

Syria crisis messaging

KEY MESSAGES

- The need for open borders;
- Need for safe passage inside the country for Syrians forced to flee their homes;
- Need for better funding of *all* programs for Syrian refugees,
- and the need for international solidarity and burden-sharing with host countries.

Regional messages

Key message: The current level of funding has propelled the humanitarian response system to a breaking point – it is vital additional funds are given.

CRITICAL LACK OF FUNDING: The appeal for the first half of 2013 of US\$1 billion for 56 UN agencies and NGOs to support up to 1.1 million refugees by June has only been 50% funded. In March the millionth refugee registered with UNHCR. Since then an additional 300,000 have registered, with thousands coming forward every day. Agencies are operating on a fraction of the funds they need, for a population that far exceeds the appeal estimation. Humanitarian agencies are being forced to scale up to meet the needs of a rapidly growing number of refugees, without receiving the additional means required. This cannot go on.

GENEROUS KUWAITI FUNDS totalling US\$110 million have given us a moment of respite, but it is not enough. More funds are urgently needed. Donors must step up to the plate by disbursing any pledges still outstanding. We also ask them to identify supplementary budgets and other sources to draw upon, including the creation of exceptional funding mechanisms.

HARD CHOICES: Unless additional funding is forthcoming, humanitarian partners will have to scale back. We have already begun the difficult process of evaluating which programmes to cut with the least severe impact on refugees. This will inevitably result in a decrease in basic services offered to already vulnerable refugees.

NEW APPEAL UNHCR and its partners in the international refugee response to the Syria crisis are now working on the their fifth appeal which will cover the period from July until the end of the year. While the final figures are not yet known, realistic requirements will be much higher than the original estimates in the currently underfunded appeal which totals US\$1.1 billion.

OPEN BORDERS: We ask all governments in the region and beyond to keep their borders open. We are particularly grateful for the commitment offered by neighbouring governments to protect Syrian refugees.

REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS: Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan have welcomed over 1,300,000 Syrian refugees across their borders, including over 600,000 since the beginning of the year, but the ever-growing number is putting increased stress on already strained public resources as well as on host families. If additional support is not forthcoming, tolerance by host communities towards refugees may soon reverse, threatening to further destabilize this fragile region.

LEBANON AND JORDAN PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE: The population of Lebanon has increased by 10% and Jordan by 6% due to refugee influx. Both countries are already struggling with the effects of previous instability and refugee waves.

CHILDREN'S CRISIS: 48% of Syrian refugees are under 18 years. As long as the conflict continues and escalates, young Syrians risk becoming a lost generation, missing out on education, prey to disease and ill health and lacking the means to contribute to the rebuilding of their country. Host countries have all prioritized access of Syrian children to their schools. We must support this.

PREPARED FOR THE WORST – UNHCR and partners maintain a permanent and renewable stockpile of lifesaving relief items such as tents, blankets and kitchen sets for up to 350,000 people in the region.

INVISIBLE REFUGEES - while the media has focused on refugees in camps, the majority, 74%, are living in urban settings. High costs of living, lack of job opportunities and rapidly dwindling resources are making life increasingly difficult for Syrian refugees. Cash assistance programs are in place to support vulnerable families.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY: International solidarity in support of the host countries is crucial. This is not a question of generosity, but one of enlightened self-interest. By taking in thousands of new refugees every day, the countries on the frontline of this crisis are doing the region and indeed, the world, an extraordinary service.

Inside Syria

Key message: The most tragic consequences of the crisis are being felt inside Syria. UNHCR has a purely humanitarian mandate and strives to assist the most vulnerable wherever they may be.

HUGE NEEDS: At least 6.5 million Syrians are in need of assistance. Their needs include shelter, relief items, community services, protection and health care. Of these 6.5 million, some 4 million Syrians are internally displaced. About 50 per cent are children.

HELPING THEMSELVES As the crisis in Syria goes into its third year the efforts Syrians have made to help the displaced has been remarkable. Up and down the country, Syrians have been volunteering their time, their homes and the little that they have to help the people around them. UNHCR is committed to supporting the efforts of Syrians to attend to the most vulnerable.

