

#SYRIA10
#WITHSYRIA



Photo: Gonzalo Hohr / Action Against Hunger

#SYRIA10:
TIME TO LOOK AHEAD





A decade of violent conflict has pushed Syrian communities, both within and outside the country, to the brink.

Within the country, the number of people reliant on humanitarian assistance has almost doubled since the war began in 2011 with approximately 75% of the population in need today (13 million). Over 6 million people are internally displaced as a result of fleeing conflict and an additional 5 million refugees remain outside the country.

Estimates indicate half a million lives have been lost since the war began. Much of the country's infrastructure has been severely damaged or destroyed, including water networks, over half of public hospitals, one in three schools, and countless homes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the already decimated economy, rising inflation and deteriorating Syrian pound – all of which have severely impacted the ability of households to purchase food and basic goods.

Ten years on, as millions of Syrians inside the country find themselves displaced, fleeing war and unable to access basics like food, shelter, water and sanitation, protection, basic health services or work, the need for sustainable early recovery and resilience solutions are more pressing than ever if the humanitarian response is to effectively restore dignity and self-reliance to the millions in need.

Whilst basic humanitarian assistance ensures lives are saved, applying a recovery and resilience lens is critical to ensuring people can access their rights, overcome aid dependence, and turn the dividends of humanitarian interventions into longer-term building blocks for sustainable livelihoods, income-generating opportunities, and the ability to cope with future shocks. Furthermore, the sustainable reintegration of displaced Syrians who chose to eventually return will depend largely on the availability of basic social infrastructure and services, a secure environment, and viable livelihood opportunities.



“I used to have to wait around five days to buy water from water trucks to water my crops,” Hala, Ahmad's wife says.

“Now, the water networks are fixed and there's no need to clean them and monitor them to help my husband (a farmer). I'm free to take care of other responsibilities at home or help in other areas of our farm.”

With 80% of the Syrian population estimated to be living below the poverty line, access to long-term sustainable water networks that enhance self-recovery and self-reliance is key for reducing communities' dependency on emergency aid.

¹ Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021.

² Names in testimonies have been changed to protect their identity.



10 YEARS OF CONFLICT AND HUNGER

! 13.4
MILLION PEOPLE
IN NEED over half of
them in severe and
extreme need.³

↑ 20%
MORE THAN LAST
YEAR
almost doubling since
the conflict began.

♥ 50%
OF HEALTH SYSTEMS
DAMAGED,
destroyed or closed
altogether.⁴

→ 6.1
MILLION PEOPLE
DISPLACED within
Syria.

💰 80%
OF PEOPLE
living **Below the**
Poverty Line.

🍲 12.4
MILLION PEOPLE
are **FOOD INSECURE**
(highest recorded
number since the
war started) and
2.2 million at risk of
becoming so.

🏠 > 5
MILLION SYRIAN
REFUGEES remain in
neighboring countries.

Photo: © Amy Leang para ActionAgainst Hunger

³ Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021.

⁴ World Health Organization.



HUNGER AND CONFLICT

Conflict and food insecurity are inextricably linked and especially so in the context of the Syrian crisis where a decade of conflict, mass displacement, economic deterioration, destroyed infrastructure, the Covid-19 pandemic and extreme weather combined has led to **12.4 MILLION** food insecure people in Syria – the highest number recorded to date since the war began - with **2.2 MILLION** at risk of becoming so.



60% OF POPULATION LACKS SUFFICIENT ACCESS TO FOOD

As of January 2021, 6.1 million people have been displaced within the country – many of them more than once and a record 60% of the population lacks sufficient access to food – a result of ten years of conflict, soaring food prices and all compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic.



FOOD PRICES ↑ 250%

2020 witnessed an unprecedented deterioration of the already frail Syrian economy with the SYP plunging, rising inflation and with 80% of the country reported to be living below the poverty line. Purchasing power has decreased to such stark levels, the price of the basic breadbasket skyrocketed to over 250% in some parts of the country – leaving basic commodities like bread, rice and lentils out of the reach of most.



