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Swiss Cooperation Strategy Middle East 2015–2018





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Glossary

CHF	Swiss francs
CSPM	Conflict-sensitive programme management
DP MENAD	Directorate of Political Affairs - Middle East and North Africa Division
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
GPMD	Global Programme Migration and Development
GPWI	Global Programme Water Initiative
HR law	Human rights law
HSD	Human Security Division
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IHL	International humanitarian law
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
KR-I	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PIR	Protection in the Region
3RP	Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDC-HA	Humanitarian Aid
SEM	State Secretariat for Migration
SGBV	Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence
SHA	Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit
SRP	Strategic response plan
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Unicef	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
WoGA	Whole-of-Government Approach



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Introduction

Over the last four years, the middle-income countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria have gradually been drawn into the dynamics of violence. Today, two ferocious armed conflicts of the highest emergency level and with eminent geostrategic implications as well as the forced displacement of 14 million people are radically transforming the Middle East. Switzerland remains fully committed to supporting political solutions to the conflicts and to responding to what has become the most serious humanitarian crisis of our time.

In order to engage in this complex, protracted and highly political crisis, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) together with the Directorate of Political Affairs (DP), the Swiss embassies and cooperation offices in the region and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) have jointly developed the present Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2015–2018. For the first time in this region, Switzerland is combining various federal instruments through a “whole-of-government” approach to increase the coherence, effectiveness, impact and visibility of its contribution.

This Swiss Cooperation Strategy is the expression of Switzerland’s commitment to support these countries and their populations in their efforts to reduce casualties, alleviate human suffering, enhance resilience, mitigate crises, address migration flows, ensure respect for international law and foster inclusive and accountable political processes, as well as search for political solutions.

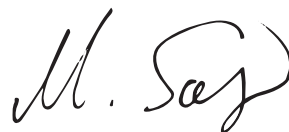
The document first reflects on the context in terms of humanitarian, development and political challenges. After reviewing the SDC Cooperation Strategy 2010–2014 and discussing its implications, this document presents the strategic orientations for 2015–2018 as well as the three domains of intervention where action will be taken jointly by the various federal offices – each of them contributing with its own resources and instruments according to its mandate. Finally, it concludes with information about programme management, monitoring and steering.

Bern, June 2015



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1 Context

As in other Arab countries, civil protests emerged in Syria in early 2011, with the demand for more social justice, economic and political reforms. The violent crackdown on these originally peaceful demonstrations rapidly escalated into an armed conflict. Multiple fronts have since opened up, pitting the Syrian government against opposition groups and various opposition groups against each other. At the time of writing, the Syrian conflict is characterised by the presence of multiple armed groups, high fragmentation of territorial control and battlefields, and large-scale violence against civilians by all conflicting parties.

Since the 2003 US invasion, Iraq has not been able to build strong representative national institutions and good governance has remained elusive. In 2014, an intense armed conflict re-emerged following the self-proclamation of a caliphate by the extremist group “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL).

The systematic violence committed against civilians has forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes and seek protection elsewhere: by June 2015, more than 3 million people are internally displaced within Iraq; in Syria, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reaches a staggering 8 million, representing more than 40% of the country’s remaining population. The neighbouring countries, for their part, are grappling to come to terms with the massive refugee influx: The Kurdistan region of Iraq has accepted over 1 million Iraqi refugee seekers and 250,000 Syrian refugees; in Jordan and Lebanon, 600,000 and 1.2 million Syrians respectively have been registered as refugees by UNHCR. As for Turkey, over 1.8 million Syrian refugees have found shelter there, making it the country with the largest refugee population in the world.¹

The stability of the host countries, relatively fragile to begin with, is being tested by the tremendous challenges linked with accommodating the incoming refugees. A majority of refugees settle in urban areas, increasing the pressure on basic services such as shelter, water, health and education but also income opportunities, in turn fuelling tensions between the refugee and host communities. Increasingly, the presence of refugees is perceived as a threat to national security – as a consequence, Jordan and Lebanon have intensified their border management in 2014, restricting the number of refugees allowed to enter the country.

Today, the Middle East is facing a complex, protracted, full-scale regional crisis. The parallel conflicts in Syria and Iraq have both been qualified by the United Nations as the highest level of humanitarian emergency. At the same time, the protracted Israeli-Arab conflict, the unresolved fate of the Palestine refugees and the conflict in Yemen remain additional fragility factors for the entire region.



