

North-west Syria Cross-Border Operation

November 2024

The February 2023 earthquakes worsened a long-standing humanitarian crisis in north-west Syria, where 3.4 million out of 4.5 million people are internally displaced, with 2 million residing in camps.

IDPs face critical needs, worsened by insecurity due to hostilities, limited shelter capacity, and lack of access to basic services.

UNHCR and partners have scaled up the provision of dignified shelters and protection services to support those affected by the ongoing conflict. UNHCR has strengthened the coordination of the three clusters under its responsibility to closely monitor humanitarian developments and inform inter-agency emergency preparedness and response.

POPULATION OF CONCERN



3.4 million
internally displaced people*

*Source: CCCM Cluster July 2024

UNHCR CROSS-BORDER OPERATION STAFFING**

7 National Staff
14 International Staff

**Based in Gaziantep, Türkiye

OBJECTIVES OF THE CROSS-BORDER OPERATION

Support the coordination of the cross-border humanitarian response through the Cluster system

Identify protection risks and assistance needs and inform the overall response

Provide protection services and emergency assistance with core relief items and shelter solutions

Build capacity of local humanitarian organizations

Fill critical gaps in the basic needs of IDPs where required and feasible

SITUATION OVERVIEW

After over 14 years of conflict, humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate in north-west Syria due to the ongoing hostilities, a worsening economic crisis and the impact of the February 2023 earthquakes. Approximately 4.5 million people, of which an estimated 3.4 million are internally displaced (IDPs), are in need of critical lifesaving assistance. Camps and self-settled sites still host some 2 million IDPs; around 80% are women and children and particularly vulnerable to many risks, including gender-based violence.

Following UN Security Council Resolution 2165 in July 2014, UNHCR launched its cross-border humanitarian response from Gaziantep, Türkiye, to north-west Syria. The cross-border operation continued to operate under the authority of security council resolutions until July 2023, when the UN Security Council failed to renew the resolution. Subsequently the Government of Syria granted consent for continued UN access and assistance to north-west Syria through three border crossings, namely Bab Al-Hawa, Bab Al-Salam, and Al-Ra'ee. Since then, consent has been extended every three to six months. Despite the challenging context, UNHCR maintained a continuous presence, providing vital assistance. During 2024, UNHCR has undertaken 29 cross-border missions to north-west Syria to better understand the operating environment and strengthen its operation.

Partnership and Coordination

As of November 2024, UNHCR is working with eight partner organizations (six national NGOs and two INGOs) to assist displaced people in north-west Syria through the provision of core relief items (CRIs), shelter support, cash assistance and protection services. In addition, UNHCR is leading the coordination of the Protection, Shelter/Non-Food Items (Shelter/NFI) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Clusters.

Strategic Directions

Ensuring robust & effective cluster coordination: As the leader of the Protection, Shelter/NFI, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Clusters, UNHCR guarantees effective coordination, timely response, and collective action in emergency situations. UNHCR sits on the Humanitarian Leadership Group (HLG) which is responsible for the overall coordination of the response under the direction of the Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator.

Enhancing community-based protection & legal assistance services: UNHCR is revamping its protection programs to provide more effective and targeted humanitarian assistance, focusing on community-based initiatives that drive tangible results. This strategic shift involves streamlining efforts towards structured interventions, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently to address specific needs¹. A key aspect of this approach is strengthening existing eight community centers and 15 community protection networks to enhance risk identification and response strategies. Additionally, UNHCR is bolstering legal assistance through comprehensive support services, including administrative, technical, and in-kind aid, to create a robust safety net for vulnerable populations.

Scaling up provision of dignified shelter & core relief items: Since 2020, UNHCR has substantially scaled up its response in north-west Syria, delivering core relief items and shelter materials to those in need. UNHCR has transitioned its focus from short-term emergency shelter to dignified shelter solutions, providing medium to long-term support for displaced individuals who have endured protracted displacement, including those affected by the February 2023 earthquakes.

Main Activities



Protection

UNHCR through its partners manages eight community centres in north-west Syria where individuals can access protection interventions such as general protection, child protection, gender-based violence (GBV), psychosocial support (PSS), community mobilization and empowerment activities, and awareness-raising. In addition to the community centers, mobile outreach teams offer protection services based on needs identified in camps and rural areas in both Idlib and Aleppo governorates. UNHCR also supports 15 community networks comprised of IDPs and host community members who play a fundamental role in informing communities of the available services and identifying protection needs and response strategies.