WIDESPREAD FUEL SHORTAGES

Ongoing fuel shortages, felt harshest during Syria's cold winter months, have also left communities queuing outside gas stations for hours – reducing the time daily wage workers can spend at work. This especially devastating when the majority of households in Syria are dependent on the informal sector and daily wage jobs to make a living. This was further exacerbated with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent public health measures that grinded most labour to a halt in 2020. Fuel shortages also increase transportation and agricultural costs, raising prices of the basic commodities people rely on.



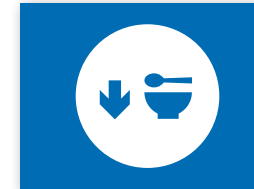
CLIMATE CRISIS

Extreme weather patterns further compound access to food with areas like Hassakeh in the north-east, in recent years facing some of the worst flooding in a decade. While rain increases yields, the subsequent high temperatures and strong winds that followed caused fires that destroyed crops before the Spring/Summer harvests. In 2020, large fires swept across the coastal areas of the north-east, destroying over 9,000 hectares of agricultural lands in Lattakia governate, destroying homes, communities and livelihoods.

All of these issues compound to leave already vulnerable Syrians unable to access the most basic commodities, let alone nutrient dense food.

DANGEROUS COPING HABITS

As prices increase, families have been forced to adopt dangerous coping methods including:



CUTTING DOWN THE NUMBER OF MEALS PER DAY (three to two⁵)



SELLING ASSETS AND LIVESTOCK to generate additional income



PURCHASING FOOD ON CREDIT (50% of people in rural areas and 70% in urban areas)



REMOVING CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL so they can work and support the family.

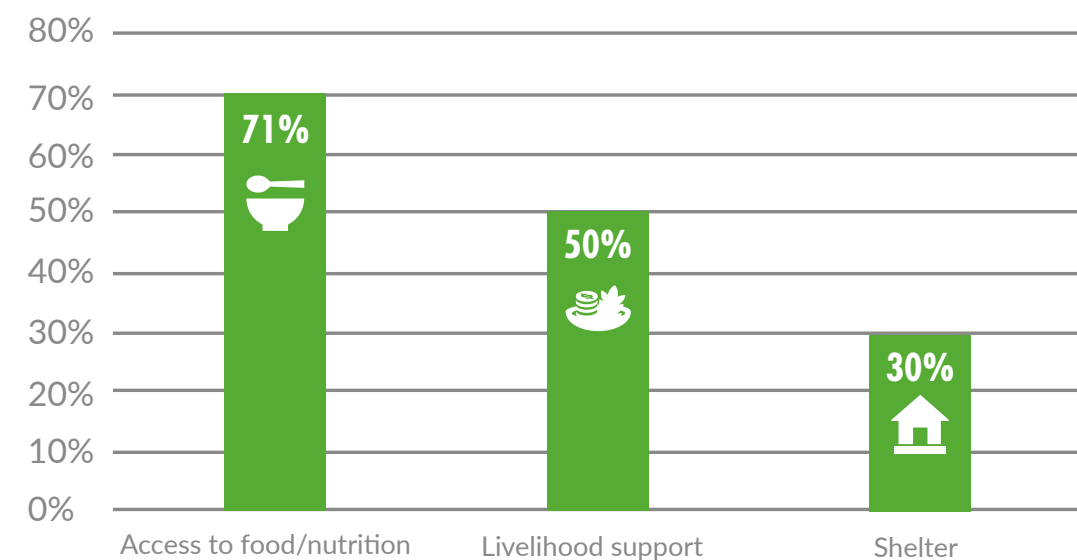


A 25% INCREASE IN CHILD MARRIAGE in areas like Quneitra, Lattakia (urban IDPs), Deir-ez-Zor (rural and urban) and Al-Hasakeh (rural and urban)

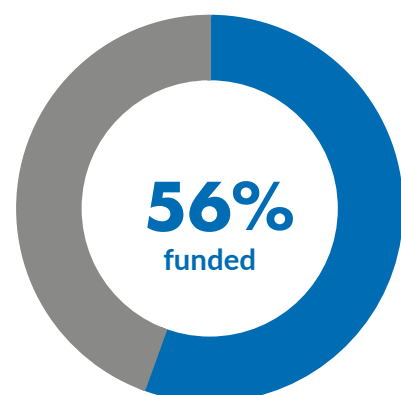


Although all population groups have been affected by the protracted crisis, children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) are facing the highest risk in terms of deteriorated physical and mental well-being as a result of inadequate food and poor nutrition.”