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¹ Cf. UNHCR Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2014.

2 Review of the 2010–2014 Cooperation Strategy

The SDC Cooperation Strategy 2010–2014, elaborated at a time when all of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq were considered middle-income countries, had as its main objective to “contribute to safe, viable and peaceful living conditions for refugees, IDPs, vulnerable groups, vulnerable migrants as well as communities at risk of disasters in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria”. The three domains of intervention were defined as Basic Services & Livelihoods, Protection, and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Outcomes under the 2010–2014 Strategy:

Basic Services and Livelihood: Living conditions are improved for refugees, IDPs, vulnerable groups and vulnerable migrants.

Protection: Capacity and conditions to exercise rights are improved for refugees, IDPs, vulnerable groups and vulnerable migrants.

Disaster Risk Reduction: Coping mechanisms to address human-made, natural and technological crises (including water scarcity) are enhanced.

Due to the fast-changing context, with emerging armed conflicts leading to a massive change in needs and priorities, the SDC Cooperation Strategy and its interventions had to be significantly adapted.



2.1. Lessons learned

Switzerland was one of the early responders to the crises in the region. It was swift and flexible in adapting its programming to the increasing needs and risks. The broad definition of the strategy's domains provided sufficient space to react in a flexible way to the evolving humanitarian needs. Additional budgets and pressure to disburse the newly allocated monies within a very short timeframe resulted in a large portfolio of projects. The continuous degradation of the humanitarian context, along with the increasingly protracted nature of the crises, called for a set of programme adaptations both on operational and managerial level. Among the key adjustments to be mentioned:

- » Despite its being a small actor, Switzerland's distinct position in a highly political, regional crisis stems from its neutral and principled action. This position should be reinforced, implying a focus on programming where interventions along Switzerland's strengths have a clear added value in supporting access to basic services and reducing factors of fragility.

- » Accordingly, and taking into account the fact that the Middle East is one of the most water-scarce region in the world, the Swiss Cooperation Programme will have a more formal focus on the theme of water, which relates both to an immediate humanitarian need and a key fragility factor in the region. Switzerland has a distinct comparative advantage in the water domain, given its expertise and its capacity to use the synergies between its humanitarian and political interventions.

- » Disaster risk reduction, a successful focus domain during the 2010–2014 Cooperation Strategy, will continue to form an integral part of the new programme, particularly for interventions in Jordan and Lebanon. The topic remains relevant as the important influx of refugees seriously increases the risk of heavy casualties in cases of natural disasters.

- » Conflict sensitive programme management (CSPM) has become a prerequisite for any intervention in the region, and will be applied consistently throughout the Swiss programme.

- » The Swiss programme will benefit from a joint context analysis, done by all involved federal actors. In particular, it will serve to optimise synergy potential in the following aspects: i) initiating and maintaining dialogue aiming at finding political solutions that address the key driving factors of conflict; ii) provide concrete support and assistance and iii) defend international humanitarian law and human rights, thereby increasing the protection space for conflict-affected and vulnerable populations.

- » While programming needs to result from a regional context analysis, specific interventions will be planned based on country-specific assessments and priorities.

- » Programming, projects and partnerships increasingly have to be of mid- to long-term design and will aim to enhance resilience by reducing fragility factors and fostering transformative potentials.



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3 Strategic orientation 2015–2018



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3.1. Added-value of Switzerland's engagement

The current context calls for a comprehensive aid approach, entailing the simultaneous use of different cooperation instruments and the combination of humanitarian as well as resilience and conflict transformation-oriented interventions. For this reason and for the first time in this region, the Swiss Cooperation Strategy Middle East 2015-2018 is designed in a whole-of-government spirit (WoGA), which includes all Swiss federal actors operating in the region.

Further, Switzerland's engagement relies on a set of comparative advantages, giving its engagement in the region a distinct added value:

» Switzerland's known credibility regarding international humanitarian law and human rights, its credibility as a reliable, efficient and neutral actor without hidden agenda have been key to opening doors for delivering humanitarian aid and implementing development projects, to taking an active role in humanitarian advocacy and donor coordination as well as to initiating political and humanitarian dialogue. Switzerland can continue to play and reinforce its distinct role in launching and enhancing dialogue with a view to improving the humanitarian and political situation.

