



SCHF Syria Cross-border
Humanitarian
Fund

SYRIA CROSS-BORDER
HUMANITARIAN FUND

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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This document was produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Türkiye. OCHA Türkiye wishes to acknowledge the contributions of its committed staff at headquarters and in the field in preparing this document.

The latest version of this document is available on the SCHF website at www.unocha.org/SCHF.

Full project details, financial updates, real-time allocation data and indicator achievements against targets are available at [CBPF DataHub](#).

Front Cover

February 2023. "I buried them and went back to work. I went back to the hospital to continue my work." Abd Al-Basit Khalil is an anesthetist at the Harim General Hospital, supported by the SCHF. He was working at the hospital when the earthquakes struck on February 6. "I could see my house from the hospital's door. I ran there to check on my wife and daughter but was instead confronted by a destroyed building," he recalled. Abd Al-Basit returned to the hospital which was quickly filled with injured people. "I had a humanitarian duty to do and I could not leave the hospital in this situation. We needed to save as many people as we can."

Credit: OCHA/Bilal Al-Hammoud

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LETTER FROM DEPUTY REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR THE SYRIA CRISIS

I am honored to present the 2023 Annual Report for the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF), reflecting on its achievements in serving people in need in north-west Syria. Women and girls are among the most vulnerable who face heightened protection risks including gender-based violence.

2023 was a year of crisis on top of crisis. The February earthquakes brought profound loss and devastation to Türkiye and Syria. More than 4,500 people lost their lives and over 10,000 others were injured in north-west Syria alone. I can still recall the massive destruction in places like Harim and Jandairis and the families I've met who lost so much in one day on top of years of conflict and displacement. Our ability to respond was also tested by the loss of nearly 100 aid workers serving the cross-border response.

In the face of such adversity, the SCHF mobilized its resources swiftly and provided emergency relief to earthquake-affected communities. The Fund was among the first funding mechanisms to support the earthquake response, allocating 35 million dollars within three weeks of the disaster.

Donor generosity was instrumental in enabling the SCHF to respond effectively to urgent needs as well as address protracted needs through early recovery and livelihood interventions. I am encouraged to see progress in projects such as dignified shelters and sustainable water supply as they enable displaced families to enjoy better living conditions, while cash and voucher assistance gives communities the flexibility to buy what they need. The Fund also supported partners to pre-position core relief items which was critical to enable lifesaving aid to be delivered when cross-border access was temporarily disrupted after the non-renewal of the Security Council resolution 2672.

One of the key strengths of the SCHF lies in its commitment to localisation. By empowering local organizations and communities, the Fund delivers solutions that address the unique needs and challenges faced by affected people. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of our interventions but also fosters greater ownership and resilience within the communities we serve.

The ability of UN personnel to regularly access north-west Syria has improved our ability to directly monitor programmes, thereby ensuring better accountability to the people we serve and the global taxpayer. In 2023, OCHA conducted 55 field missions to assess SCHF-funded projects in addition to more than 200 third-party monitoring visits, allowing UN experts to speak directly with communities and observe the delivery of assistance. This approach is an integral part of our risk management framework, ensuring that aid reaches the most vulnerable.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my heartfelt gratitude for the dedication demonstrated by all humanitarian partners in responding to the various emergencies during the year. Together, we have made significant strides in improving the humanitarian situation in north-west Syria. However, the needs on the ground remain immense, and our work is far from complete. I urge all stakeholders, and especially the donor community, to join us in our ongoing efforts to provide hope, dignity, and relief to those in need.