According to a needs analysis the top three needs in 2021 as reported by Syrian communities are:



⁵ World Food Programme.

Syria Humanitarian Response Plan
2020

2140.8 m USD funding: 56%
3817.5 m USD requirements

#WITHSYRIA

During last year's Brussels IV international conference for Syria and the region, donors demonstrated continued commitment to the Syria Crisis. Pledges totaling \$ 5.5 billion (€ 4.9 billion) for 2020, together with multi-year pledges around US\$ 2.2 billion (€ 2 billion) for 2021 and beyond, similar to amounts from previous years – this was particularly welcome in light of perceived 'Syria fatigue' internationally and the global economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic which meant that many states were prioritizing domestic spending.

Several major donors including the UK and the US have since announced intentions to dramatically reduce their Syria portfolio, which will in turn negatively impact the work of humanitarian agencies on the ground. **We urge donors to continue the generous support they have shown towards Syria to date.**

“As the protracted crisis reaches the ten year mark, it is more essential than ever that the humanitarian response be delivered in a way that allows Syrians to resume their own income-generating opportunities, enjoy guaranteed access to basic services, and move from aid dependence to self-reliance. This is key to avoiding another devastating chapter in the Syria crisis as poverty and food insecurity rates continue to climb across the country.”



“I'm very happy nowadays with the availability of rainwater. I don't have to buy water when it's not sufficient,” says Aisha, a 42-year-old widow and mother of six children, two of whom live with disabilities.

She lost her husband in the war and now depends on income from daily agricultural work to support her family. She described the horrible water conditions she used to face and her dependence on buying water from water trucks to irrigate her garden; but since Action Against Hunger water rehabilitation project in Hama she can now use gathered rainwater to irrigate her small 900 square meter garden meaning her children now have access to nutritious vegetables like lettuce, beans, peas, tomato and pepper zucchini

Aisha could benefit from a pump to ensure long-term sustainable access to her nutritious crops but can't afford it. For now – she expresses her gratitude for having a sustainable way to grow healthy, nutritious food for her family.

GENDERED IMPACTS OF CONFLICT

The issues outlined above all have a gendered and disproportionate impact on women and girls in Syria. They manifest through any number of protection risks such as **gender-based violence early/child marriage, domestic violence, sexual harassment and/or violence, denial of resources, and psychological and/or physical abuse.**

It's estimated that half of those in need of humanitarian assistance are women and girls⁶ who have **higher poverty rates** than men and who are often relied on to shoulder the responsibility of not only caring for their children and families but, in the cases of lost-loved ones to war, carry the responsibility of suddenly becoming sole-bread winners.

Over half a million Syrian women are pregnant. Many of them **unable to access health facilities** due to movement restrictions, Covid-19 transmission fears or lack of access to health facilities altogether, putting their lives and that of their newborns at risk. It's estimated that 80% of people living in informal settlement sites in the north-west as well as the north-east are women and children (HNO) making the **need for education, nutrition, maternal and child health services** dire. Maternal anemia and maternal malnutrition is expected to continue rising due to deteriorating socio- economic conditions.

“During 2021, an estimated 1.2 million mothers and women at child-bearing age will continue to suffer the consequences of maternal anemia and/or malnutrition if not treated appropriately.”



⁶ UNWomen.



In 2021, Action Against Hunger has planned and is already implementing exit strategies from emergency interventions in key areas in order to focus on promoting more sustainable, long-term solutions that build on our decade-long presence in the country and that Syrian communities have called for, time and time again.”

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER IS WORKING IN SYRIA SINCE 2008

As Syria marks ten years of war that has decimated communities, economies, infrastructure and basic social services, Action Against Hunger aims to move toward long-term sustainable solutions that are grounded in humanitarian principles and the needs of communities we exist to serve.