» In this region, Switzerland has the comparative advantage of being not only a state and a donor, but also an implementing actor. With its presence and engagement – thanks to its embassies, field cooperation offices, direct actions and experts deployed to various UN agencies – the Swiss Cooperation Programme is implemented close to the targeted populations. This allows Swiss actors to have a deeper understanding of the context and a privileged contact to relevant multilateral and national actors.

» The fact that Switzerland does not ban contacts with armed groups is crucial for enabling humanitarian diplomacy on access and facilitation of political dialogue. Switzerland maintains the principled position that for humanitarian and peace-building purposes, contacts with all relevant actors are necessary to improve the humanitarian situation and to contribute to peaceful transformations of the conflicts.

» The various federal departments and offices involved in the region, adopting a whole-of-government approach, are in an ideal position to address the region's main problems in a focused and complementary way through the different instruments developed on the basis of the services' respective mandates.

» Interventions are designed in such a way that they comply with the quality requirements of action that is effective, efficient, quality and result-oriented, flexible, close to the beneficiaries and focused.

3.2. Overall goal

Considering the *lessons learned* mentioned in the previous chapter and Switzerland's added value on a programmatic level, the Swiss engagement for 2015–2018 will strive towards the following overall goal:

Switzerland contributes to safe, viable and peaceful living conditions for conflict-affected and vulnerable people, reducing fragility, preventing and transforming conflicts.

To the extent possible, the Swiss Cooperation Programme will be aligned with multilateral and national response plans.

3.3. Domains of intervention

In continuity with key aspects of the Cooperation Strategy 2010–2014 and in order to achieve the overall goal defined for the new Cooperation Strategy, Switzerland will apply and focus its instruments in the three following domains of intervention:





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Domain 1: Basic Needs & Services – save lives, reduce vulnerabilities and enhance resilience². Vulnerable populations are to be supported in improving their access to basic needs and services. Self-reliance and coping mechanisms are to be enhanced while preparedness, response and rehabilitation mechanisms are to be fostered for addressing natural and man-made disaster risks.

Impact hypothesis: By providing immediate emergency relief and long-term capacity development for basic services providers and civil society actors, lives of conflict-affected people will be saved, the countries and communities in the region will be better prepared to cope with the refugee and IDP caseload and to maintain the levels of basic service delivery based on good governance principles, and the population will be in a better position to cope with the distress and to develop a positive approach towards the future.

This domain is implemented by SDC, HSD and SEM.

² According to the 3RP, “resilience is the ability of individuals, households, communities and institutions to anticipate, withstand, recover and transform from shocks and crises.” See Regional Strategic Overview – Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015–2016, p.17.

Domain 2: Protection – strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and human rights and contribute to conflict transformation, as well as to a protective environment for conflict-affected and vulnerable populations, including IDPs, refugees and migrants.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme will engage with state and non-state actors to bring about their adherence to and compliance with international humanitarian law and to increase their efforts and capacities to actively contribute to safe environments in which human rights and refugee law are respected. Inclusive processes seeking to transform existing conflicts at the local, national or regional level, initiatives in the area of transitional justice, support for political solutions to the conflict and engagement with key actors on good governance are expected to lead to a reduction in tensions and a trend towards peaceful societies.

A variety of multilateral and bilateral interventions as well as expert secondments will be carried out to achieve the domain's objective, including diplomatic initiatives and the facilitation of processes as well as policy dialogue. Capacity building, awareness-raising based on the Protection of Civilians concept³, advocacy towards both duty-bearers and rights-holders as well as support for the UN system's efforts to find political solutions to the existing conflicts will be cornerstones of this domain of intervention.

Impact hypothesis: Promoting a protective and safe environment for conflict-affected and vulnerable people will contribute to reducing the massive forced displacements within and beyond the region, prevent the further deepening of societal divides, increase the chances for political solutions to be developed with the participation of local populations, and contribute to safer migration and decent working conditions for migrants.

Additionally, Switzerland's support, through technical support for policies (including in the context of labour migration) and supporting services to vulnerable migrants, will ensure that the development potential of migrants (playing a strong role in the livelihoods of communities of origin) can be maximised, and that protection is guaranteed in line with international and national labour conventions.