Sincerely,



David Carden
Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis

“

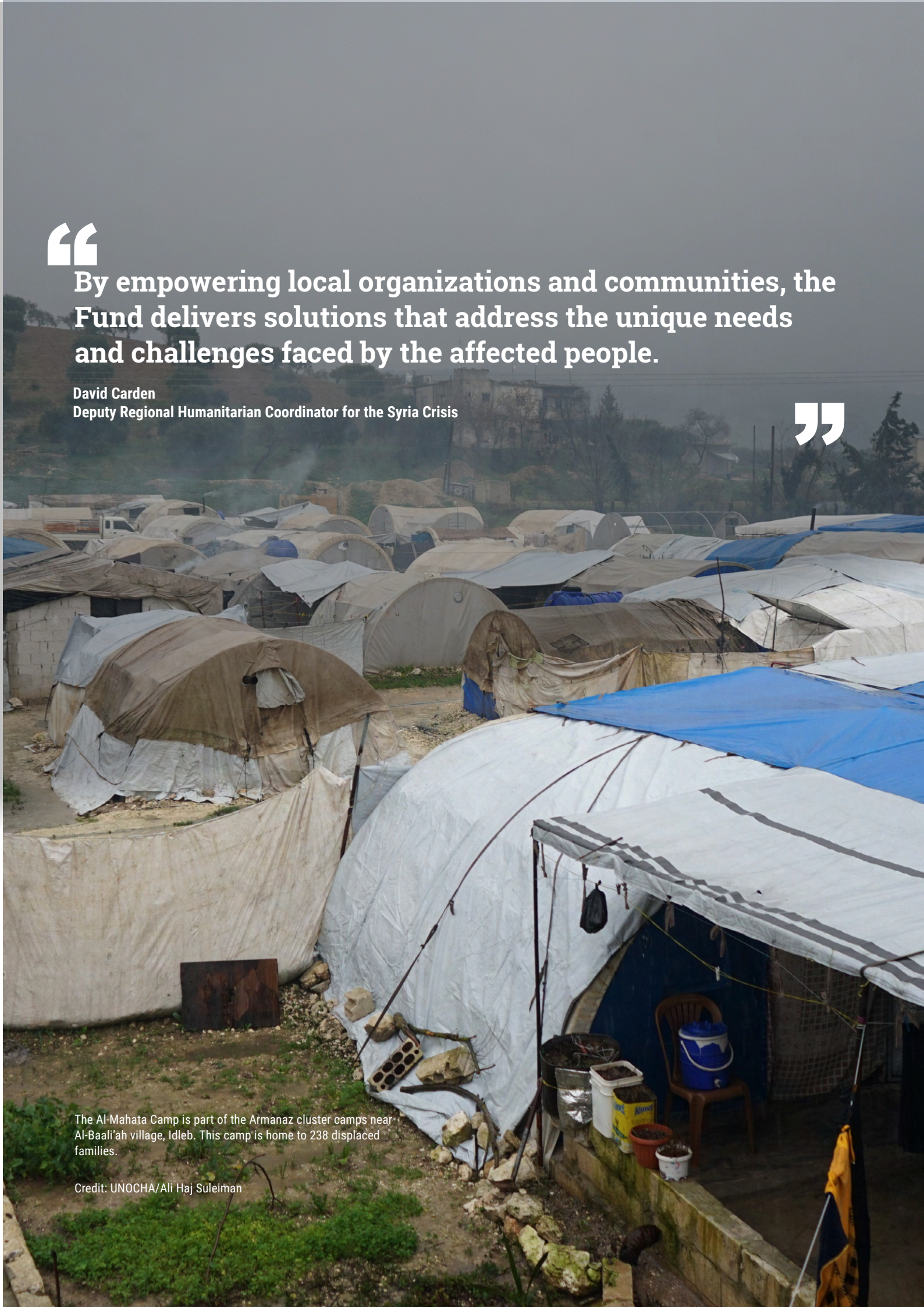
By empowering local organizations and communities, the Fund delivers solutions that address the unique needs and challenges faced by the affected people.

David Carden
Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis

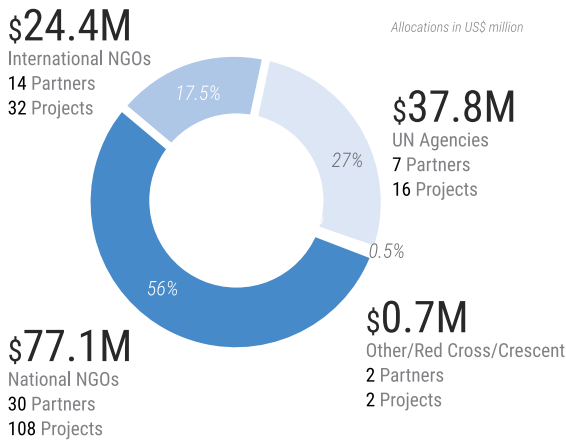
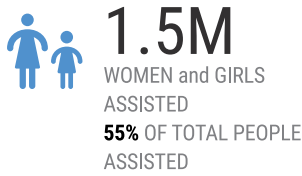
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The Al-Mahata Camp is part of the Armanaz cluster camps near Al-Baali'ah village, Idlib. This camp is home to 238 displaced families.

Credit: UNOCHA/Ali Haj Suleiman

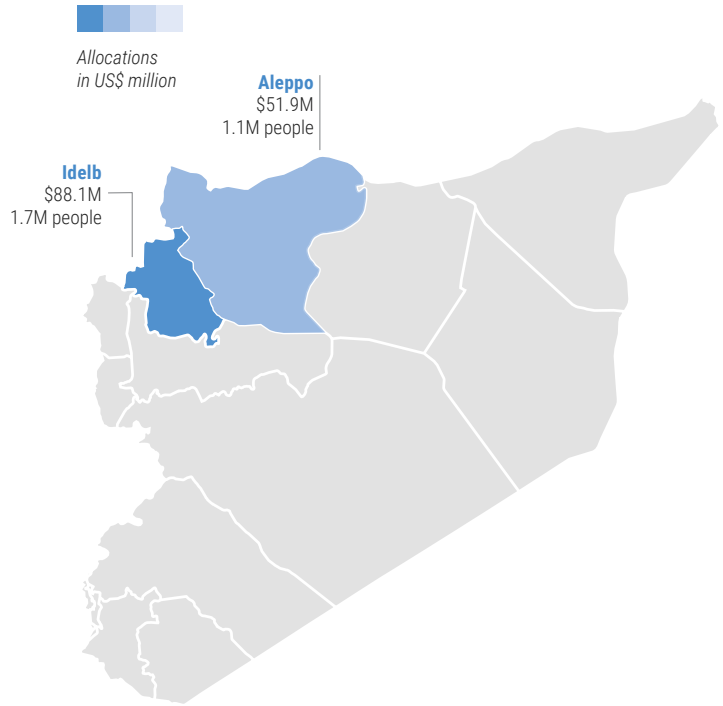
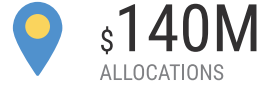
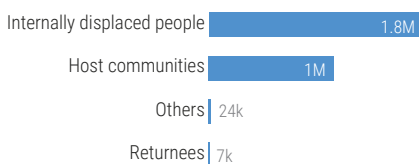


2023 IN NUMBERS



* Funds provided to humanitarian organizations as a primary recipient and excluding sub-grants arrangements. To see sub-grants included please see page 12