While emergency assistance is still needed, the changing nature of the conflict and the changing areas of control means that now more than ever – a needs-based, gender-responsive, holistic approach that restores dignity and increases the self-reliance of Syrian communities is needed.

This means a stronger focus on water sanitation and hygiene programs that rehabilitate water networks, repair pipelines, irrigation networks and pumping stations to ensure longer-term solutions that are more sustainable and more cost-efficient than interventions like water-trucking. Doing so in a complimentary and integrated way that ensures these interventions are considered in areas where rehabilitation of schools, primary health clinics and hospitals is already taking place – or for example, where agricultural programming like garden-kit distribution or other food security and livelihood inputs are being provided.



“I was always so worried about the price of water, I was careful of not consuming too much - I used to postpone cleaning the house, leaving dirty dishes and many other hardships. I just couldn't afford the 5000 SYP it cost,” says Fatima, a 25 year old woman, mother of two who returned to the village in 2018.

“We're so much more comfortable now and not worried about water. I can clean my house every day and feel it a blessing. Even though the electricity is difficult, access to water is so much more important for me.”

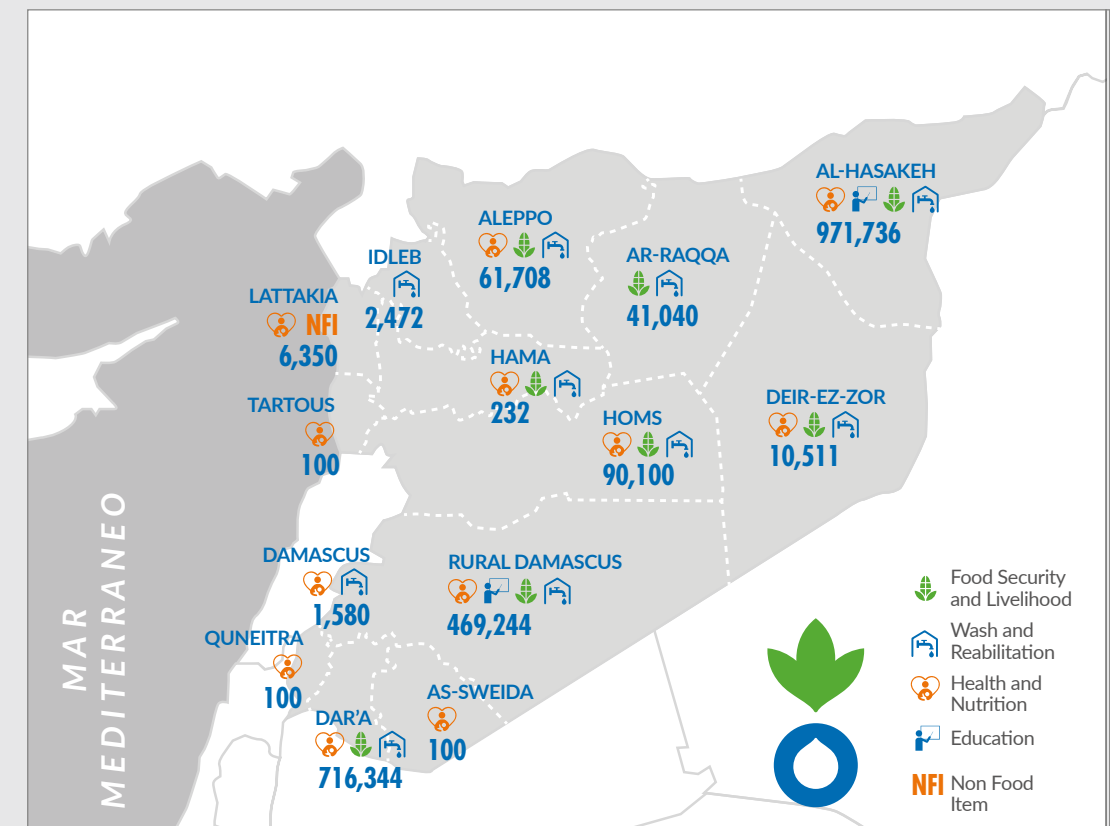
After ten years of conflict, Syria's water and sanitation infrastructure remains drastically insufficient, with increased pressure from the Covid-19 pandemic that requires more preventative hygiene practices.