FDFA (SDC, HSD and PD MENAD) and SEM will be the main Swiss actors active in this domain. The DPPS may provide in kind contributions.



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³ The Swiss "Strategy for the Protection of Civilians in armed conflicts 2013-2017" refers to the IASC definition and states that "the protection of civilians in armed conflicts involves all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of people who do not (or no longer) take part in hostilities, in accordance with both the letter and the spirit of relevant laws.



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Domain 3: Water – enhance resilient, sustainable and conflict-sensitive water management.

Interventions will aim to increase access to safe water, sanitation and the efficient use of water for food production, improve the basis for integrated water resources management as well as mitigate water-related disaster risks.

Multi- and bilateral cooperation arrangements as well as secondments to UN agencies will be complemented with directly implemented projects by the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit. Policy dialogue and water-related diplomacy (Blue Peace processes) and capacity building of local institutions will be the instruments applied.

Impact hypothesis: By improving access to water and sanitation, the conflict-affected and vulnerable populations in the region will stand a better chance of achieving safe and viable living conditions. Further, by fostering capacities for integrated water management, the communities and countries in the region will use water resources in a more sustainable and equitable manner. In this way, they will prevent water from being a major aggravating conflict factor that might lead to increased violent confrontations.

The FDFA (HA, GPWI, HSD), SEM and other Swiss actors will be active in this domain.



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3.4. Transversal themes

Gender: Violent conflicts often aggravate the existing gender inequalities but do not affect women and men in the same way: while men are at higher risk of being killed or arrested as a direct consequence of armed conflict, women and girls are more likely to face sexual and gender-based violence, social exclusion and restrictions on their mobility (culture or security related), which negatively impacts their access to vital assistance, education or employment. Gender dimensions will therefore be taken into account in all aspects of implementation of the Swiss Cooperation Programme in order to address the different gender needs and work towards long-term gender equality. The issue of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), women's participation in conflict transformation and humanitarian response will receive particular attention when working on gender equality in this context (cf. Swiss National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁴).

⁴ The Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peace-keeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Good Governance: At all intervention levels of the Swiss Cooperation Programme – project implementation, coordination and policy dialogue – the principles of accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, participation, efficiency, protection and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights are to be considered. When dealing with authorities and civil society organisations regarding reconstruction and rehabilitation, governance will be an especially important concern. Furthermore, good governance will play a key role from the perspective of conflict transformation.

DRR: The Swiss Cooperation Programme's contribution to DRR will be aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 adopted by the UN World Conference in March 2015 as well as by the interventions carried out under the previous Cooperation Strategy. When planning and implementing projects, the domains of intervention will take into account disaster risks and foster an enabling environment for integrated risk management (IRM) at the national and sub-national levels.

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4 Management and programme implementation



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4.1. Contributions of Swiss federal actors

The contributions to the Swiss Cooperation Strategy of the various federal actors will be focused on their corresponding fields of expertise:

SEM will mainly contribute to the Swiss Cooperation Programme via the PiR platform with interventions and expertise aiming at assisting countries of first refuge in protecting refugees and IDPs within the region, thus mainly contributing to Protection.

HSD will contribute with interventions and expertise to initiate and support processes to reduce and transform conflicts and promote human rights as well as strengthen the protection capacities for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable migrants within the region. HSD will mainly contribute to interventions within the Protection domain, but to some extent also within the domains Water (Blue Peace) and Basic Needs & Services.

PD MENAD and the Swiss embassies in Amman, Ankara and Beirut will contribute with analytical expertise and take the lead in ensuring a shared and profound context analysis.

SDC will contribute with interventions and expertise to all three domains of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy, making use of its humanitarian aid and cooperation development instruments (MENA) as well as

of the Global Programmes, especially Migration and Development (GPMD) and Water Initiatives (GPWI). Through its staff in the region, SDC will ensure information exchange and facilitate the identification, implementation, coordination and monitoring of interventions according to the requirements and needs of the different federal offices.

4.2. Implementation modalities

Switzerland takes an active part in donor coordination and, when opportunities arise, takes a leading role. It cooperates whenever possible with like-minded donors and encourages emerging donors to be included in the coordination mechanisms.