Shelter and Core Relief Items

UNHCR provides core relief items – including blankets, sleeping mats, mattresses, jerry cans, plastic sheets, kitchen sets, and solar lamps – as well as family tents on an as needed basis to IDPs who frequently lose items due to fire, winter storms and extreme heat. While tent installation remains an emergency response option, UNHCR prioritizes developing

dignified shelters, offering increased privacy, security, and protection from harsh weather conditions. Dignified shelters feature separate rooms, lockable doors and windows, integrated WASH facilities, and proper site lighting, ultimately mitigating gender-based violence risks and enhancing the overall well-being of displaced families.



Multi-purpose Cash Assistance

UNHCR's multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) program provides crucial support to approximately 2,000 vulnerable households, enhancing their resilience and well-being. UNHCR conducts thorough vulnerability assessments, employing a scoring system to ensure fair and targeted beneficiary selection. Eligible households receive regular bi-monthly disbursements of US\$200, enabling them to address essential needs and improve their living conditions.

CLUSTERS



Protection

The UNHCR co-led Protection Cluster brings together over 111 members, comprising three areas of responsibility (AoR) focused on Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, and Housing, Land, and Property (HLP). Additionally, the Cluster encompasses a Protection Monitoring Task Force, a Mine Action Technical Working Group, and a Technical Working Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The Cluster prioritizes the delivery of lifesaving emergency protection services to newly displaced populations, as well as specialized protection services to communities and individuals in need and at risk. This is achieved through outreach capacity and mobile teams. Furthermore, the Cluster conducts protection monitoring to inform advocacy and the overall response. It also supports capacity development of cluster members to enhance programming, information collection, and advocacy on protection concerns.



Camp Coordination and Camp Management

The CCCM Cluster coordinates the efforts of 74 member organizations providing cross-border humanitarian assistance in north-west Syria. Activities of the Cluster focus on coordinating and monitoring responses to the multi-sectoral needs in over 1,500 IDP sites that host 2 million IDPs (nearly 373,000 families). The CCCM Cluster is also responsible for profiling the population in IDP sites and tracking IDP movements.



Shelter/NFI Cluster

The Shelter/NFI Cluster, coordinating the response of over 75 member organizations, plays a pivotal role in the cross-border humanitarian operation by streamlining efforts to address emergency shelter and non-food item needs. Through a multifaceted approach, the Cluster provides in-kind assistance, as well as cash and voucher support, to enhance household and community resilience. Additionally, it raises awareness and offers technical guidance on housing, land, and property rights, ultimately promoting a more comprehensive and sustainable response.

Funding Update

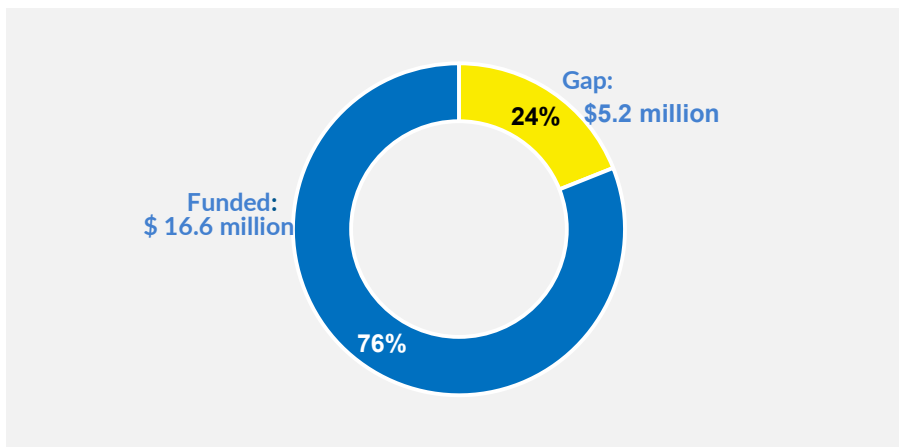
As of November 2024

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FUNDING AS OF NOVEMBER 2024

USD 21.8 million

Cross-border Operation Requirements



For more information, please contact Huda Abdalla, Associate Reporting Officer: abdalhud@unhcr.org