10.7 million people across Syria are in need of water and sanitation assistance - the majority having to make steep financial sacrifices to be able to access water or hygiene supplies.

In addition to providing emergency water assistance like jerry cans and water trucks, Action Against Hunger looks to rehabilitating damaged water infrastructure to ensure mid-and-long-term sustainable solutions are available for Syrians suffering from a decade of war.

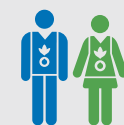


2020 AT A GLANCE



2, 371, 617 BENEFICIARIES

across 14 governorates in 2020



118 National Staff
19 Expatriate Staff



1,409,065
Beneficiaries
reached under
WaSH



745,497
Beneficiaries
reached under
Health



115,903
Beneficiaries
reached under
Shelter



6,250
Beneficiaries
reached under
NFI



20,867
Beneficiaries
reached under
Education



72,535
Beneficiaries
reached under
FSL



1,500
Beneficiaries
reached under
Nutrition



CONFLICT-AFFECTED SYRIANS DESERVE EARLY RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE SUPPORT

Needs of conflict-affected Syrians today are drastically different from what they were when the war erupted ten years ago. As we continue to improve our own in-country interventions anchored in the humanitarian principles of impartiality, independence, neutrality, gender responsiveness, conflict sensitivity and protection and as we work to ensure increased timely access to Syrians in-need – we urge donor communities to:

1. Move away from merely emergency-focused program delivery (funding) when possible – and work toward **long-term early recovery and resilience-focused solutions that restore hope, dignity and self-reliance** to those affected by a decade of war.
2. Provide support for needs-based programs that **restore existing infrastructure**, increasing civilian access to basic services such as **water networks**, education and public health facilities with a focus on those that provide immediate protection benefits.
3. Support longer-term **sustainable food production solutions**, that allow increased household food availability and diversity – ensuring nutrition intake guarantees increased and reducing reliance on emergency food parcels.
4. Support **gender-responsive livelihoods** programming that builds on existing capacities for new and existing businesses, connecting households to essential community market chains.
5. Expand support of flexible, **long-term (>24 month) funding approaches** – especially as they relate to the third Humanitarian Response Plan pillar of Early Recovery and Resilience, allowing humanitarian actors to respond to both emergency needs and lay groundwork for sustainable solutions
6. In a complex operational environment, member states and relevant regulatory bodies should work together to ensure that restrictive measures (sanctions & counterterrorism) do not hinder a more dignifying, cost-effective and sustainable response across Syria. This requires effective **humanitarian exemptions to sanctions, and guaranteed banking channels** for the transfer of humanitarian funds to Syria, and a manageable level of risk sharing with implementing partners.
7. All means of reaching those in need across Syria remain necessary – regular programming, cross-border, and cross line. Together with efforts around the renewal of the **UN cross-border resolution**, member states should adopt a forwards-looking, pragmatic and inclusive approach to contingency planning. This includes support for the scale-up of **cross-line access** by International NGOs (**INGOs**) alongside UN agencies and national entities.

Photo: © Lys Arango para Action Against Hunger.



ADHARA

“I was able to save money this year not having to buy these vegetables from the market,” says Adhara who managed to grow ~ 20 kilos of eggplant and 4 kilos of zucchini every week after Action Against Hunger vegetable seed distribution in Rural Damascus.

She described the difference it made to have healthy vegetables available nearby and no longer have to worry about financial constraints of buying food from local markets.

As Syria enters a decade of war, rising inflation and a plummeting currency have had severe impacts on access to food. Over 9 million people are food insecure and with food basket prices increasing by over 250%, long-term sustainable and dignified solutions are needed now more than ever.

