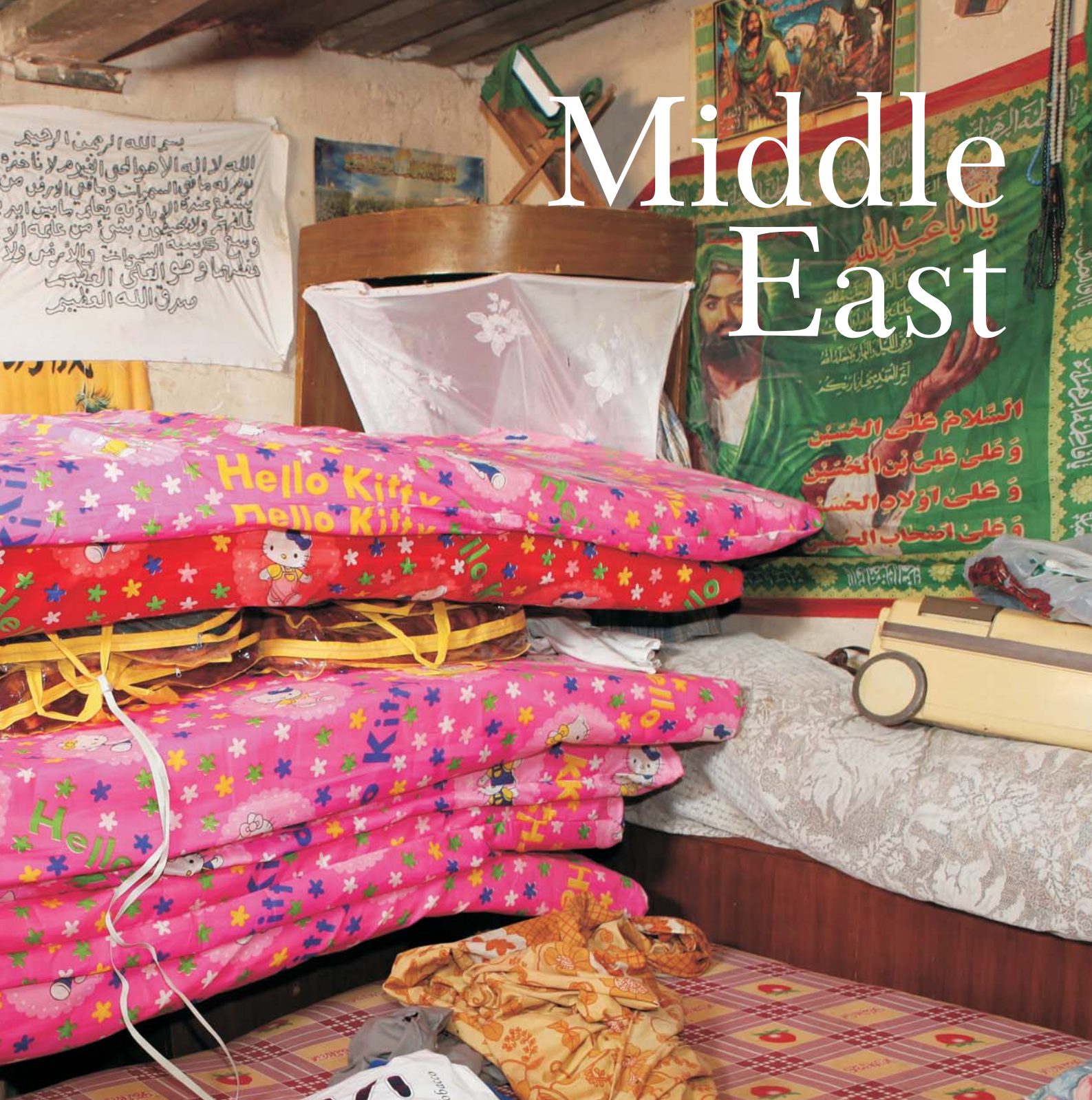


A mother and her daughter in the bedroom of their shelter in Baghdad.



- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Syrian Arab Republic
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen



Middle East

| Working environment |

Recent developments in the Middle East have made the task of protecting and assisting refugees and others of concern much more challenging. Unstable conditions in the region have led to security constraints, continued displacement and an increase in the vulnerability of a number of refugee groups. The situation is also complicated by the protracted nature of many refugee situations in the region and a growing number of mixed-migration movements.