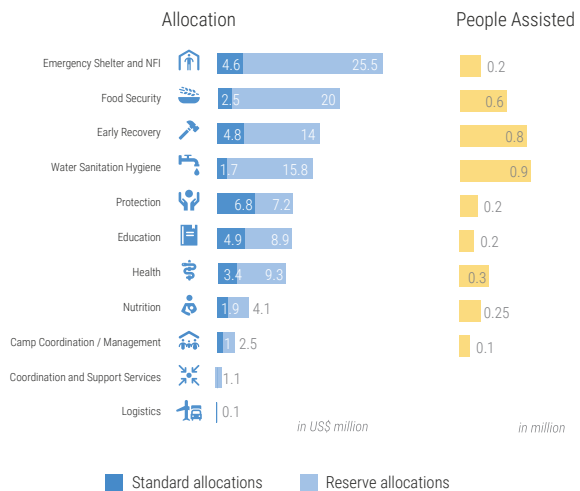
PEOPLE ASSISTED BY TYPE



* The Annual Report uses the number of people targeted as a proxy for the number of people reached and henceforth the term people assisted will be used. This approach allows for more timely global reporting as the final data on people reached only becomes available over a year after the allocation of CBPF funds. The reported outcomes will be available on the <https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/>, the CBPFs will continuously monitor if targets are reached.

** Figures for people assisted may include double counting as individuals often receive aid from multiple cluster/sectors. The maximum methodology was applied by the SCHF to estimate the number of people assisted in 2023. The total number of people assisted is thus the sum of the maximum number of targeted beneficiaries by gender and age per cluster/sectors and location at admin level III

ALLOCATIONS AND PEOPLE ASSISTED BY CLUSTER



Donor contributions



The SCHF provides a lifeline for millions of people affected by disasters and conflicts. By combining resources from multiple donors, it ensures that humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it most, when they need it most”

Charles Apotheker, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

In 2023, the SCHF continued to play a pivotal role as the primary funding mechanism addressing critical humanitarian needs in north-west Syria. The unwavering support from SCHF donors underscores the essential nature of the Funds’ mission, with the devastating earthquakes that struck north-west Syria and Türkiye was an event that triggered additional donor support and funding.

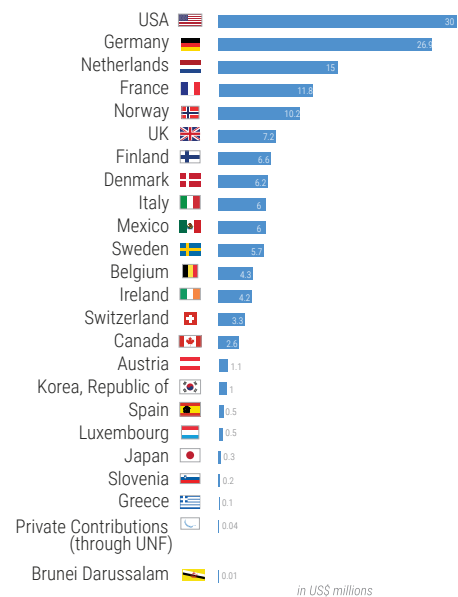
The SCHF witnessed a significant increase in funding during 2023, totaling \$150 million compared to \$118 million in the previous year - a notable 37.7 per cent rise. This increase in funding underscored the urgency of the situation and the global community’s commitment to addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

For 2023, the SCHF accounted for 13.93 per cent of the total Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funding for Syria, demonstrating its substantial contribution and commitment to the wider humanitarian efforts in addressing the consequences of the 11-year protracted conflict in Syria.

The SCHF was one of the largest Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) after Ukraine and Afghanistan. With the generous contributions received, the SCHF allocated \$140 million, with nearly \$106 million disbursed within the initial three months of the year, following the earthquake in February. These funds were instrumental in providing essential assistance, including food aid, health facilities and school rehabilitation, infrastructure repair, debris removal, and the establishment of dignified shelters in a progressively challenging and volatile environment.



\$150.1M
CONTRIBUTIONS



In 2023, donors’ engagement significantly increased, with the number of contributing countries rising from 14 to 25. Notably, Mexico, Austria, Korea, Spain, Luxembourg, Japan, Slovenia, Greece, and Brunei Darussalam joined as first-time contributors, reflecting a growing international commitment to addressing the humanitarian needs in north-west Syria. Despite the heightened donors’ participation and increased humanitarian needs, overall contributions remained relatively similar to previous years, which may be a reflection of a wider trend of decreased funding and various ongoing or emergent crises globally.


As the Fund had efficiently allocated all funding by the end of 2022,¹ and contributions tapered off in the latter half of the year, the Fund adopted a flexible, adaptive and innovative approach to allocation of resources to ensure continued support for critical interventions despite fluctuations in funding level throughout 2023, reinforcing its commitment to delivering timely and targeted assistance to vulnerable populations in north-west Syria. For example the Fund did so by launching the Earthquake Emergency Response in February, strategically planning a sequence of allocations (RA1, RA2, RA3) to define different phases of the response: Phase 1 focused on immediate life-saving response², and Phase 2 concentrated on life sustaining medium term response.³ Another targeted allocation (RA2) prioritized ensuring Accountability to Affected Population and Risk Management in response to the complex contexts. This approach enabled the Fund to swiftly provide relief to the population and enhance the humanitarian community's response within a medium-term framework. Simultaneously, the approach allowed ample time for the generous contributions that had been newly pledged to become available. RA1 was initiated using the limited available resources, supplemented at that moment by a loan from CERF. Another instance of flexibility and adaptability was the simultaneous launch of two allocations in October (SA1, RA4), with a combined envelope exceeding \$36 million following the escalation of hostilities, that created new waves of displacement and impacted millions of Syrians.

