

Facts and Figures

Number of people in need of humanitarian aid: (OCHA 2025)

- 16.7 million people in need in Syria (including 7.2 million IDPs) out of a current population of 23.5 million.
- 6.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers found in neighbouring countries (primarily Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan & Iraq).

Returns:

(UNHCR 2025)

- Since 2016, over 410,000 spontaneous refugee returns have been verified by UNHCR from neighbouring countries (approximately 7% of Syrian refugees hosted in the region).
- Surveys of refugees based in neighbouring countries show that only 1.7% intend to return within the next 12 months (due to a lack of essential service – especially education and health facilities –, the failing economy, the UXO contamination, among others).

Swiss financial commitment in 2025:

- Switzerland pledged CHF 60 million annually for Syria and neighbouring countries (Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan & Iraq) in 2023, 2024 and renewed in 2025.
- In response to increased needs, an additional CHF 3 million were allocated in 2024 and in 2025.

Swiss presence in the region

- Embassy in Amman, Jordan
- Embassy in Beirut & Project Office in Zahlé, Lebanon
- Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye
- Humanitarian Office in Damascus, Syria

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



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Switzerland's Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Crisis

The Syrian conflict has led to one of the world's most protracted humanitarian and displacement crises. The civilian population continues to suffer the devastating consequences of the conflict, including serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In this context, SDC collaborates with strategic partners and national authorities to provide emergency assistance where it is needed most, enabling long-term resilience and development.

In 2025, more than 16.7 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance, the highest number since the beginning of the crisis, and around 617'000 people have been newly displaced following localized violence and insecurity. Changing circumstances have resulted in evolving needs and vulnerabilities, which have been further exacerbated by shifting funding priorities on the international stage and regional instability. Meanwhile, the number of people returning home is increasing, primarily driven by the internally displaced population. The number of returns from neighbouring countries and beyond to Syria remains low and is hindered by uncertainties and, in some areas, by conditions that do not guarantee safe and dignified returns.

Switzerland's engagement in Syria and the region began in 2011 in response to the humanitarian consequences of the Syrian conflict. It has since been one of the largest humanitarian operations in Switzerland's history. The current Regional Cooperation Programme for Syria & Neighbouring Countries (2025–2028) aligns with the Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Strategy. It encompasses Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq & Türkiye and focuses on three strategic priorities:

- Peace: Strengthening social cohesion, promoting inclusive dialogue and local governance.
- Youth: Quality education and vocational training, skills development, decent work, and protection.
- Water: Equitable access to safe water, policy dialogue and improved governance of shared water resources.

Gender equality and good governance are key cross-cutting themes. The programme links international cooperation with migration policy, showcasing Switzerland's active involvement in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and good governance. To achieve its objectives, SDC pursues the following approaches:

- 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.

SDC is supporting various projects in Syria and the neighbouring countries some of which 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 wastewater 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 National and International 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 governorates with high severity of humanitarian needs. 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 and before the fall of Bashar al-Assad, nearly 5 million people were unable to meet their basic needs for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food, and livelihoods. SDC worked 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 wastewater 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. The freeze of USAID contributions, announced in January 2025, threatens the projects and activities of many humanitarian actors in the Northeast.

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. Some experts are also seconded to UN-agencies in the region. They support international efforts to ensure access to drinking water and basic sanitation and provide protection assistance for the most vulnerable population groups, among others.

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. During its term at the UN Security Council, in 2023-2024, Switzerland acted as the co-penholder (with Brazil in 2023 and then alone in 2024) for the Syria humanitarian file. Switzerland was 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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