Switzerland will contribute to the regional shared analysis and coordinated whole of crisis approach by supporting the regional OCHA office as well as other regional relevant coordination, harmonisation and alignment mechanisms, such as the 3RP (Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan) and SRP (Strategic Response Plan) processes. UNRWA will continue to be the main regional institutional partner for Switzerland's support for Palestine refugees. While the lead in relation to and financing for UNRWA is mainly channelled through the Swiss Cooperation Programme in Jerusalem, the Middle East Programme will contribute to the institutional development and dialogue through SDC staff based in Amman and Beirut.

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Together with competent partners, Switzerland is engaged in the development of innovative policies and contributes to the strengthening, implementation and further development of international norms as well as politically binding instruments for the better protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

Switzerland is engaged in the multilateral dialogue on migration to further develop the normative framework, to set standards and to implement instruments for effective migration governance, which respects and promotes the rights of migrants, refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

The intervention modalities of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy will entail:

» **Contribution to multilateral interventions** with a focus on SDC-HA multilateral priority partners active in the domains of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy, thus mainly ICRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA, WFP but including also UN-Habitat and UNDP for resilience-focused interventions. Contributions will consist of core and earmarked multilateral funding, in-kind and **secondments of SHA experts**. Assistance to Palestine refugees will be channelled through SDC's core contribution to UNRWA, accompanied by close monitoring and institutional dialogue. This modality acknowledges the important role of multilateral actors in conflict settings and provides the opportunity to access and operate in security contexts that are beyond Switzerland's own capacities.

» **Bilateral project partnerships** (contributions, partnerships and mandates to implementing civil society organisations, INGOs, research institutions and national authorities where feasible): This modality builds on existing partnerships and acknowledges the important role of civil society in conflict transformation, support for vulnerable populations and in the outreach and capacity-development role of non-governmental actors in conflict prone settings.

» **Direct project implementation** through the deployment of Swiss staff for accompanying and supporting processes or projects. This modality respects the principle of subsidiarity and is applied where it has a strong comparative advantage and can offer internal expertise.

» SDC will continue to engage in **humanitarian diplomacy**, especially related to improving access and the working environment for aid agencies, and in **policy dialogue** with multilateral aid agencies with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of aid coordination.

4.3. Human resources

The Swiss regional cooperation office in Amman, including the Swiss cooperation programme office in Beirut and a regional advisor in Ankara are responsible for the operational management, implementation and monitoring of SDC's contribution to the Swiss Cooperation Strategy, as well as for supporting the implementation and monitoring of SEM and HSD projects based on specific delegation agreements.

The regional cooperation structure is planned to be integrated with the Swiss embassies in the course of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy.



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4.4. Financial resources

Switzerland intends to remain solidary with the people affected by this regional humanitarian crisis. The indicative financial envelope for the 4-year period totals CHF 250 million, to be constituted and distributed as follows:

	Regional incl. Turkey	Syria	Jordan	Lebanon	Iraq	Total in CHF million
Multilateral UN/ICRC	10	30	10	20	30	100
Bilateral (geographic focus):	15	40	32	40	8	135
Basic Needs & Services	4	18	14	18	3	57
Protection	4	6	4	6	3	23
Water	7	16	14	16	2	55
Cooperation / Program Office(s) costs	15					15
Total	40	70	42	60	38	250

Given the rapid development of the crisis and its impact on the region and depending on an increase or reduction in opportunities for programming, this strategy will require high flexibility. The above financial targets along country and area of intervention lines are therefore only indicative. Moreover, additional funding may become available in the course of the Swiss Cooperation Programme.

5 Strategic steering

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring the Swiss Cooperation Strategy serves the two-fold objective of programme steering for ensuring the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Swiss Cooperation Programme, as well as accounting for results.