Within the region, only Egypt, Israel and Yemen have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. Issues related to asylum continue to be governed by national laws on foreigners. State priorities are often driven by security concerns, which may have an impact on asylum policies. Despite these constraints, the majority of the States in the

region provide protection and assistance to a large number of refugees and other people of concern based on established religious solidarity, long-standing traditions of hospitality and ethnic linkages.

The humanitarian situation of displaced Iraqis continues to pose a heavy burden on host governments and represents a challenge for the wider international community. Even as Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic struggle with their own economic and social challenges, they continue to host hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, as well as the protracted presence of large numbers of Palestinian refugees, inflicting a heavy burden on their economies.



The international community has a significant role to play in mitigating the effects of this burden, which in turn would have a stabilizing effect on the region. While the number of Iraqi refugees in Syria has decreased due to returns and movements to third countries, UNHCR's financial assistance programme will need to continue to support an increasingly vulnerable refugee population. The number of Iraqi arrivals in Jordan, meanwhile, is on the rise.

While there has been a significant decline in violence in Iraq over the past three years, sporadic violence, lack of basic services and limited employment opportunities have not only restricted the level of voluntary returns, but have triggered continued outflows to neighbouring States.

In partnership with the authorities, UNHCR will continue to assist Iraqi returnees under its repatriation scheme and help those displaced inside Iraq. However, it will move the focus of its shelter interventions away from the construction of permanent shelter to increasing support for government efforts to find solutions for the thousands of returnees now residing in squalid squatter camps throughout the country. The majority of Iraqi refugees return home without taking advantage of UNHCR's help, preferring to maintain ties with the asylum country while assessing the conditions in Iraq.

UNHCR's contingency and operational plans have been enhanced to respond to potential additional displacement.

In Yemen, UNHCR has registered some 200,000 refugees, the vast majority from Somalia. Despite its own security and economic challenges, Yemen continues to generously receive Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians who make the perilous sea journey across the Gulf of Aden in search of protection and assistance. Unless Yemen receives significant international

support for existing and anticipated programmes, its noteworthy record in upholding its international protection commitments will be difficult to maintain. In addition, Yemen is beset by conflict in the north, centre and south of the country, where hundreds of thousands of IDPs continue to need assistance.

Large numbers of people, mainly from countries in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to cross the Egypt-Israel border through the Sinai desert with the help of smugglers.

Strategy in 2012

UNHCR's strategy in the region has been adjusted to respond to the protracted displacement of Iraqis as well as the fresh challenges emanating from the new developments in the Middle East. The Office will seek to address protection and assistance gaps identified through comprehensive needs assessments by strengthening partnerships with host governments and relevant regional and national organizations. Most of the unmet needs can be attributed to funding shortfalls and the lack of legal protection frameworks. UNHCR will also gradually introduce a biometric identity verification system throughout the region at the registration stage to enhance accountability of assistance and protection programmes.

While pursuing durable solutions where possible, UNHCR continues to advocate with host governments for the need to increase self-reliance opportunities for refugees and others of concern. UNHCR is also strengthening its partnerships with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) in order to address existing challenges. In cooperation with national and regional organizations, UNHCR

will engage in campaigns to raise awareness of statelessness as well as build capacity and conduct research. Finally, as part of its 60th anniversary activities, UNHCR will redouble its efforts to persuade more States to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and develop national asylum systems.

Constraints

Security concerns dominate asylum policies and practices, and the absence of regional and national legal frameworks to deal with population displacement continue to be a major hindrance to progress in institutionalizing protection in the region. The current unrest in several countries in the region poses a challenge for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Resettlement departures have likewise suffered due to stricter security checks by resettlement States and limitations on their access to refugee sites. This has led to significant backlogs and higher than anticipated numbers of refugees remaining in these countries.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Iraq**, the **Syrian Arab Republic**, **Jordan** and **Yemen** are described in detail in separate chapters.