ESTABLISHED OPERATION READY TO RESPOND: UNHCR has worked for two decades in Syria. The assistance systems developed for the large influx of Iraqi refugees have been adapted to cater to the needs of Syrian displaced and vulnerable. Our experienced staff of 350, as well as long standing partners in the country are doing their

utmost to deliver aid, rehabilitate shelters, and provide counseling and advice to refugees and the displaced.

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF MAKING A DIFFERENCE: UNHCR has delivered assistance to every governorate in the country.

- In 2012 UNHCR reached over 450,000 people with aid items and 73,000 people with cash assistance.
- So far in 2013 UNHCR dispatched over 1,160,000 much-needed aid including financial aid, tents, blankets, mattresses and kitchen sets benefitting close to half a million Syrians.
- By the end of February 2013, 42 shelters have been rehabilitated home to 23,909 individuals.
- UNHCR staff visits communal centers and homes of the displaced and provide counseling sessions at community centres.

PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE REFUGEE POPULATION: UNHCR remains committed to the refugee population in Syria, the majority of whom are Iraqis. Refugees in Syria face the same hardship and dangers as their Syrian neighbours. As refugees they often have limited support mechanisms, so they are acutely vulnerable when they are driven from their homes. 62,624 Iraqi refugees are registered with UNHCR (as of February 28th 2013). The most vulnerable receive assistance from UNHCR on a regular basis.

URGENT FUNDING NEEDS: Refugees and the displaced in Syria are impacted by rising prices, fuel shortages, scarcity of livelihood opportunities and unaffordable rents in the safer areas. They live under the constant threat of generalized and targeted violence. UNHCR's commitment to serving this extraordinarily vulnerable group is unwavering. Increased funding is vital to support life saving deliveries of aid, protection and counseling for refugees and the displaced.

Iraq

Key message: Despite its own challenges, Iraq continues to welcome tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to its territory.

URGENT NEED FOR SOLIDARITY: Iraq is struggling on a number of fronts:

- 1 million displaced Iraqis,
- the homecoming of tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees
- Close to 130,000 Syrian refugees (as of 10 April 2013), increasing daily by 800 a day
- Longstanding refugee communities, including Palestinians, Iranians and Turks
- An unknown number of Stateless, possibly numbering over 120,000 people, according to the Government of Iraq

LOCAL SOLIDARITY: In the Kurdistan region, the local population responded to a KurdSat TV appeal to support Syrians, raising over US\$1.5 million which will be spent on food and household items to be given directly to Syrian refugees.

VULNERABLE URBAN REFUGEES: Refugees living in urban communities are stressed by high rents, poor quality of housing. Some families are living in shelters, without proper

roofs, windows or doors. They are in dire need of assistance. UNHCR has a programme to provide aid items to the most vulnerable. We are also supporting health and education services.

CAMP BASED REFUGEES: Syrian refugee camps are established in Al Qaim, Anbar Governorate and in Domiz, Dohuk Governorate. Domiz hosts over 35,000 refugees and is critically overcrowded. 3,500 families are obliged to share tents with other families because there is no space to construct new tents. In some cases over 15 refugees are living in tents designed for 5 people. We repeat our appeal for new land to be given to establish additional camps.

NEW LAND/ CAMPS: A new camp is being built in Erbil governorate to accommodate up to 12,000 refugees. We hope to build a camp in Sulaymaniyah with a capacity of 15,000 people, but negotiations are still ongoing. Both camps will provide space for around 25,000 new refugees, yet this only addresses about one third of the need of new arrivals as well as the need to decongest Domiz camp.

RISKS OF OVERCROWDING Congestion and warmer temperatures are increasing the risk of disease as well as tension between the camp residents. The number of children under five years of age suffering from diarrhoea has doubled since February.

WELCOME HOME: Iraqi families are returning in large numbers from lengthy exile in Syria. They need help reintegrating. Returnees receive financial assistance from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.

OPEN BORDERS PLEASE: UNHCR appeals to the Iraqi government to ensure that all borders remain open for Syrian civilians that need to flee the country. Since October 2012 the border at Al Qa'im, Anbar Governorate, has been closed to all but a few individuals who were allowed to cross for emergency medical care or family reunification. As of end March the border is completely closed for all males older than fifteen years.