1 In 2022, the SCHF allocated \$141 million with the support of from 14 donors. To respond to the increased needs despite declining contributions (-23% on 2021), SCHF successfully utilised all available resources and carry over funds from the previous year; when earthquake struck, the SCHF recorded a low level of funding compared to the immense needs that materialised overnight on 6 February.

2 The Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund: 2023 First Standard Allocation Strategy can be found [here](#).

3 The Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund: 2023 Third Standard Allocation Strategy can be found [here](#).

DONORS WITH MULTI-YEAR CONTRIBUTIONS

 UK	\$16.8M	2022-2025
 Canada	\$3.2M	2023-2024
 Germany	\$2.8M	2021-2024

in US\$ millions

Contribution timeliness

One of the significant achievements in 2023 was the marked improvement in timeliness and predictability. Nearly 88 per cent of total contributions were received by June, enabling the allocation of 70 per cent of available funding during the first half of the year through three reserve allocations. This facilitated rapid response efforts across ten sectors, particularly in addressing immediate humanitarian needs and mitigating the impact of the earthquake and ongoing crises.

Moving into 2024, the SCHF anticipates a continued challenging funding landscape with reduced resources. To address this, the Fund will intensify its efforts in resource mobilization and advocacy while enhancing engagement with donors. It will continue to explore innovative and more cost-efficient approaches, including Cash and Voucher assistance, and through multisectoral, year-long or even multi-year funding, to support sustainable interventions in vital sectors like Education, Health, Shelter, Protection, Early recovery, and Multipurpose Cash Intervention (MPCA). Furthermore, SCHF will prioritize localization, empowering local actors, and ensuring inclusion of marginalized groups. With a focus on Anticipatory Action and efficient aid distribution, the Fund remains dedicated to providing dignified shelter solutions to internally displaced communities. Through transparency, collaboration, and adaptive leadership, SCHF will maximize its impact amid evolving humanitarian crises.

Humanitarian Context and Allocations

In the early hours of 6 February 2023, a series of earthquakes, the strongest measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale, struck southern Türkiye and northern Syria causing over 4,500 fatalities and 10,400 injuries in north-west Syria alone. This catastrophe compounded an already dire humanitarian situation, with 4.1 million individuals, out of a total population of 4.5 million, reliant on humanitarian aid for survival and access to basic services. Furthermore, an escalation of hostilities in October in Idlib and western Aleppo led to the displacement of approximately 123,000 people, exacerbating the crisis.

Through the year, the operational landscape remained intricate, characterized by ongoing challenges and uncertainties. Factors such as the expiration of the UN Security Council Resolution in July 2023 and the transition to the consent model, that allowed the continued use for six months of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to millions of people in need in north-west Syria contributed to the com-

plexity of the environment.¹ The consent model requested to rediscuss and clarify the modality of access to north-west Syria with state and non-state actors, to reassure the humanitarian response remained unchanged in principle. Additional efforts were made to enhance and adapt Accountability to Affected Population through direct feedback collection. Coordination for cross-border operations adapted with partial direct access. On a positive note, the consent model facilitated direct access of OCHA into north-west Syria, enabling the HFU to refine its working modality, particularly in planning and monitoring. While the consent remains an uncertain model in addition to being timebound, through continued direct access in 2024, the Fund will improve allocation planning, monitoring processes, and will be able to gather feedback for enhanced response effectiveness.

In the first quarters of the year, the SCHF initiated three reserve allocations to rapidly scale up and sustain a principled, accountable, and effective earthquake response until June. Additionally, the Fourth Reserve Allocation and the First Standard Allocation were launched in October to address the displacement resulting from the escalation of hostilities, protect affected communities from anticipated winter risks and ensure continued access to basic services.

As the Fund navigates the uncertainties of the coming year, it remains steadfast in its commitment to serving vulnerable populations and mitigating the impact of crises in north-west Syria through prioritizing flexible interventions able to deliver in the short and medium term, while remaining strategic and committed to localization and Cash Based assistance, and supporting the objectives and priorities set out in the Humanitarian Response Plan.²

¹ [Secretary-General Welcomes United Nations Understanding With Syrian Government to Continue Using Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing for Delivering Life-Saving Aid](#)

² The SCHF is a key enabler of the Dignified Shelter Approach in north-west Syria. See the 2024 Dignified Shelter Advocacy Note [here](#).



The damage caused by the February 6 earthquake in Jandairis.

Credit: OCHA/Mohanad Zayat

2023

Contributions

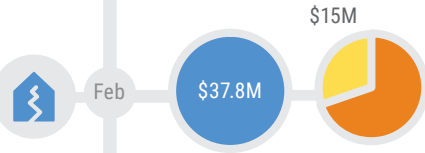
Allocations



On 10 January, the Security Council unanimously decided to extend the use of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for the delivery of aid into north-west Syria until 10 July 2023.



In February, a devastating **7.7** magnitude earthquake struck north-west Syria and Türkiye on 6 February, followed by strong aftershocks and a second earthquake of 7.5 magnitude on the same day impacting approximately 3 million people in north-west Syria.



