

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Syria: Drought

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (Syrian Arab RC), with the support of the International Federation, will assess the situation and may request funding from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

A recent assessment carried out indicates that around 1,3 million people are affected from the drought in Syria; specifically in Al Hassakeh, Raqqa, Hama and Deir ez-Zor. Crops have been damaged, forcing the affected population to migrate to big cities.

Population movement, livelihoods, risk reduction and humanitarian relief are the main areas of focus for the Syrian Arab RC. Special attention will be given by the National Society to food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution, risk reduction, climate change adaptation, water and sanitation and registration of the internally displaced persons (IDPs).

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The drought in Syria, continuing for the last three years, has affected the wheat and main crops in Syria. Photo: Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The Situation

The situation Syria is facing for the last three years with regards to drought is seriously deteriorating. According to a recent assessment carried out by a joint United Nations mission in the eastern parts of the country and its findings presented on 13 July 2009, currently around 1,3 million people are affected from this disaster.

The worst hit area in the Syrian Arab Republic is Al Hassakeh, with more than 500,000 people directly being affected. Other governorates of concern are Raqqa (more than 100,000 people), Hama (around 80,000 people) and Deir ez-Zor (around 50,000 people). Small scale farmers and rural households have lost their crops and 80 per cent of their animal stock with no alternative income sources. Food supplies, clean water, health support and maintaining livelihoods are the urgent needs. In addition, those who have been migrating and their host families may require humanitarian support. According to UN sources, around 35,000 people have already left for the cities. The area affected by the drought normally provides the country with 70 per cent of its wheat and other important crops.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In 2008, in cooperation with the local authorities, the Syrian Arab RC had participated in distributing 29,000 food baskets in the east of the country where the drought was, and still is, severe. Recently, the National Society participated in the coordination meetings with UN agencies like United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), Food and Agricultural Office (FAO), and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The National Society requested support from the International Federation and sister National Societies for food items and was present in meetings with various partners.

The National Society is also part of the coordination meetings with the government and some local branches have been asked by the government to participate in food distributions. The Syrian Arab RC has offered to deal with the government directions in the affected area in responding to disasters and to work together through the risk reduction programme in order to facilitate the work within the communities.

The Syrian Arab RC carried out many visits to some of the affected areas. The visits' findings indicated that the villagers started to sell their belongings in order to buy food items. The visit also highlighted that all the children born in the last three years are lacking proper nutrition and have a low level of protein and other nutritious agents necessary for proper growth. On the other hand, the children at elementary schools are withdrawing from education to work and bring income to the families.

The National Society has identified population movement, livelihoods, risk reduction and humanitarian relief as the main areas to focus on. In the short-term, it is planning to distribute food and non-food items (NFIs) to the people in the drought affected area and also in their new settlements as a result of the migration. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation will be priority areas which the National Society will carry out special plans and awareness campaigns to stabilise and deal with sand storms, and provide preventive measures related to the health consequences through the mobilisation of its mobile health clinics. Water and sanitation and registration of the IDPs are other areas the Syrian Arab RC is planning to focus on to mitigate the effects of the drought on the population.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

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