Steering and coordination

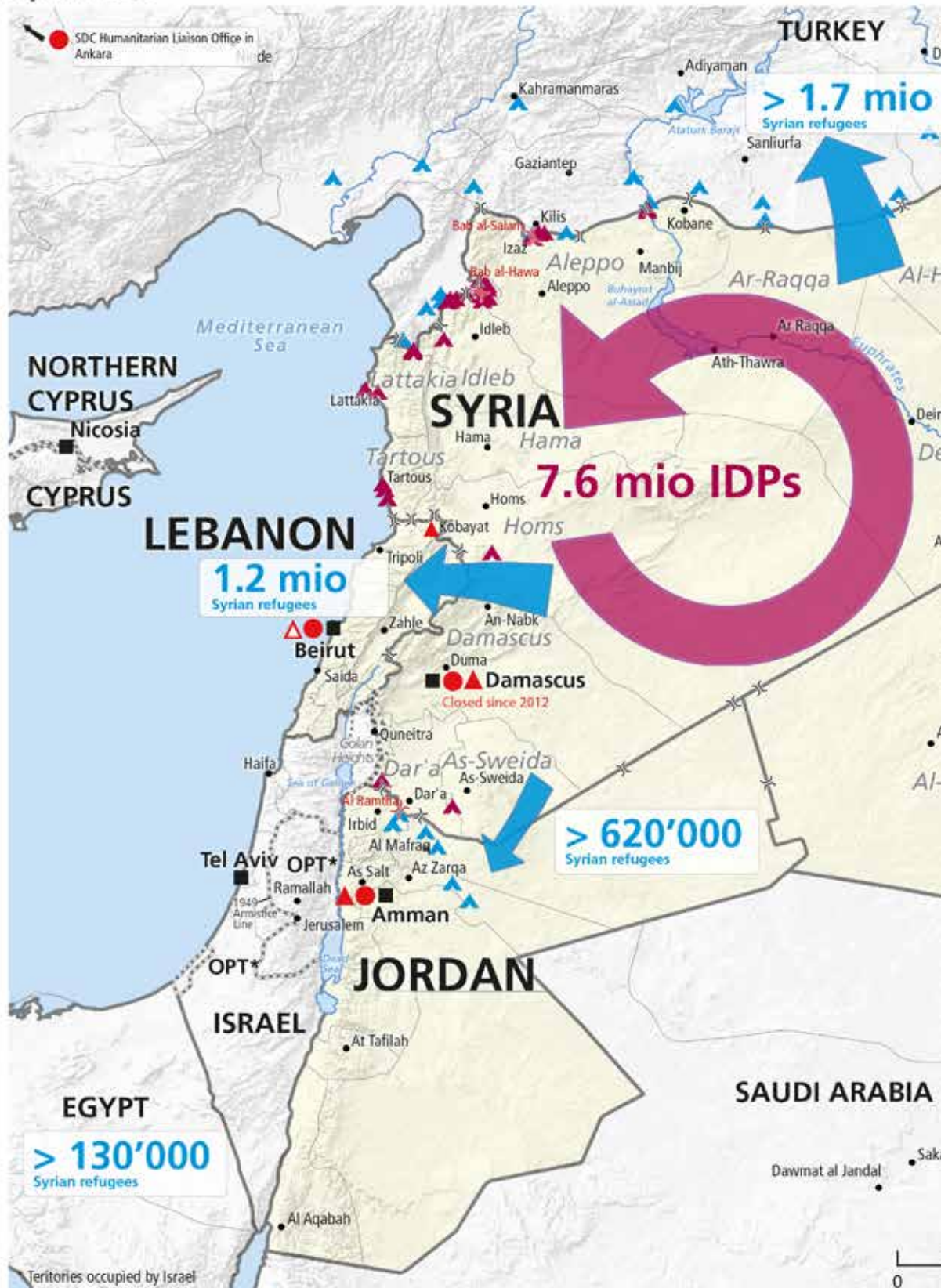
All involved actors will meet at least on a bi-annual basis to discuss the context developments as well to monitor the outcomes of the interventions. At the end of 2016, a Mid-Term Review will assess the need to adapt the Swiss Cooperation Strategy to contextual developments.

