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Regional Analysis Syria - BRIEF

6 May 2014

This RAS Brief supplements the [quarterly RAS reports](#) and seeks to highlight current key issues. Meanwhile the RAS provides a more comprehensive, coherent analysis of the overall situation in the region as well as in each of the affected countries. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement these reports. For additional information, comments or questions please email SNAP@ACAPS.org.

Syria

Notable humanitarian developments

For a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian needs and possible developments, please see the latest [quarterly RAS \(April\)](#).

Heightened risk of disease outbreaks

The onset of warm weather, the ongoing conflict, lack of humanitarian access and the deterioration of both the health and water and sanitation systems are further increasing the risk of a major disease outbreak. As of April, suspected measles cases have been reported in 13 out of 14 governorates in Syria this year by disease surveillance systems¹ established across the country. Suspected measles cases are likely under-reported, as monitoring and confirming cases is proving difficult due to the interruption of routine immunisation services and the frequent movements of affected populations. Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor and Idleb are the most affected governorates, reporting the highest numbers of suspected measles cases across Syria, as well as the highest figures for confirmed polio cases. There were significant challenges in carrying out the fourth round of the polio vaccination campaign in early April, particularly in these 4 governorates due to the ongoing conflict, insecurity and refusal by households to receive vaccinations.

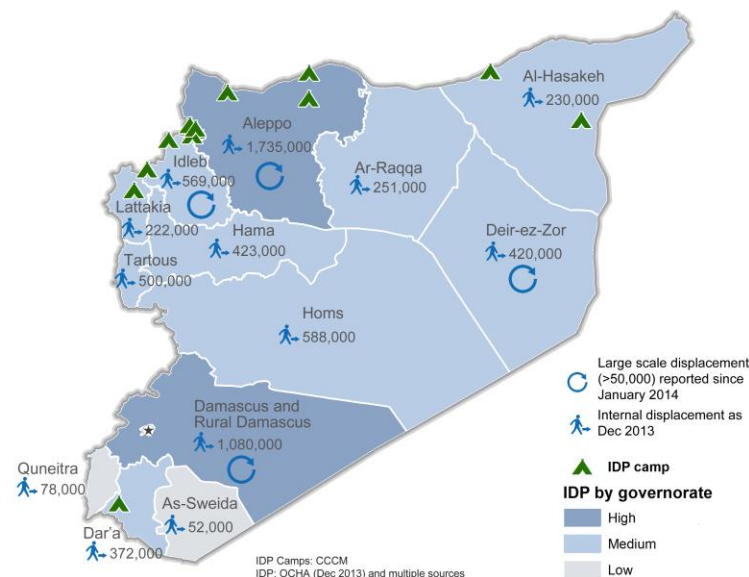
The eastern governorate of Deir-ez-Zor, where polio was first confirmed in Syria, is of particular concern as WASH actors are shifting their activities to areas with better access in neighbouring governorates, which will have a major impact on the health status of the population. In addition, Deir-ez-Zor's water sources are heavily polluted by the informal oil extraction industry.

While reports of chlorine gas attacks in a village in Hama governorate remain unsubstantiated, there is concern that reports of such attacks could lead to

increased restrictions and logistical challenges for transport of chlorine across the country by humanitarian organisations to treat water supplies. Given the above factors and potential risks, the likelihood of a major disease outbreak, particularly measles, in the coming months is significant.

Displacement and IDP camps

Displacement continued to increase throughout April, with major movements reported in Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Idleb and Rural Damascus due to conflict. Increased displacement in both the northern and southern regions has led to the establishment of new camps in Aleppo, Dar'a and Idleb. In the north, the IDP population residing in camps has increased by 20% to around 129,500 since January 2014 and the number of camps more than doubled from 40 to 84 in the past 6 months. The significant expansion of the camps has led to overstretched WASH services and aid agencies are struggling to meet the high demand. With continuing displacement and limited remaining safe spaces, the number and size of the IDP camps is expected to increase, with over 200,000 IDPs expected to reside in camps by June.



In Dar'a, the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) associated with the Syrian opposition has established 2 IDP camps in the southwestern part of the governorate, which is already hosting a significant number of IDPs. The newly established camps have already experienced major insecurity, including direct shelling. When a larger population congregates in the highly contested area, it is likely that there will be additional protection concerns as the camps could become a target.

¹This includes diseases surveillance systems such as the Early Warning and Response System (EWARS) set up by the Ministry of Health and WHO, as well as the Early Warning and Alert and Response Network (EWARN) established by the Aid Coordination Unit, as well as NGO reports.