First Reserve Allocation: Earthquake Emergency Response in Northwest Syria

The earthquake hit at the height of winter and in communities deeply impacted by over ten years of hostilities and protracted displacements. With mounting humanitarian needs, the SCHF launched a \$30 million Reserve Allocation to scale up the humanitarian response by local and national responders providing critical lifesaving assistance to earthquake-affected people. The allocation was the first in a series of allocations in response to the earthquake, and eventually allocated \$34.6 million, also complemented by a \$15 million CERF allocation.

On the same day, the aid pre-positioned in late 2022 north-west Syria was released including trauma kits by the World Health Organization (WHO) to 16 hospitals. Partners also opened reception centers to support displaced families.

Partners reported about depletion of available pre-positioned aid stock. OCHA Türkiye communicated to SCHF donors requesting urgent contributions.

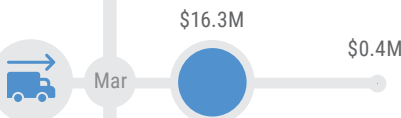
Access to north-west Syria through two additional crossings between Türkiye and Syria Bab al-Salam and Al Ra'ee granted for three months by the Government of Syria (GoS).

CERF loan requested to assist with the launch of SCHF reserve allocation to allow of pledged donor contributions to materialize.

CERF released a \$15 million to respond to earthquake-affected population of Syria.

The UN and humanitarian partners called for \$397.6 million in a Flash Appeal for Syria launched on 14 February.

The UN and partners scaled up the cross-border operation. As of 31 March, more than 1,200 trucks carrying aid provided by seven UN agencies had crossed into north-west Syria.



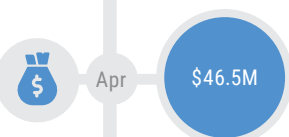
Significant localized flooding in southern Idlib and northern Aleppo affected almost 50 IDP sites with 1,500 tents destroyed.

International donor conference took place in Brussels in support of earthquake victims in Syria and Türkiye.

Second Reserve Allocation: Ensuring Accountability to Affected People and Risk Management in the Earthquake Response in Northwest Syria

The SCHF launched a Reserve Allocation to ensure Accountability to Affected People, and strengthen the prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment for the cross-border response through the PSEAH Network, and to enhance Risk Management at the Gaziantep-hub level through the Risk Management Unit hosted by IOM. This allocation complemented the RA1 launched in February and the CERF allocation for the Syria earthquake response.

CERF released \$25 million to respond to continued needs of earthquake-affected population of Syria.



Emergency education and psychosocial support to boys and girls affected by the earthquake in north-west Syria.

Credit: People In Need (PIN)



Overall reflections on Allocations

By November 2023, the SCHF allocated all available contributions, playing a catalytic role to support urgent life-saving assistance in the north-west Syria. This support was particularly crucial given the multiple challenges facing the areas, including the aftermath of an earthquake, ongoing hostilities, socioeconomic hardship, and a lack of safe and functioning infrastructure, which exacerbated humanitarian needs and heightened the risks faced by vulnerable populations.

The SCHF demonstrated its responsiveness by swiftly mobilizing resources to address these complex needs and risks. As the first funding mechanism to support the earthquake response, the SCHF strategically allocated funds to priority areas with high and life-saving impact. Innovative and flexible projects were prioritized, such as initiatives to convert debris into construction material using environmentally sustainable techniques. These projects aimed to maximize the impact of humanitarian interventions and reach sustainable outcomes.

Furthermore, the SCHF played a critical role in supporting the DRHC advocacy and fund mobilization efforts, providing institutional donors with sufficient time to disburse their donations, while to supporting operational humanitarian partners.

In addition to financial support, and following the endorsement of the SCHF Advisory Board, the SCHF provided “flexibility guidance” to its existing partners, allowing them to promptly reprogram

ongoing activities and projects. This flexibility enabled the rapid reprogramming of \$5.3 million worth of projects, facilitating a quicker response through initiatives already operational on the ground.

Following the endorsement from the Advisory Board, SCHF also covered Duty of Care (DoC) expenditure of partners whose staff were impacted by the earthquake. Staff based in Türkiye and north-west Syria received financial support according to their organization’s DoC policy. This effort was especially well-received by the humanitarian community, considering how the earthquake impacted many aid workers who were already involved in the Syria response and personally impacted having lost family members or homes or both.

The second phase for the SCHF earthquake response was launched on 22 May, via the Third Reserve Allocation of \$70,9 million that focused on addressing medium to longer term needs, including support to improve dignified living conditions for the most vulnerable in under-served sites, which included constructing or rehabilitating 8,146 dignified shelter units, equipped with basic amenities and kitchen sets, to accommodate 39,000 internally displaced people and host community households; provision of cash for rent to 27,000 people, and rehabilitation of roads and camps, clearing debris, and provision of essential services and infrastructure such as drainage, sewage, and electricity.

This effort was consistent with the dignified shelter approach spearheaded by the SCHF since 2021,

that has allocated a total of \$34 million, enabling 8 National and Syrian NGOs, 7 International NGOs, and 3 UN agencies, and a Red Cross/Red Crescent partner to deliver 11,510 units in total to more than 55,000 individuals, including women, men, children, elderly, and people with disabilities who have been able to move out of tents and IDP camps into new homes, significantly improving their living standards.