In addition to its activities for displaced Iraqis, UNHCR assists several thousand refugees of other nationalities in the region. The majority of these refugees originate from Eritrea the

Islamic Republic of Iran, Somalia, Sudan and Turkey. The most vulnerable among them receive basic humanitarian assistance from UNHCR, which also conducts registration and refugee status determination and seeks durable solutions, including resettlement.

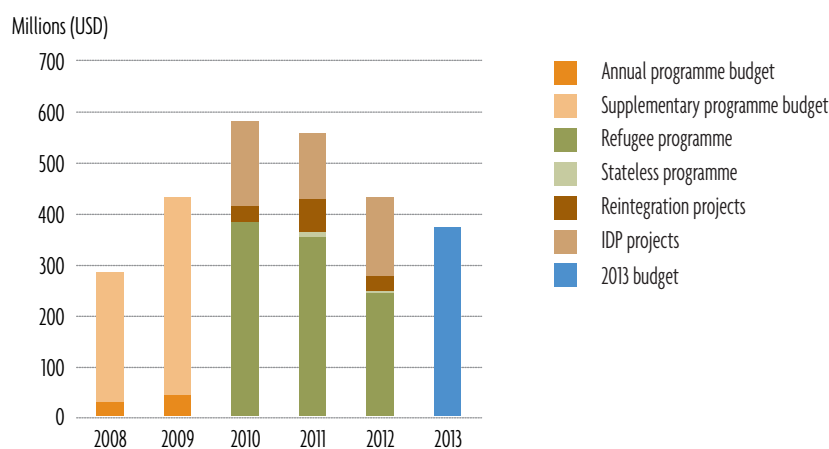
UNHCR has a long-established presence in the **Gulf Region** through its Regional Office in Saudi Arabia, Liaison Office in Kuwait and External Relations Hub in the United Arab Emirates. Establishing solid partnerships, public awareness, fund-raising, RSD and durable solutions—primarily resettlement—are the main components of the programme in the Gulf region, whereby resettlement processing is facilitated by the Regional Resettlement Hub in Lebanon. Fund-raising and media activities have been strengthened by the recent establishment of the External Relations Hub in the United Arab Emirates.

At the same time, strategic partnerships with national and regional organizations will be strengthened and efforts to reduce statelessness will be intensified by means of public-awareness campaigns, capacity-building and research initiatives.

Israel continues to receive and accept asylum-seekers, the majority of whom are of sub-Saharan African origin. Some 1,000 persons per month cross the Egypt-Israel Sinai border in an irregular manner. These arrivals have demonstrated the need for the Israeli Government to increase its capacity to manage mixed migration flows, as well as to establish an adequate legislative and procedural framework.

Financial information

UNHCR's budget in the Middle East 2008 – 2013



The budget for 2012 amounts to USD 430.8 million (USD 339.9 million for the Iraq Situation and USD 70.8 million for other operations in Middle East). This represents a net decline of 15 per cent from 2011, mainly due to the phasing down of activities in Iraq and neighbouring countries, partially offset by increased in activities in Yemen (the IDP situation), Egypt and the Gulf. More than half the budget (54 per cent) is devoted to refugee operations, followed by IDP situations (38 per cent), reintegration (7 per cent) and statelessness (1 per cent).

UNHCR Budget in the Middle East (USD)

OPERATION	2011 REVISED BUDGET	2012					2013
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	TOTAL	
Iraq	210,598,239	29,959,528	1,102,037	29,914,264	129,524,172	190,500,000	143,500,000
Israel	2,782,934	3,127,545	0	0	0	3,127,545	2,796,607
Jordan	43,620,558	42,522,390	0	0	0	42,522,390	38,000,000
Lebanon	14,399,303	12,076,970	314,011	0	0	12,390,982	12,356,500
Saudi Arabia Regional Office	4,063,149	4,087,894	182,801	0	0	4,270,695	3,500,000
Syrian Arab Republic	118,179,121	94,029,983	495,299	0	0	94,525,282	87,400,000
United Arab Emirates	3,055,460	3,634,944	126,418	0	0	3,761,362	3,606,284
Yemen	60,067,394	34,341,463	0	0	25,355,979	59,697,441	59,697,441
Regional activities	43,218,085	19,100,000	900,000	0	0	20,000,000	20,000,001
Total	499,984,242	242,880,717	3,120,566	29,914,264	154,880,150	430,795,697	370,856,833