Local peace agreements

Early May has seen a ceasefire agreed in the besieged Old City of Homs, with opposition fighters agreeing to leave the area. Local negotiations and ceasefires continue to take place across the country, particularly in Aleppo, the suburbs of Damascus and Homs. Although the terms of the local agreements vary, generally they involve

the lifting of a siege and the handing over of heavy weapons to the SAF, and occasionally, the evacuation of civilians, release of detainees by the Government of Syria (GoS) or the departure of opposition fighters from specific areas within a designated timeframe. Although it appears that all parties obtain some gains from

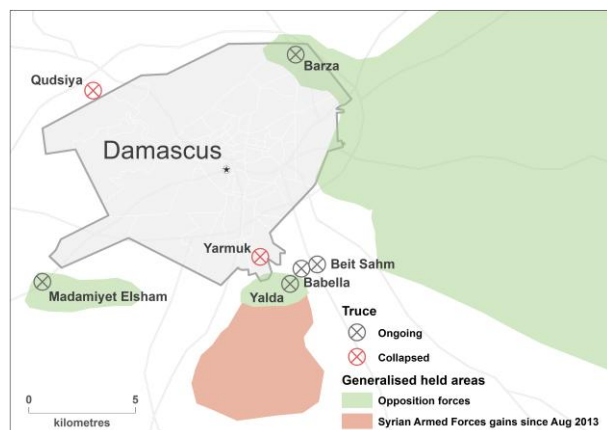
a temporary agreement, there is little accountability for either side to uphold the terms of the agreements once the initial objectives are met. A review of the impact of local truces to date shows that sieges are usually only partially lifted. For instance, the GoS checkpoints in Madamiyet Elsham and Barzeh in the Damascus area continue to control the entry of goods. In addition, truces have generally only succeeded in a temporary halt to fighting, for instance in Qudsaya where shortly after a truce was negotiated, heavy fighting re-ignited in March.

Humanitarian access and reach of humanitarian aid

The obstruction of humanitarian assistance to Syria continues to be used as a political tactic by parties to the conflict, further compromising the humanitarian community's ability to reach the most vulnerable communities. Permission for UN convoys and access to besieged areas is provided intermittently. UNRWA was only permitted access to the besieged Palestinian camp Yarmouk in Damascus for 7 days during the month of April. Since negotiations allowed for a temporary ceasefire and food distributions in Yarmouk beginning on 18 January, UNRWA estimates that the food delivered since has met no more than 25% of the minimum requirements of the over 18,000 civilians in the area.

According to WFP, only 25% of its food distributions occur in opposition-held territory, as international aid agencies registered with the GoS require

Local peace agreements around Damascus



government permission to cross into opposition-held territory. Comprehensive data on aid deliveries, including those provided via cross-border operations, into opposition areas is limited, and the reach of humanitarian assistance provided through official channels is often unclear as agencies lack regular and direct access to beneficiaries. WFP has stated that with displacement being disproportionately higher in GoS-controlled and contested areas which are considered safer, WFP focuses on delivering aid for these displaced populations, which partly justifies why there is increased distribution in GoS-controlled areas. However, the governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, mostly opposition-controlled, host a large number of IDPs as well. WFP reported that in some areas of Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, beneficiaries are being coerced by actors with political or financial objectives not to accept UN humanitarian assistance. Reports have surfaced suggesting that assistance is sometimes siphoned to those with connections to armed groups or hoarded by fighters. Concerns have also been raised that in some governorates, assistance only goes to communities linked to the area's most powerful group.

Severely affected areas

Aleppo city continues to be one of the most affected areas of the country, subjected to intense conflict and military tactics with far-reaching humanitarian impacts applied by parties vying for control of the city. The recent disruption of electricity and water supplies by opposition groups as a means to force an end to GoS aerial raids is an example of such tactics. A temporary agreement was reached by the end of April ending the intentional disruption of electricity and water. However, at the start of May, the agreement was breached and subsequent continuation of the aerial bombardment will likely lead to more cuts, leading to further water shortages. This tit-for-tat approach also extends to access, with routes, such as the Al-Bustan crossing between east and west Aleppo and the southern access route, blocked to use as leverage during negotiations. As a result of the blockades, a significant lack of flour was reported in Aleppo City. With the start of an opposition offensive on western Aleppo and the SAF planning to extend its control further to eastern and southern Aleppo, violence and detrimental military tactics are expected to further affect the population.

While much attention and resources are focused on the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, one of the other most affected areas of the country, remains under-served. The limited information available on this area of the country indicates critical WASH and health concerns. A slight improvement in access, which allowed for more aid to enter at the start of April, was short-lived and WFP reported that it was able to reach only 23% of its intended recipients in the governorate by mid-April, compared to 50% countrywide. Without a significant improvement in access to Deir-ez-Zor, the governorate is likely to remain largely neglected, with humanitarian actors focusing limited resources on those that are more easily accessible.