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6 Map

Protection Crisis and Swiss Presence in t April 2015



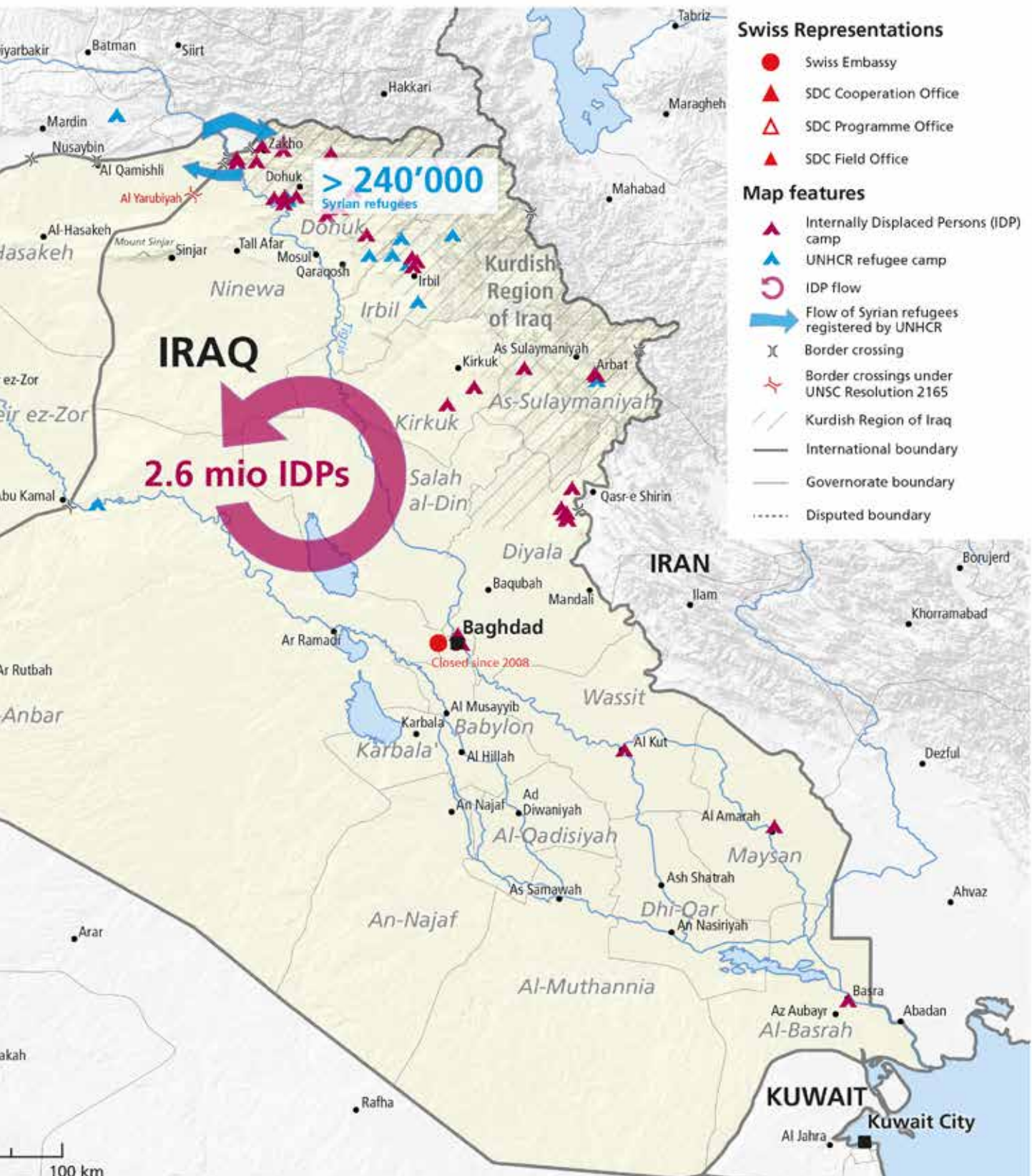
¹ Swiss Presence in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is not represented on this map as it is part of a separate Swiss Cooperation Program. Sources: Natural Earth, GeoNames, CGIAR Consortium for Spatial Information (CGIAR-CSI); Thematical data Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), OCHA, WFP, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster. Copyright: © 2014 Natural Earth; Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License, © United Nations 2014. General Remarks: Some international boundaries are not settled yet. The boundaries and names as well as the designations used on this map are not necessarily endorsed by the Swiss Confederation.

the Middle East¹



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Programme (see Swiss Cooperation Strategy in oPt)
and Cooperation, Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC), US Department of State, IOM-DTM, UNHCR, HIU,

Map commissioned for:

Data compiled by:

SDC, Humanitarian Aid and
Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit
FDFA, STS CMC-Geoservices

do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Switzerland

Imprint

Publisher:

Federal department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

3003 Bern

www.deza.admin.ch

Layout:

FDFA Information/Visual Communication, Bern

Cover photograph:

Pascal Mora

Order:

www.sdc.admin.ch (heading "Publications")

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Bern, 2015