RETURNS TO SYRIA: Nearly 3,900 Syrian refugees returned to Syria, mainly from Al Qa'im, Anbar Governorate, central Iraq. The main reasons given by refugees for returning are lack of freedom of movement in Al Qa'im, limited livelihoods opportunities and encouraging reports from their home areas regarding security. UNHCR is not associated with the returns and does not facilitate them but closely monitors the situation and provides counselling to potential returnees to ensure they make an informed decision and understand the possible consequences of their return.

Jordan

Key message: Jordan has maintained unwavering support for refugees throughout the past decades, offering a home to Palestinian, Iraqi and now Syrian refugees.

OUT OF THE DESERT, A CITY IS BORN: From July 2012, when Za'atri was a barren, inhospitable desert, the Jordanian authorities and UNHCR have worked day and night shifts to establish and maintain Za'atri refugee camp that currently hosts over 100,000 Syrian refugee, matching the population of the nearby city of Mafraq. A second camp has been opened and a third is being built.

VULNERABLE FROM DAY ONE, IMMEDIATE SUPPORT VITAL: Elderly, sick and traumatised Syrians arrive by their thousands every day in Jordan. Jordanian border authorities, the military and UNHCR work closely together to ensure that Syrian refugees are safe and protected from the moment they cross the border.

CHILDREN'S CRISIS: - Almost 55 per cent of Syrian refugees are children. 18 per cent are under four years.

ELDERLY AND YOUNG ARRIVING EVERY DAY: Mothers have elected to deliver early; families are arriving every day with very small babies; elderly Syrians, some centenarians, who never thought they would leave their homes and country, have fled. From the moment they arrive, staff are working day and night shifts are in Za'atri camp to assist, shelter and support refugees.

NEED FOR SOLIDARITY: It is vital that Jordan's generous policy of keeping borders open is encouraged. The hundreds of thousands of refugees Jordan has welcomed must be supported, along with the communities that have welcomed them. Many refugees living in urban settings find it difficult to afford rent and to make ends meet.

INNOVATION: 40,000 Syrian refugees are receiving monthly financial aid in Jordan. We are targetting the most vulnerable, those who cannot survive without money to pay rent and buy clothes. Retina scanning technology is used so there is no question of who is receiving the funds

URBAN REFUGEES: We estimate that 75% of the refugee population are living in Jordan's villages, towns and cities. This largely invisible population is relying heavily on the support of their Jordanian neighbours. It is vital that we support these communities more.

OUTREACH: We know that tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have not yet approached us for help, many living in Jordan's towns and cities. UNHCR and its partner, International Relief and Development, have visited over 17,000 vulnerable Syrian families.

WAR NEXT DOOR: In Deraa, the Syrian governorate bordering Jordan, hundreds of thousand people are either displaced or extremely vulnerable.

UNRELENTING ARRIVALS: up to 2,000 refugees arrive each day, placing enormous pressure on Jordan and the humanitarian actors committed to supporting them

RETURNS: In April UNHCR has witnessed an increase in the number of Syrian families electing to return home. The majority are returning to villages straddling the Jordanian border. Many are still insecure, with mortars and bombings a daily risk. The supply of bread, clean water, fuel and electricity are all unreliable. UNHCR does not facilitate or promote returns, but does offer counselling to individuals and families considering returning.

LIMITED RESOURCES: Jordan is clearly feeling the impact of the war, and is facing severe economic issues of its own. Its infrastructure, notably health and education have been severely impacted. Jordan has limited water resources. Za'atri camp requires 3.5 million litres of water every day. UNHCR and partners are working hard to support and boost local services. Syrians have access to food, fuel, health and education services that

are subsidized by the Jordanian government, incurring a significant burden on the national budget. We currently only have 20 per cent of the funds we need, placing an impossible strain on our operations.

Lebanon

Key message: Lebanon is small country of 4.2 million people, with economic, political and security issues of its own. With this refugee influx, its population has increased by 10%. It is vital that Lebanon receives economic support.

ESCALATING DEMAND, RAPID RESPONSE: Compared to January 2012 when UNHCR was receiving a few hundred registration and assistance requests each month, UNHCR is registering 2,500 people every day, with over 3,000 requesting appointments each day. We are assisting tens of thousands every week. In a coordinated response with NGOs, local leaders and municipalities, UNHCR is providing emergency and basic assistance to those waiting to be registered.