The dignified shelter approach addressed the critical humanitarian concern of massive displacements, exacerbated by inadequate IDP sites and extreme living conditions, particularly during winter and which present severe risks, especially for women and girls, while extreme weather particularly affects young children and elderly. The dignified shelters approach is multisectoral and inclusive; it improves living conditions, provides essential services, and mitigates health and protection risks and enhances the resilience of displaced populations. Moving forward, the dignified shelter approach will continue to be a SCHF key priority for 2024.

The escalation of hostilities on 5 October saw incidents of shelling and airstrikes, which affected over 2,300 locations and forced into displacement over 120,000 people in two weeks. Considering the situation, the allocation of \$2.6 million focused on strengthening the management and quality of camps where the newly displaced sought refuge, supporting health facilities treating wounded pa-

tients, rehabilitating 10 water stations, three water networks and 17 education facilities damaged by the shelling. Due to the urgency of needs, the allocation was completed in one week with immediate disbursements reaching partners within 10 days.

The SCHF enabled integrated interventions focusing on improving dignified living conditions for the most vulnerable IDPs in underserved sites, through promoting flexible cash and voucher assistance (CVA) modalities that reached 554,000 individuals, infrastructure rehabilitation, including provision of dignified shelters to 80,000 people, debris removal that were further recycled to pave the roads in IDP camps benefitting 275,000 individuals, 1,064 schools, hospitals and markets rehabilitated. In addition, some 760,000 individuals received access to water, while another 562,000 persons were supported with food and livelihood activities.

Among other anticipatory interventions in 2023, the SCHF funded UNICEF to implement a project for the rehabilitation of a dam in Kafruhin (Idleb) and the establishment of wastewater treatment systems to prevent massive flooding and large-scale cholera outbreaks in overcrowded camps, in addition to help reduce pollution of agricultural lands.

As in previous years, the SCHF continued to champion interventions ahead of seasonal trends and potential shocks, evident in the allocation of \$31.6 million (SA1), focusing on winterization needs, in anticipation of rainfall, flooding and freezing temperatures, in addition to conflict-related threats.



Winter clothing distribution to ensuring continued access to learning and education in north-west Syria.

Credit: Massrat (The Establishment for Human Care and Development)

Promoting Localization



66%
OF FUNDING PROVIDED
TO LOCAL PARTNERS,
OF WHICH 55 PER
CENT WAS PROVIDED
DIRECTLY

The Fund remains committed to capacitating local humanitarian actors, aligning with the principles of the Grand Bargain’s localization agenda, “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary”. The SCHF consistently endeavors to enhance the performance of local humanitarian non-governmental organizations, thereby broadening avenues for funding access and enhancing the quality of aid provision.

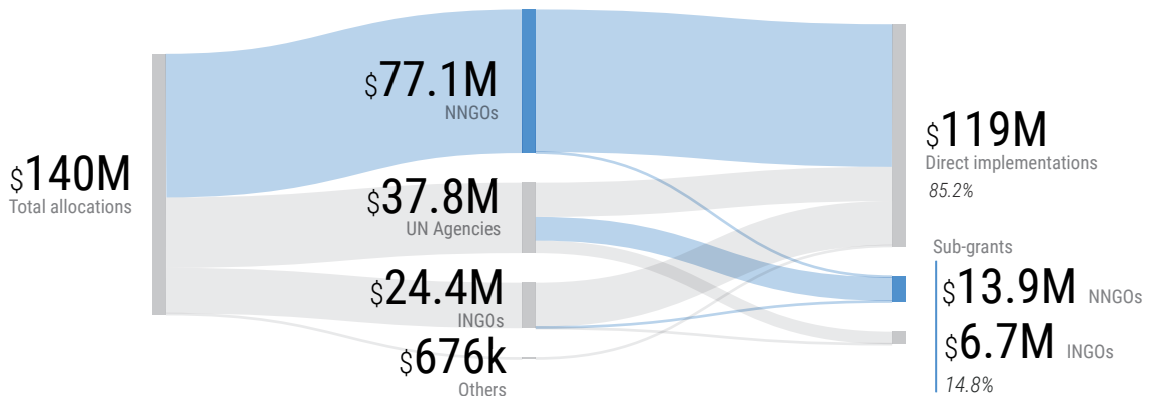
Financing Local Partners

In response to the heightened humanitarian needs arising from the earthquake and subsequent escalation of hostilities, the Fund allocated \$140 million across five allocations. Notably, a significant portion of these allocations - \$93.1 million - equivalent to 66 per cent of overall funding, was directed towards national NGOs. This is a slight increase compared to the preceding year, when 61 per cent of funding was allocated to national NGOs. Furthermore, this distribution signifies a

commendable achievement for the Fund and the humanitarian community, in surpassing the established global performance indicator, with 55 per cent of total allocations directly benefiting national partners, exceeding the 30 per cent benchmark for direct funding and 10 per cent for indirect funding.

In 2023, the SCHF funded 108 projects to 30 Syrian/national NGOs (out of the 40 active partners); while four partners received funds for the first time. It is particularly interesting to note that while the average direct funding to national NGOs is 55 per cent in four key sectors such as Early Recovery, Health, Protection and Emergency Shelter, the share of overall funding implemented by national partners is well is close to 70 per cent, considering the subgrants, showcasing the leadership. On a less positive note, the SCHF keeps struggling to partner with Women-Led Organizations (WLOs) as in 2023 only one such partner succeeded to receive grants.