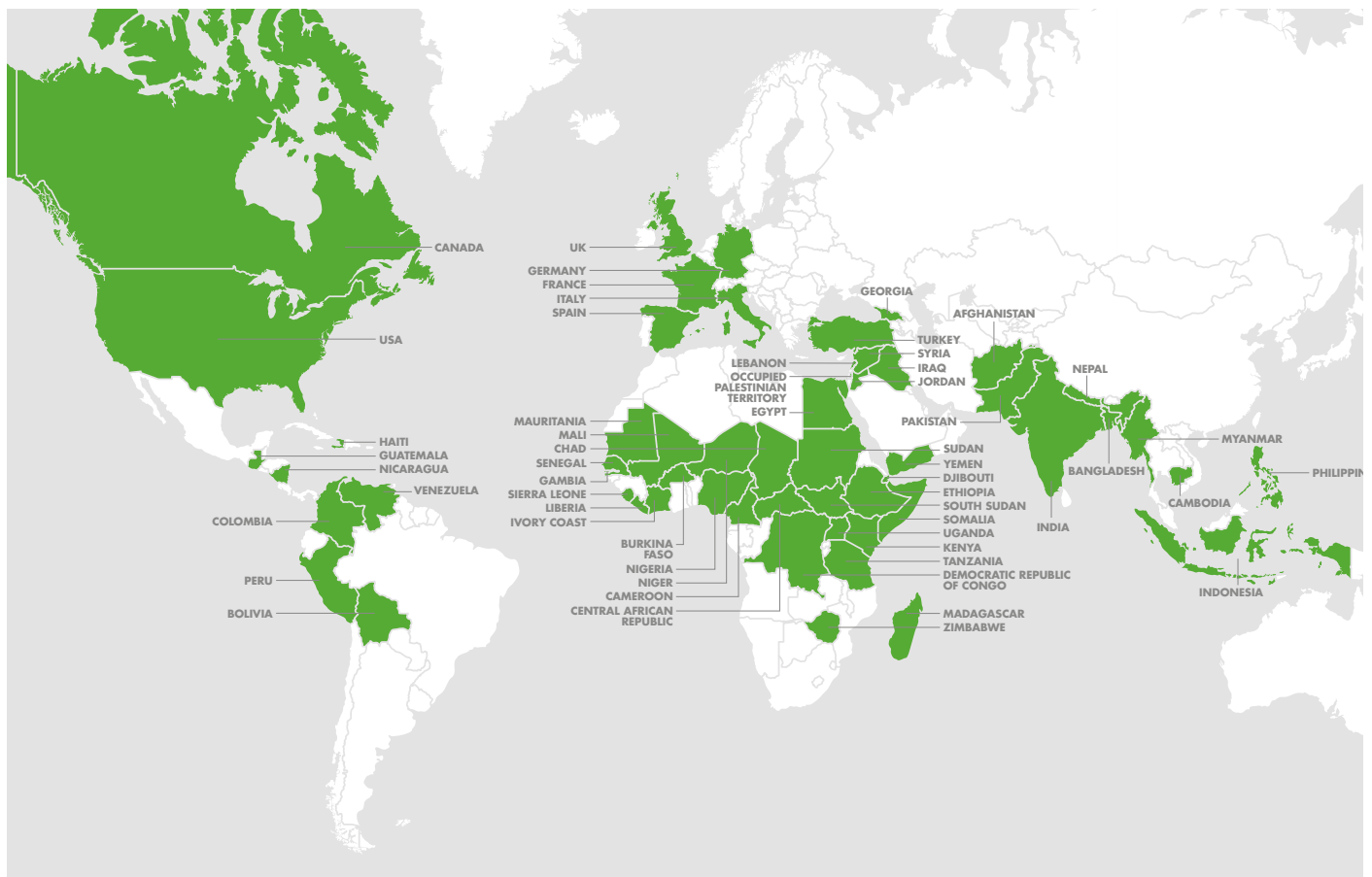
Action Against Hunger's Food Security & Livelihoods programs reached over 64,000 conflict-affected Syrians in 2020.

More information:

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ACTION AGAINST HUNGER INTERVENES IN AROUND 50 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE



www.accioncontraelhambre.org



Action Against Hunger is an international humanitarian organisation that fights against the causes and effects of hunger. We save the lives of malnourished children. We ensure that families have access to safe water, food, training and basic health care. We also work to free children, women and men from the threat of hunger. In Spain, we work against unemployment and for the social and labour market inclusion of people with difficulties in accessing the labour market.