

Syrian crisis

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Facts and figures

Number of people in need of humanitarian aid:

(OCHA 2021; World Bank 2020)

- 13.4 million in Syria (including 6.1 million IDPs) out of a current population of 18.3 million
- 5.5 million refugees in the region

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

- over CHF 522 million
- 52% in Syria
- 48% in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey

Swiss pledge 2021 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

Contributions to partners since 2011

Organisations	Amount (in CHF million)
ICRC, IFRC, Swiss Red Cross	90.0
NGOs	151.0
UNHCR	49.7
WFP	40.4
UNRWA	59.9
OCHA	28.5
UNDP	13.5
UNICEF	22.6
UN-Habitat	4.8
FAO	6.9
World Bank	5.0
IOM	6.5
Other UN	7.3



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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 2019–2022 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; 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 522 million (approx. CHF 50 million per year) 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. Swiss Humanitarian Aid, pursues the following approach to achieve its 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 both the host and the refugee communities in the Bekaa valley.

Assistance via humanitarian partners

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

Around 11 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. In addition to this, the COVID-19 pandemic is hard to contain considering the given sanitary conditions and the fragile health system.

Switzerland supports the projects of various INGOs, such as Medair, which provide multisectoral assistance, including, access to medical services to the conflict-affected population. Switzerland has also donated more than 170 WATA water purification kits to the ICRC. These will be distributed and used in different regions of Syria.

Promoting access to safe and adequate shelter in Syria

Countless forced displacements and damage to or destruction of homes have forced people to accept overcrowded accommodation of inadequate quality, rising rents and insufficient protection of property rights for those living in their own homes. Displaced persons have limited access to basic services and essential household items. Switzerland is co-financing a project launched by the NGO Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to provide multi-sectoral support for people in need as a result of the conflict. The project seeks to improve access to adequate housing, including better protection of property and tenancy rights, clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and education and income.

Strengthening the resilience of families in rural areas

Restricting access to food and water continues to be used as a weapon of war in Syria. The 10.5 million people who suffer from food insecurity spend up to 25% of their income on meeting their minimum daily water needs. Seed and fuel prices are so high that many families can no longer afford to farm. Thanks to financial support from Switzerland, the NGO Acción contra el Hambre is improving water supply services in rural communities. The project also aims to increase the wheat yield by 200 kg per household and livestock production by 27% in the south-western governorate of Daraa and by 34% in the north-eastern governorate of Al-Hasakah.

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. Through its intervention, the NGO Danish Refugee Council (DRC) provides protection to people threatened by GBV and connects them with actors enabling them to acquire their own income.

Protection and psychosocial support for vulnerable children

Girls, boys and their families affected by the conflict throughout Syria have experienced 9 years of war, bombing and acute deprivation. They face complex and multiple needs, compounded by protection risks, neglect and deprivation. Access to and quality of education are affected by a number of obstacles, exposing children to serious protection problems. This intervention, carried out by an SDC partner, aims to provide education and child protection services to highly vulnerable children in underserved areas in the North West (Idlib and North Aleppo) and North East (Raqqa and Deir Ez Zour).

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 51 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. Nine 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

SDC
Swiss Humanitarian Aid
Effingerstrasse 27
3003 Bern, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 58 462 31 24
Fax: +41 58 464 16 94
Email: hh@deza.admin.ch
@SwissHumAidUnit

Media contact:
FDFA Information
Federal Parliament West Wing
3003 Bern, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 58 462 31 53
Fax: +41 58 464 90 47
Email: info@eda.admin.ch
www.eda.admin.ch