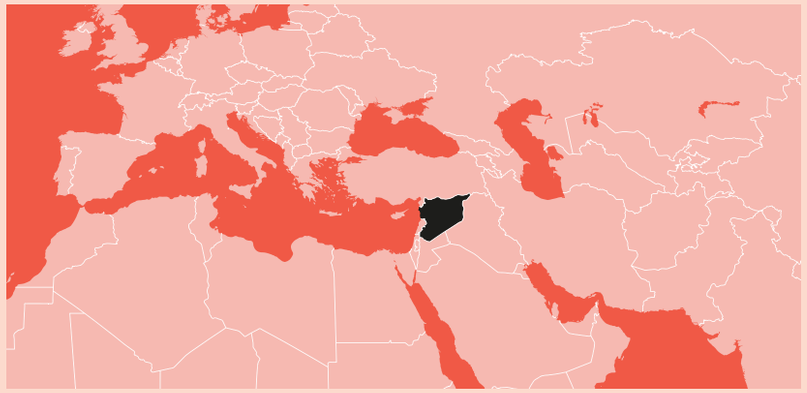

SYRIA

Since late 2011, the conflict in Syria has resulted in a quarter of a million deaths, over 7 million people displaced, and more than 12 million people in need of humanitarian aid. The extraordinarily difficult operating environment involves an obstructive government (itself a violator of international humanitarian law) as one of the conflict parties, a fractured opposition that includes actors with no compunction against targeting aid workers for violence, as well as a divided aid community. Active combat and high levels of insecurity, alongside the constraints imposed by the government, have severely limited access for humanitarian actors. UN agencies and a few NGOs have provided aid from Damascus, mainly through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, while other NGOs and diaspora groups deliver cross-border aid from the neighbouring countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Overview of performance

Coverage/sufficiency: With $5.5 billion raised through the Syria SRP over three years, the crisis has brought in a historic volume of financial contributions. Additional contributions come through untracked channels, including from the Middle East and Syrian diaspora organisations. However, with humanitarian access severely constrained, funding has not translated into physical and material coverage of needs, particularly in some of the worst-affected areas inside Syria. As acknowledged in the most recent SRP, 'recognising that all needs cannot be covered, critical humanitarian gaps remain both in terms of geographical coverage and the scale of activities.'

Relevance/appropriateness: Getting solid information on the aid picture for the whole of Syria has been extremely difficult, and as a result the humanitarian community is unable to determine if the aid getting through is the most relevant and appropriate to people's needs. Until 2014 there was no information on needs for Syria as a whole. Although a consolidated assessment was finally accomplished in the Humanitarian Needs Overview produced at the end of 2014, it remains limited due to the small number of primary information sources available. The consensus among humanitarians, however, is that the biggest gaps are in protection, health and shelter, recognising the limited extent to which humanitarian actors can influence protection in the absence of a political solution.

Effectiveness: As a measure of timely relief delivered on a prioritised basis to those most in need, it would be impossible to call the Syria response a success. Less than half of the estimated 12.2 million people in need have been reached by humanitarian assistance. The insurgent-held and heavily contested districts in the north, as well as besieged areas, have the highest numbers of people in need, and many people have been relying on cross-border aid operations that were secretive until the UN Security Council endorsed them in 2014. Only a small proportion of the aid, whether from Damascus or cross-border, can be monitored, making it extremely challenging to determine whether it has reached the target population or met its objectives.

Efficiency, coordination and connectedness: Coordination among and between the UN agencies and NGOs has been severely hindered. Organisations have been highly reluctant to share information, both for security reasons and in some cases for the reputational risk in not being able to state confidently where their aid was ending up. Tensions have also run high between the UN-led response coordinated from Damascus and the NGOs, working largely cross-border, preventing a unified humanitarian operational response to the crisis. Western humanitarians have also been criticised for missing opportunities to build more effective partnerships for delivery though local and diaspora Syrian actors.

Coherence/principles: Much of the aid delivered within Syria has been neither impartial nor independent, primarily due to restrictions imposed by the government and other armed actors, general insecurity, and the difficulties of operating at scale from cross-border locations. ●