

31 March 2024

### 1. Crisis overview<sup>i</sup>

|                          |                                                     |                                                       |                                               |                                                  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4.5 / 5</b>           | <b>16.7 million</b>                                 | <b>13 million</b>                                     | <b>\$4.4 billion</b>                          | <b>29.6%</b>                                     |
| INFORM<br>Severity Index | People in need of<br>humanitarian aid<br>(HNO 2024) | People targeted in the<br>response plan<br>(HNO 2024) | Required to reach<br>the target<br>(HNO 2024) | Of the required<br>funding secured<br>(HRP 2023) |
| <b>175 MSEK</b>          | -                                                   | -                                                     | <b>175 MSEK</b>                               |                                                  |
| Initial allocation       | Additional allocation                               | Flexible Funding                                      | Total Sida funding 2024                       |                                                  |

Syria is in its 13th year of a protracted crisis, and is the largest refugee crisis worldwide. The humanitarian situation has continuously deteriorated across Syria and more so in the past year. The country is experiencing multiple crises driven by ongoing conflict, unresolved political crisis and growing food insecurity. All of this augmented by climate change leading to severe lack of water, and a deepening economic crisis. The number of people in need of life-saving assistance has continuously risen since 2020 reaching an unprecedented 16.7 million people in 2024. In 2023 it was calculated that 4.1 million were in extreme and catastrophic need and 11.2 in severe need. Severe poverty is widespread in Syria, more than 12.9 million people are food insecure. In 2024 7.2 million people are internally displaced out of which 5.5 million people need humanitarian assistance. The situation was further compounded by the earthquake that hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria in 2023 which reduced already scarce access to shelter and damaged infrastructure. The economic situation is only expected to deteriorate with high inflation. Price increases on fuel, medicine and basic commodities contribute to rising malnutrition and negative coping mechanisms, especially affecting women and children.

The Syrian context is broadly characterised by three sub-contexts – Northwest (NWS), Northeast (NES) and regime-controlled areas in Southern/Central Syria (GoS) – each experiencing various levels of conflict intensity, access dynamics, constraints and needs. In the past months the conflict has intensified in Northeast Syria (NES), as well as in the Northwest (NWS). The Israel-Gaza conflict has spilled over into Syria, with sporadic fire across the Israeli Syrian demarcation line, repeated attacks against US/Coalition bases in NES, as well as several airstrikes against targets in Damascus and Aleppo.

## 2. Humanitarian needs & affected population

The humanitarian situation continues to worsen. Large-scale displacement of populations creates immediate humanitarian needs, as well as more protracted emergency needs in all humanitarian sectors. The harsh economic stagnation has put additional strains on the Syrian population, exacerbated by a severe water crisis in the past three years. Internally displaced persons, in particular women, children, elderly and people with disabilities, are specifically exposed due to their limited access to resources, services, voice and power. The devastation left by the earthquake has left over 8.8 million people affected, with thousands of buildings partially or completely destroyed and protection needs further increasing.

Food security needs range from emergency food assistance to livelihood interventions to help people become self-reliant. The health system is vulnerable and inadequate with only half of its primary healthcare centres and hospitals functional. Frequent violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a major cause of human suffering for civilians and so is sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrest, detention, disappearances and forced conscription, as well as lack of access to civil documentation and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights. The crisis continues to have a gendered impact, with an increase of female-headed households and with women and adolescent girls paying a high price for harmful and discriminatory gender norms, including gender-based violence. Children remain exposed to a number of threats and grave violations of their rights such as forced early marriages, sexual violence, child labour and recruitment into armed groups. The resilience of the population is reduced by active conflicts and continued large population displacements. Climate change is linked to worsening natural hazards such as harsh winters and droughts. This has impacted livelihood opportunities within agriculture as well as health, contributing to preventable diseases such as cholera.

The large cross border assistance provided by the UN to NWS is a life-line for the population in this part of the country. The majority of the population needs lifesaving assistance while about 3.4 million are internally displaced in 2024. Following the non-renewal of the UN Security Council Resolution 2672 in 2023, the UN and the regime in Damascus have agreed that assistance across the border from Türkiye to NWS can continue. However, with this new arrangement humanitarian access to NWS has become more constrained and vulnerable, being dependent on decisions in Damascus. NWS is also suffering from an intensified conflict since October 2023, which led to the temporary displacement of over 120,000 people at one stage.