ALLOCATION FLOW BY PARTNER TYPE *in US\$ million*



Reflections from local partner Takaful Al Sham

Being a member of the SCHF Advisory Board and representing the NNGOs has proven to be a fulfilling position. Not only has the SCHF been supportive of localization, but also the DRHC and OCHA have been active listeners of the needs of the NGO Community. The focus has always been on strengthening local capacities, addressing the needs on the ground, and finding ways to ensure that allocations are made when they are most needed. The highlight of SCHF in the years that I have worked with them as a partner or as a member of the AB, was during the time of the devastating EQ which shook both Türkiye and Syria, the OCHA team that made sure to stand with the humanitarian community and stay on the ground, the ones who took the time to ask about others before themselves and to work around the clock to review and approve requests to re-program projects and programs to help EQ affected communities, to

support local NGOs cover duty of care, to listen to the Humanitarian Community, and most of all to mobilize resources to release an emergency allocation within a mere few weeks. I feel that my concerns representing the NNGOs and the concerns of the people in need in Syria have been heard, discussed, and addressed. Appreciation goes to the open communication, the feel of equal membership, engagement, and support for the actual North-west Syria Response as a whole; truly fulfilling its mandate and vision of promoting and scaling-up localization efforts, ensuring a gender sensitive, inclusive, and accountable humanitarian response, and promoting innovation and sustainability to ultimately invest in humanity.

Marwa Eissa, Takaful Al Sham (TAS), SCHF AB Member



SCHF local partner, Takaful Al Sham, providing urgent daily needs for families affected by the earthquake, across three camps in Jandairis, northern Syria, they delivered winter blankets, water and bread.

Credit: Takaful Al Sham



10
TRAININGS



85
NNGOS TRAINED



1
WOMEN-LED/
WOMEN RIGHTS
ORGANIZATION
TRAINED

Promoting local partner participation in coordinated humanitarian response and strengthening their capacity:

The SCHF ensures the active engagement of national NGOs in its governance structures, notably through its Advisory Board and Review Committees, which rigorously evaluate partner proposals. In tandem, the OCHA Humanitarian Financing Unit (HFU) strategically engages diverse humanitarian coordination platforms to enhance understanding of allocation procedures and eligibility criteria, highlighting the importance of cluster collaboration as a prerequisite for potential partnership with the Fund.

In 2023, the HFU conducted targeted Capacity Assessment and Due Diligence for inactive partners that expressed a renewed interest to work with the SCHF, particularly in the aftermath of the earthquake and will plan for an open capacity assessment in 2024. Moreover, the HFU conducted specialized training sessions covering SCHF allocation procedures, project development, implementation and reporting, and risk management.

Acknowledging that the lack of information available and opportunities to engage in a local language constitutes a major barrier to local partners' engagement with international humanitarian financing mechanisms, the HFU conducted allocation awareness sessions in Arabic and English.

In 2023, the HFU conducted 10 trainings including technical sessions on specific allocations, GMS refreshers and proposal writing, as well as inclusive programming, interactive workshops on Gender, PSEA, protection mainstreaming, and AAP with the contribution of the Protection Cluster and Gender, PSEA, and AAP advisors. All sessions were conducted in English, supported with Arabic interpretation. Specific sessions held in Arabic were also conducted in line with the commitment made through the Action Plan for Change¹ to ensure the appropriate use of local languages in all meetings and documents, thus facilitating the meaningful engagement of local organizations and affected people.

¹ [Accountability to Affected People Assessing NGO engagement with the Collective AAP Framework](#)

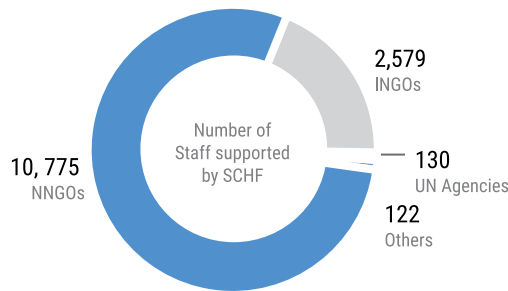
Initiated in 2021, the Humanitarian Liaison Group's Action Plan for Change, focuses on inclusive participation of crisis-affected people by consulting with diverse groups, tailoring allocation strategies, and dynamically collecting feedback. This includes piloting projects identifying barriers for persons with disabilities and implementing initiatives to the listen and respond to the voices of Affected People, contributing to a comprehensive approach for accountable and inclusive humanitarian response.

Through capacity assessments and ongoing monitoring efforts, the HFU has observed that while national NGOs possess invaluable insights into local operational contexts and play a pivotal role in delivering assistance in hard-to-reach areas, they often exhibit limited institutional capacity, with limited understanding and participation in the humanitarian response and coordination mechanisms, dependency on limited pool of institutional donors, limited or absence of managerial, risk-management, accountability, HR and financial policies and practices. To address this, the HFU advocated for the integration of capacity development initiatives for local partners within project frameworks, with provisions outlined in project log frames or separate action plans, adequately budgeted.

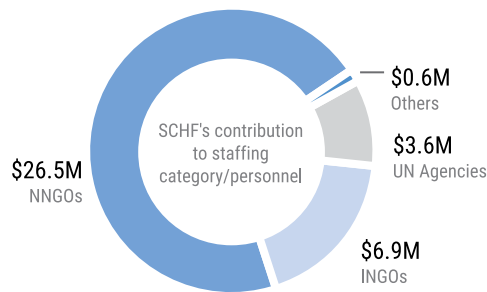
For example, in 2023, with funding from the SCHF, UNDP implemented a winterization project in Idleb through rehabilitation of roads and shelters damaged by the earthquake. As part of this project, UNDP developed a capacity-building program leveraging its global network of experts. This program targeted 130 CSOs and 4 local networks, aiming to enhance their capacity in humanitarian operations, address emerging issues in north-west Syria, and promote feedback-driven improvement in programming.

