conflict-affected communities

Northern Syria is witnessing the worst drought of the last seventy years with almost 4.5 million individuals unable to meet their basic needs with regards to WASH, food and livelihoods. SDC works with a partner to support conflict-affected population to strengthen their resilience through an area-based approach increasing access to basic WASH services and supporting local economic recovery. This includes the rehabilitation of water supply systems to enhance access to safe water for drinking, cooking and irrigation, and waste water networks to improve sanitation and overall community health. Additionally, the project increases livelihood opportunities through support to local businesses including tailoring workshops, barbers small shops, as well as carpenters and agricultural businesses.

Building resilient communities in Rural Damascus

The project implemented by Oxfam in Rural Damascus targets areas with a high severity of needs. It aims at improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation, solid waste management and hygiene for conflict-affected communities. The project includes the rehabilitation of WASH facilities in schools in Rural Damascus and conducts hygiene promotion activities in those schools. Oxfam also improves access to food, income and livelihood opportunities through supporting households to start income generating activities. Furthermore, the production line of a bakery will be rehabilitated in Harasta which contributes to the access of approximately 10'000 vulnerable households to subsidized bread.

Secondment of Swiss experts

Experts from the SHA provide UN agencies with technical support and strategic advice, thus contributing to an effective and coordinated response to the humanitarian challenges in Syria and the region. To date, Switzerland has deployed 55 experts to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey, where they support international efforts to ensure access to drinking water, basic sanitation and shelter, and provide cash assistance and protection for the most disadvantaged population groups, including children and young people. Eight Swiss experts are currently deployed in the region.

Humanitarian diplomacy

Switzerland's commitment to international humanitarian law and human rights has earned it a high degree of credibility as a reliable, effective and neutral actor. This credibility plays a key role in opening the doors that enable it to deliver humanitarian aid. Switzerland is actively engaged in advocacy work and the promotion of humanitarian dialogue. Switzerland will continue to engage in concrete humanitarian operations, in particular to improve access to and protection of people in need and the working environment for humanitarian actors.

Further information

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