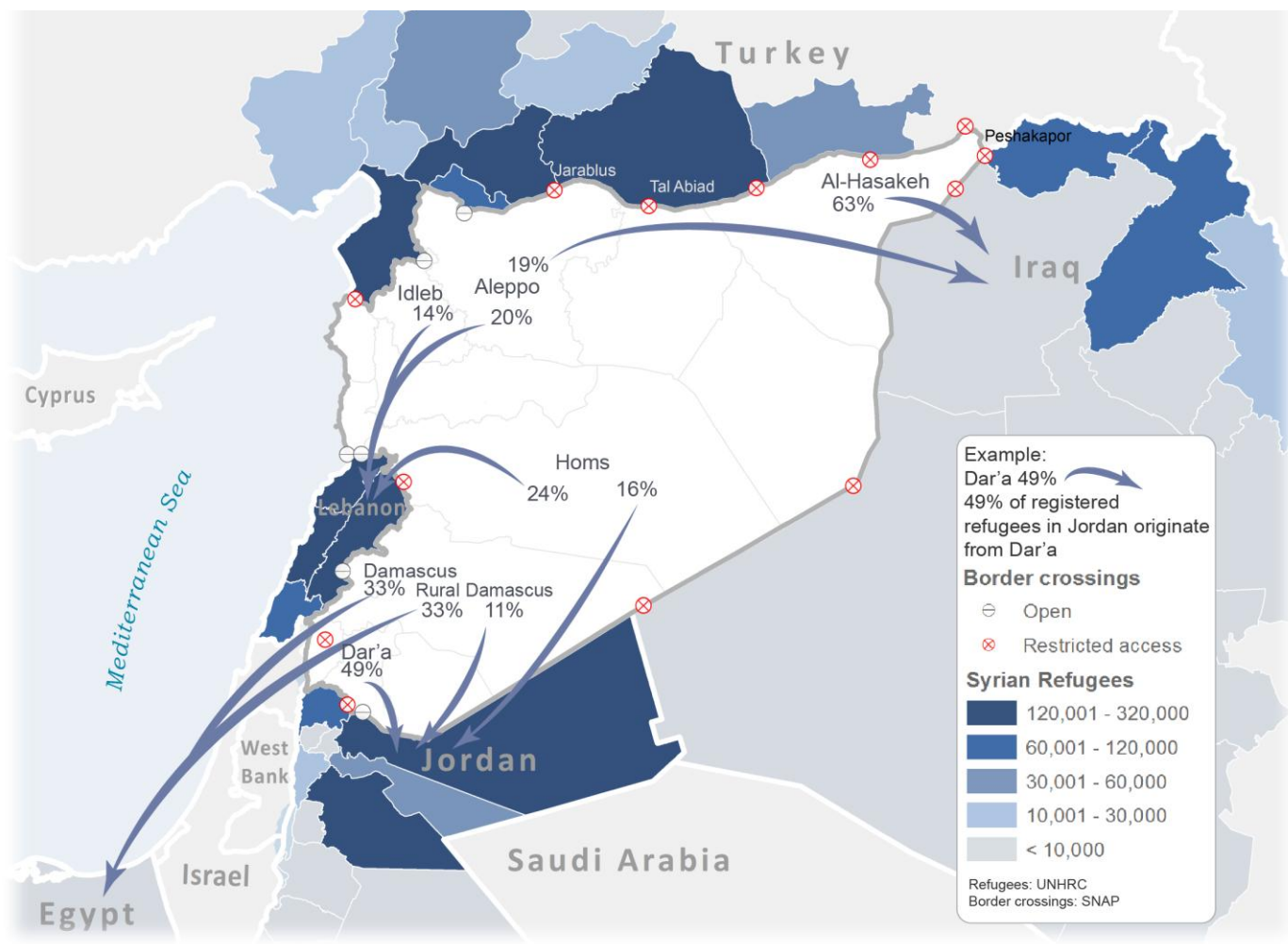
Region

Notable humanitarian developments

Entry restrictions

As at the start of May, neighbouring countries are hosting over 2.5 million Syrian refugees. However, official restrictions and other obstacles to entry continue to hamper movement, with the closure of 2 ISIL-controlled crossing points (Jarablus and Tal Abiad) by the Turkish authorities in January and, more recently, the Syria-Iraq border crossing at Peshakapor at the end of April. As a result, those trying to flee via Al-Hasakeh to the KR-I are not able to enter. Similar to other border areas with Syria, such as in Turkey and Jordan, it is possible that Al-Hasakeh will experience a concentration of IDPs stranded along the KR-I border if restrictions persist. While refugee entry was already restricted by the KR-I authorities prior to the closure, the cross-border movement of humanitarian assistance and other commodities which sustain this region is also hampered. While the border closure is not in the long-term interests of either the KR-I authorities or Syrian Kurdish groups and is unlikely to be sustained, the closure signals a further deterioration in relations between Kurdish political groups in Iraq and Syria, which could affect policies towards Syrian refugees in the KR-I.