In 2023, 650,000 people remained displaced in NES. NES has faced a significant increase in shelling from Türkiye with tribal violence further complicating the situation. The discontinuation of UN support to cross-border assistance from Iraq continues to pose significant challenges to the provision of essential services where a large part of the assistance is provided by international and national NGOs. Approximately 70 percent – 8.1 million – of the people who are in need of humanitarian assistance live in GoS-controlled areas. Although the security situation has stabilised in recent years, increased food insecurity, poverty, eroded coping capacities and deteriorating access to basic services, as well as conflict flareups persist.

In all neighbouring countries, Syrian refugees remain among those most vulnerable and are increasingly perceived by host populations as competing for jobs, scarce public resources and services. In the past year there has been increasing pressure for the return of refugees and IDPs, regardless of conditions in areas of origin and protection risks. Principled return is not likely in any of the three contexts within Syria. With the reduction of humanitarian support to refugees in neighbouring countries and regional economic downturn, the situation is highly precarious. The Israel-Gaza crisis has further exacerbated the situation, particularly in Lebanon.

### 3. The humanitarian response

The UN-led humanitarian coordination is an adaptation of the standard ‘country’ coordination model, extended to encompass both the response of humanitarian actors in GoS-controlled areas, as well as those responding cross-border to the needs in NES and NWS. The UN is to some extent, and when possible, providing humanitarian assistance across the lines of control in Syria. Area-level coordination mechanisms are supplemented with a “Whole of Syria” coordination structure, aiming to ensure a strategic approach to delivering timely assistance to people in need across the different sub-contexts in Syria. While the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2022-2023 primarily targets urgent and acute humanitarian needs, efforts have been made to integrate resilience and early recovery where possible, to mitigate growing needs and promote human dignity and cost effectiveness at the core of the response. This ambition will likely be reflected in the second two-year humanitarian programme cycle for 2024-2025. At time of publication of the HCA 2024, the Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview has been published, but the HRP 2024-2025 has yet to be released.

Considering the HRP for 2023 was only around 39 percent funded at the end of 2023 – compared with 53 percent in 2022 – the HRP 2024-2025 will have to accommodate already announced budget cuts for 2024 and donor fatigue. With reduced funding, a longer horizon for planning promotes stronger integration of early recovery response and sequencing with short-term, life-saving interventions. Needs continue to be great and with the protracted nature of the context, and the need to build resilience, it is expected that multi-purpose cash will be promoted to an even larger extent in the coming HRP to ensure cost efficiency and effectiveness, and to provide recipients greater autonomy to use funds according to their needs.

The operational environment and the humanitarian needs take different forms across the country, where insecurity, various risks as well as bureaucratic- and administrative impediments are more prevalent in one sub-context than the other. In GoS-areas, bureaucratic constraints have to some extent lessened during the past year, particularly in the months following the earthquake when some administrative regulations were temporary eased. Since the earthquake, UN-staff has improved cross-border access into NWS, which was not the case before. Yet, restrictions on humanitarian access continue with concerns around insecurity, IHL violations and cases of aid interference, leading to various constraints and delays in humanitarian assistance. The political dynamics that surround and permeate the country, partly manifested through a series of economic sanctions and restrictions, confine the prospects of efforts geared toward economic recovery and reconstruction.

## 4. Sida's humanitarian allocation

Sida's revised humanitarian allocation model, combined with increasing humanitarian needs globally, has led to a reduction of the initial funds being allocated to Syria in 2024, thereby limiting possibilities to include new partnerships. The protractedness of the Syrian crisis and reduced funding, requires new ways of working that still ensures that the most severe needs remain prioritised. Against this backdrop, Sida will continue to prioritise organisations that have the presence and capacity to meet the most urgent unaddressed humanitarian needs through aid modalities that enable, when and where possible, a sustainable humanitarian impact. Quality funding, through flexible programme-based support and multi-year commitments, will allow for Sida's partner organisations to agilely address ever-changing needs on the ground. Targeted support, through funding to specific projects, will remain key in allowing a few selected partners to address urgent, prioritised and underfunded needs. Geographical coverage, based on the severity and scope of needs, remains a priority during partner selection. The reduction of funds means that Sida will review its portfolio to ensure the support is best placed to meet the most severe needs in 2024, whilst avoiding duplication in terms of geographical reach.

