

Facts and Figures

Number of people in need of humanitarian aid:

(OCHA 2023 and UNHCR 2023)

- 15.3 million people in need in Syria (including 6.8 million IDPs) out of a current population of 21.1 million
- 5.5 million registered Syrian refugees in the region of 6.8 million worldwide

Swiss humanitarian pledge for the Syria crisis in 2023:

- CHF **60 million** – for Syria and its neighbouring countries Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Türkiye
- In 2023 Switzerland in addition contributed CHF 8.5 million for the earthquake response in Türkiye and Syria

SDC has been active in Syria and the region since 2011.

Swiss presence in the region

- Embassy in Amman, Jordan
- Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon
- Project Office in Zahlé, Lebanon
- Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye
- 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. The conflict triggered one of the world's worst displacement crises and led to the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, health facilities, water supply and irrigation systems. The situation deteriorated further in recent years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cholera outbreaks, a lasting economic crisis and other reasons.

A series of devastating earthquakes struck southern Türkiye and northern Syria in February 2023, which further exacerbated the disastrous situation. The United Nations estimates that 8.8 million people were impacted by the earthquake in Syria to varying degrees. Prior to the earthquake, it was estimated that in 2023 15.3 million people required humanitarian assistance throughout the country. Delivering aid remains challenging, as the humanitarian community is facing restricted access and security risks, as well as bureaucratic hurdles. Switzerland implements a "Whole of Syria" approach, helping people throughout Syria according to their needs and independently of the lines of conflict.

In the face of the devastating effects of the conflict on the entire region and specifically on Syria's neighbouring countries, Switzerland has defined a Regional Cooperation Programme for 2019–2024. The programme aims to protect the people affected by the conflict and to alleviate their suffering. It encompasses Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Türkiye and focusses on four priority areas: protection and migration; education and income; conflict prevention and peace promotion; water and sanitation. Gender equality and good governance continue to be transversal themes. It also supports the development efforts of Switzerland's partner countries in the region, notably in Jordan and Lebanon. The programme links international cooperation with migration policy and highlights Switzerland's active engagement in conflict prevention and peace promotion.

Switzerland has provided continuous support to affected populations in the region since 2011. SDC pursues the following approaches 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)
- Expert deployments from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) to partner organisations (specialists in construction, protection, water and sanitation and cash assistance etc.)
- Humanitarian diplomacy

The SDC is supporting various projects in Syria and the neighboring countries. Some of the projects are presented below:

1. Direct Action by Switzerland

Access to quality water for vulnerable communities in Lebanon

Displacement as a result of the conflict 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), an 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.

Humanitarian Assistance for the People Affected by the Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria

The devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria of 6 February 2023 claimed the lives of over 57,800 people and forced over three million persons to leave their homes. Immediately after the earthquakes, Switzerland mobilised the Swiss Rescue Chain and subsequently sent an emergency response team with specialists from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) to Türkiye. In total, the SDC contributed with CHF 8.5 million in additional funding.



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2. Assistance via Humanitarian Partners

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 empowered to make decisions about their life, further education, secure future work and contribute to society.

Supporting the resilience efforts of conflict-affected communities

In northern Syria, nearly 4.5 million people are unable to meet their basic needs for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food, and livelihoods. SDC works with a partner to support conflict-affected population to strengthen their resilience, 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 the rehabilitation of waste water networks to improve sanitation and overall community health. Additionally, the project increases livelihood opportunities through vocational training and support to local businesses.

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 child protection services, mental health and psychosocial support as well as education initiatives. Children benefit from educational activities with structured socio-emotional learning sessions which promote children's holistic development and wellbeing. Alongside these initiatives, SC provides child-led recreational activities and protection services in Child Friendly Spaces aiming at strengthening positive coping strategies, peer support and problem-solving skills.

Protection and economic resilience for survivors of gender-based violence in Türkiye

Türkiye hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees, among whom gender-based violence (GBV) is a recurrent issue. Our partner NGO Danish Refugee Council (DRC) supports GBV survivors and women at risk with protection services and offers them opportunities to generate an income and to become more independent.

3. 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. Switzerland currently has a presence with a total of 9 experts who are seconded to UN-agencies in the region. They support international efforts to ensure access to drinking water and basic sanitation, provide protection and cash assistance for the most disadvantaged population groups and are engaged in disaster risk reduction endeavors.

4. 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 impartial actor. For the years 2023-2024, Switzerland acts as the co-penholder (with Brazil) for the Syria humanitarian file in the UN Security Council. Switzerland is actively engaged in advocacy work, the promotion of humanitarian dialogue and international humanitarian law. Switzerland will continue to promote access to and protection of people in need as well as a conducive working environment for humanitarian actors.

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