Place of origin Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR



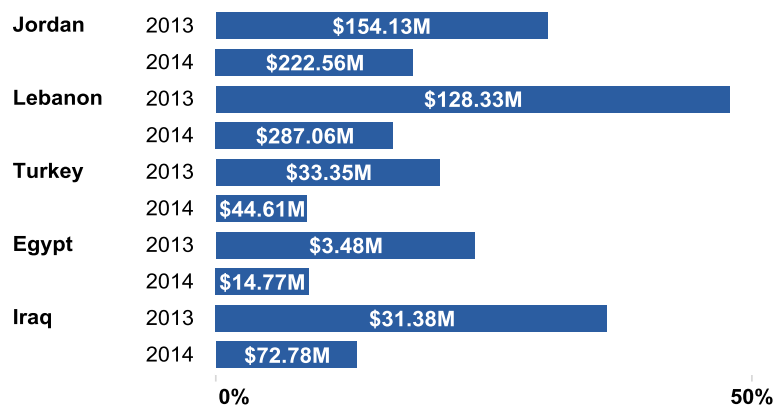
Security situation and humanitarian impact

Since the GoS forces' offensive in the Qalamoun region and the rolling out of the Lebanese Armed Forces' security plan in the north and the Bekaa border regions, security in Lebanon has noticeably improved. Bombings in Beirut were occurring with regularity until March. The increased security presence along the Lebanese borders is expected to reduce the unofficial movement of both armed fighters and refugees between Lebanon and Syria but official data is yet to confirm a decrease in arrivals, as data on unofficial entry is not publically shared.

On Syria's eastern border, the conflict between Iraqi security forces and ISIL in Anbar governorate continues to spill-over into Syria. In late April, the Iraqi military attacked a fuel convoy in Deir-ez-Zor that they accused of supplying ISIL fighters in Anbar. While these incursions have as of yet not had a significant humanitarian impact, they are expected to gradually increase with Government of Iraq expanding its fight against ISIL.

Uneven funding across the region

RRP funding received in % of total requested April 2013 compared to April 2014



As of 14 April 2014, 24% of the USD 4.26 billion funding requested within the regional response plan (RRP6) had been funded. While the amount of funding received as of April this year (USD 1 billion) is far above the funding received at the same time last year (USD 527 million), the refugee caseload has tripled in the past year and consequently the current funding coverage is below that achieved in April 2013, which stood at 34%. In addition to the much higher amount requested in 2014, the low proportion funded can be partly explained by a decrease in the sense of urgency. In April 2013, the humanitarian community faced the impact of a sudden and significant

increase in refugee influxes coupled with a harsh winter. By April 2014, the crisis has entered its fourth year and funding allocation is competing with a range of other humanitarian crises, including in the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

There continue to be inequities in the allocation of funding among host countries. While some of this can be attributed to the unique context of each country and the capacity and resources of host governments to respond, neither the appeals nor the funding allocations appear to be based on identified needs. For example, in Egypt, where refugees from Syria have experienced a major deterioration in protection since mid-2013, the response plan has received only USD 14 million or 8% of the appeal. While the Turkey response is also funded at 8%, there is significantly more bilateral support provided by Government of Turkey, including opportunities for refugees to work legally. While Lebanon hosts nearly twice as many refugees as Jordan and the humanitarian indicators demonstrate a greater severity of need among Syrian refugees, Lebanon's response plan has received only 30% more funds than Jordan.

These inequities undermine the principle of impartiality and might reinforce the already deep tensions between host and refugee communities.

Refugee caseload per country compared to RRP6 funding allocated April 2014

	% of total number of registered refugees	% of total RRP6 funding allocated
Lebanon	38	28
Turkey	26	4
Jordan	22	22
Egypt	5	1
Iraq	8	7

Transitioning from humanitarian assistance to early recovery

As the conflict enters its fourth year and donor fatigue set in, the international community responding to the crisis in Syria is experiencing a shift in aid modalities from emergency response to early recovery in which the primary focus is on re-establishing, maintaining and building capacity of basic services in host countries and areas in Syria with medium to low levels of conflict. While this is a welcome approach in some areas, there is a risk that some early recovery programs may be linked to increasingly politicised agendas of various donors, which may negatively impact the perception of humanitarian activities by parties to the conflict and create further security implications. As a result of the shift to new funding modalities and donors, new types of aid actors will emerge, which could make coordination more difficult, particularly between humanitarian and more development-oriented actors.