| PARTNER           | SECTOR                                               | INITIAL ALLOCATION (SEK) |                         |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                   |                                                      | 2024                     | 2025                    |
| AAH               | Food Security, Health, Nutrition, WASH               | 20,000,000 <sup>1</sup>  | -                       |
| ICRC              | Food Security, Health, Protection, WASH              | 8,000,000                | -                       |
| IRC               | Protection, Food Security, Health                    | 8 000 000                | -                       |
| Islamic Relief    | Health                                               | 20,000,000 <sup>2</sup>  | 20,000,000 <sup>2</sup> |
| NRC               | Education, WASH, Food Security, Shelter              | 50,000,000 <sup>3</sup>  | 50,000,000 <sup>3</sup> |
| Save the Children | Education, Child Protection                          | 8,000,000                |                         |
| Swedish Red Cross | Health, WASH                                         | 20,000,000 <sup>4</sup>  | 20,000,000 <sup>4</sup> |
| SCHF              | Multi-sector                                         | 14,000,000               |                         |
| SHF               | Multi-sector                                         | 14,000,000               | -                       |
| UNICEF            | Child Protection, Education, Health, Nutrition, WASH | 13,000,000               | -                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      |                                                      | <b>175,000,000</b>       | <b>90,000,000</b>       |

<sup>1</sup> Already committed in 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Already committed in 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Already committed in 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Already committed in 2023.

## 5. Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

The complexities of the Syrian crisis, with its differing dynamics and needs across the country, provide opportunities for complementarity and synergies between humanitarian assistance, resilience and peace-building efforts.

These opportunities are capitalised on through the close cooperation between the humanitarian team for the Syria-crisis with the team at the embassy in Beirut working with the Regional Strategy for the Syria-crisis (2016-2024). The latter strategy supports local peace-building, democracy and human rights, gender equality and human security while its focus on resilience building, including lasting livelihood opportunities and inclusive and equitable basic public services, aligns with the third strategic objective of the HRP. In the daily work at the embassy, the two teams cooperate closely in regard of *inter alia* joint analysis, risk management, field monitoring and follow-up. A new regional strategy for the Syria-crisis is currently being prepared, expected to start later in 2024. Once the strategy is approved and operationalisation begins, Sida should look into further opportunities for collaboration between resilience, peace, and humanitarian efforts, and find ways to encourage more synergies in the Swedish assistance to the Syria-crisis. This could include exploring how to link or replace humanitarian support with early recovery support, or looking into opportunities for area-based approaches, without compromising humanitarian principles.

Other strategies that may present opportunities are the Regional Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation with MENA and the Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Peace. Many organisations have a dual mandate and allowing strategic partner organisations, such as NRC, AAH and UNICEF, to receive funding from both the humanitarian strategy and the regional Syria strategy, would facilitate joint monitoring, follow-up and more strategic dialogue with each organisation. There are also complementarities in terms of areas for support, primarily within basic services, livelihoods and food security, in addition to cross-cutting issues such as gender, child rights, conflict sensitivity and climate change related challenges.

As a result of the actions of the Syrian regime, and subsequent international sanctions, international funding to Syria has largely been limited to humanitarian funding. However, there has been a gradual realisation among the international community that more resilience-building activities are needed for early recovery, while adhering to relevant sanctions. Differing views still exist among donors on what early recovery entails in terms of the practical work on the ground, but dialogue is continuing on the necessity to complement short-term humanitarian interventions with longer-term resilience building activities which incorporate social cohesion and conflict sensitivity perspectives. One of the main forums for this dialogue is the Regional Dialogue Mechanism (RDM) which brings together UN in Damascus and the largest donors to government controlled areas.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2024 initial allocation of humanitarian funding is based on Sida's humanitarian allocation analysis methodology. The methodology was updated during 2023 to more clearly inform an allocation of funding that is proportional between crises, in line with Humanitarian and Good Humanitarian Donorship principles. Key changes in funding levels between the initial allocations for 2023 and 2024 for specific crises are therefore not only reflecting changes in the humanitarian situation but also changes in the analysis methodology. The analysis reflects the current humanitarian situation across crises and is being updated continuously with the latest available data, thereby allowing future allocations to be informed by how indicators have changed since previous allocations. The information in the HCA is based on reports, data, and information from partner organisations and other entities, as well as observations from field visits and dialogue with partners.