



*Engagement of Civil Society
and affected populations in
response to the Syria Crisis*

29th annual ALNAP meeting – March 2014



Valentina Stivanello- Syria Crisis Response Manager

Currently based in Beirut, I lead the BRC Response to the Syria Crisis in Syria and displacement affected countries. The BRC has been responding to the crisis since its onset in 2011. The BRC has a long-standing partnership with the SARC, and under the IFRC umbrella, sustains the response through human, in-kind and financial resources to support the Red Cross Red Crescent operations in Syria and neighbouring countries.

After almost 3 years of protracted crisis in Syria, the humanitarian situation has reached unprecedented scale:

- More than 9 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance
- At least 6.5 million Syrian citizens are internally displaced of which more than 2 million are children
- Nearly 6 million children have been directly affected both in Syria and in neighbouring countries.
- More than 4,5 million people are at imminent risk of food insecurity
- More than 2,5 million Syrians have fled to surrounding countries
- Estimates of more than 100,000 people have been killed







Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)

SARC is a community based organisation with over 200 staff and over 3,000 active volunteers in 14 branches, 77 sub-branches and 41 points across Syria who are responding to the humanitarian needs on a daily basis.

SARC has a lead role for facilitating and implementing the provision of assistance to people in need, working in cooperation with around 80 local organizations.

SARC is also the operational lead for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement response and facilitates and often implements activities supported by UN partners (WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA) as well as INGOs.



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What assistance is SARC providing in Syria?

Relief: Provision of food to approximately 4 million people monthly and non-food relief items including basic hygiene items (such as soap, sanitary pads, toothpaste), mattresses, blankets, and basic kitchen items for approximately 1 million monthly

Emergency and Basic Health: 24/7 Emergency first aid activities throughout the country with medical health points, mobile health units and ambulances in all the governorates including hard to reach areas. SARC has a network of clinics across the country and is providing medicine for chronic and acute diseases for hundreds of thousands in need. Over 130,000 people receive medical assistance from SARC health structures on a monthly basis.

Psycho-Social Support: SARC specialized personnel continue providing psycho-social support to children, women and elderly through a network of centres and mobile PS units across the country.



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What are main challenges for SARC in responding in a highly dangerous and politicised environment? Is it possible to have an independent and neutral response?

Humanitarian access:

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent remains the agency with the most access to vulnerable communities across Syria. The ICRC and the SARC negotiate access daily to people most in need across the country, including across conflict lines. During recent months, SARC has delivered assistance in hard to reach areas such as the prison in Aleppo, Homs, Deir Ezzor, Raqqa, Barzeh, Yarmouk and in rural Damascus.

Safety and protection of aid workers:

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent is neutral and independent, and its members are risking their lives daily to help everyone affected, without exception. The ICRC and Syrian Arab Red Crescent are part of the global Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement, which operates under humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. 34 SARC volunteers have been killed and many more injured, kidnapped or detained while carrying out their humanitarian duties. The situation is unpredictable and extremely volatile and the risks involving SARC volunteers are of grave concern.





What could international actors be doing better to assist affected people?

- Keep advocating for access and protection of humanitarian workers all over Syria
- Sustain flexible funding for the emergency operations
- Provide capacity building to SARC volunteers (high turn-over)



Questions