NEED FOR SOLIDARITY: Lebanon has never faltered in its commitment to keep its borders open. It is currently hosting the highest number of refugees in the region. It is vital Lebanon receives support to continue this generous policy.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS: Syrian refugees are arriving with very few resources. They are often welcomed into the homes of Lebanese families with little to share themselves, or are renting expensive, often substandard accommodation. Humanitarian assistance is vital to ensure that everyone is sheltered, protected and assisted.

IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES – The current level of funding is resulting in programmes being cut to the minimum. Healthcare is a significant part of the budget. The coverage of secondary health care will be reduced if we don't receive extra funding to only maintain coverage for life-saving operations and childbirth. Currently over 11,000 refugees benefit from primary health care support on a monthly basis, and an additional 3,000 receive secondary health care.

NO CAMPS - SHELTER CHALLENGE: 65% of refugees are living with host families, renting apartments or pieces of land where they build makeshift structures to shelter themselves. Rents are high, space limited. The number of Syrian refugees unable to pay their monthly rent is increasing and more families are finding themselves at risk of being evicted from their current accommodation. UNHCR and partners are working around the clock to rehabilitate buildings and provide shelter to the thousands of families struggling to find solutions. Lack of funding is impacting the scope of our plans to rehabilitate buildings.

CHILDREN Some 30,000 school-aged children have registered in Lebanese public schools and have been assisted with school grants. Many adolescents require further support including through remedial classes to adapt and continue attending school. Many more school-aged children have been traumatized by the conflict and have been out of school for over two years. Child labour is on the rise. Only ten per cent of the funding needed for education and children's programmes has been received, putting on hold programmes to help families get their children back to school, increase psycho-social support for traumatised children and put in place outreach schemes to identify children at risk.

FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT: There is an urgent need for concrete support to Lebanon as it struggles to maintain order and stability within its borders. Apart from the obvious impact this has in a complex political situation, it has also put enormous pressure on available resources, in particular accommodation, health and education infrastructure.

Turkey

Key message: Turkey has assumed the bulk of responsibility for assisting and protecting Syrian refugees. It is vital that Turkey is supported.

OPEN BORDERS: it is vital that Turkey is supported to maintain its commitment to open borders.

HIGH STANDARD ASSISTANCE: UNHCR considers the assistance offered by the Turkish government to Syrian refugees to be of a very high standard.

HIGH COST BOURNE BY TURKISH GOVERNMENT: Turkey has spent in excess of US\$600 million setting up camps and assisting Syrian refugees. There are currently 17 camps hosting over 190,000 Syrians. Three more camps are planned in the coming months. In addition it is estimated that there are over 200,000 Syrian refugees living in Turkey's villages, towns and cities.

NEED FOR SOLIDARITY: UNHCR and partners have contributed tens of thousands of tents, blankets and other essential items. The international community should step up assistance to humanitarian operations in Turkey which is important for the sustainability of the level of assistance provided for Syrians.

EXPERTISE AND COMMITMENT: The Turkish Government, AFAD (Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) and the Red Crescent have shown an extraordinary commitment and expertise for protecting and assisting Syrian refugees.

SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION: Over 26,000 Children are educated in camps by trained Syrian teachers. Turkish Universities are opening their doors to Syrian refugees. In addition around 27,500 Syrians have participated vocational training.

URBAN REFUGEES: The Turkish government estimates that around 200,000 Syrians are living in towns and cities throughout the country. Registration by the government of this group started in 2013. To date close to 70,000 have been registered while there are around 35,000 Syrians with appointments awaiting registration. UNHCR is providing 10 coordination centers to AFAD, where AFAD will register refugees and distribute aid.

HEALTHCARE: 857,755 patients have been treated in Turkish health facilities. Over 19,000 Syrians are currently in Turkish hospitals. 2,877 Syrian babies were born in Turkish refugee camps so far

DEDICATION TO BEST PRACTICES IN ASYLUM LAW: The new Law on Foreigners and International Protection, recently adopted by the Turkish Government, is reflection of Turkey's strong commitment to humanitarian values and principles. It provides for the establishment, under the Ministry of the Interior, of a specialized institution to manage international protection.

DESIRE TO GO HOME: The vast majority of Syrians long to go home.