Training included technical, programmatic, and managerial and institutional building aspects, addressing themes such as Climate Change, Human Rights, Earthquake Resistant Shelter Design, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education, Waste Management, Emergency Employment, Psychosocial Support, Gender Mainstreaming, and Legal Matters. For the Managerial and institutional building aspects, the focus was mostly on Procurement and Financial Management.

STAFF SUPPORTED BY SCHF BY PARTNER TYPE



SCHF FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO STAFFING CATEGORY/PERSONNEL



The support the SCHF provided to its partners in north-west Syria is unique amongst the CBPFs in terms of funding and number of staff salaries and positions. From all 2023 allocations (\$140 million)

22 per cent of programing costs were addressed to cover human resources expenditure. The large majority are staff working in field and providing direct services to the people.

Growing partnership with national NGOs

As a result of the scaled-up humanitarian operations since February 2023 and the Fund's active partner outreach, there has been a remarkable surge in interest from organizations seeking partnership with the SCHF. In 2023, the Fund conducted partner reassessments as part of efforts to invest and ensure local partners are adequately meeting the requirements of the CBPF. In 2023, the Fund has had a pool of 78 eligible partners, comprising of 26 international NGOs, 40 national NGOs, 10 UN agencies and two Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement organizations.

In 2024, the SCHF plans to open the capacity assessment window for all interested prospective partners, with the aim of bringing more experience and technical capacity to implement projects in north-west Syria, with a particular focus on sectors facing shortages in partner availability. In addition, the Fund is committed to assessing the capacities of and allocating funds to eligible local Women-Led Organizations (WLOs) and organizations representing people with disabilities as part of its commitment to inclusivity and diversity in humanitarian interventions.

On 17 May, a business fair was held in Deir Ballut, northern Aleppo, showcasing products of entrepreneurs ranging from sweets, dairy goods, pickles, clothing and electronic equipment. The entrepreneurs who participated in the fair were supported by a SCHF project, providing vocational training and seed-grants. At the end of the fair, the SCHF partner distributed trophies to distinguished entrepreneurs who shared their experiences with their communities.

Credit: OCHA/Anastasya Kahala Atassi





DIGNIFIED SHELTER: SAAD'S STORY

“Living with walls and a roof feels like a dream [...] it feels like a real home to us. The comfort and security provided by doors and windows protect my wife and children.”

In the aftermath of the earthquake, Saad Khiyara's family descended into chaos, their home reduced to rubble. They were forced into makeshift shelter, facing harsh conditions lacking basic necessities.

Saad Khiyara says: *“We miraculously escaped from our home during the earthquake [...] We sought refuge in one of the shelter centers to protect my family from the freezing cold and heavy rain temporarily, instead of being on the streets without any shelter.”*

Recognizing the urgent need for sustainable housing solutions, a national and an international partner launched the “Land of Giving” project funded by SCHF, aimed to provide dignified shelter to families who had lost everything in the disaster.

The housing units, equipped with essential amenities, offer security and privacy, marking a hopeful step towards rebuilding shattered lives. After moving to the new home, Saad's family expressed profound gratitude

for the positive change in their life: *“Living with walls and a roof feels like a dream. This house protects us from the scorching summer and the cold winter. It is equipped with a kitchen and a bathroom [...] it feels like a real home to us. The comfort and security provided by doors and windows protect my wife and children from theft or intrusion by strangers into our home.”*

The Land of Giving housing project provided a “new home” to 200 families, including sewage infrastructure, and high tanks for drinking water, internal roads, lighting, and a school for 200 students.

[Read more impact stories on StoryHub.](#)



Photos of Saad and the shelter provided by ATAA.

Credit: ATAA

Programming Highlights

Alleviating earthquake conditions on humanitarian communities through Duty of Care and resiliency support

In the humanitarian context of north-west Syria, the Duty of Care (DoC) entails ensuring the safety, well-being, and protection of both affected population and humanitarian workers amidst the ongoing conflict and crisis. This includes prioritizing the protection of communities from harm, upholding humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, and providing essential services based on need alone. Humanitarian organizations must also prioritize the safety and security of their staff through effective risk management measures and collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

The SCHF has activated the DoC for several of its partners staff in response to the trauma created by the devastating earthquake in 2023. This came with the support of the Advisory Board with guidance provided by OCHA's CBPF Section in New York. SCHF provided DoC support to 1,014 NGO humanitarian workers and their families. In Türkiye, this referred to 266 staff while in north-west Syria, the DoC was provided to 748 staff.

Early recovery mechanisms and interventions are essential for facilitating the rebuilding of communities following conflict or disaster. These efforts typically involve restoration of essential services like healthcare and education, livelihood support through cash assistance and vocational training, rehabilitation of infrastructure and shelters, provision of psychosocial support to address trauma, community engagement and capacity building, coordination among humanitarian actors, and integration of risk reduction measures to enhance resilience.

The SCHF has generously supported three sectors, namely: Shelter and NFIs, Food security, and Early

Recovery with funds amounting to \$71.3 million. Building on efforts from previous years, the SCHF supported the installation of dignified shelters instead of short-lasting tents. In addition, the SCHF through its partner UNDP piloted environmentally sustainable debris processing with the recycled materials further used for the much-needed roads rehabilitation ensuring access of the affected population to the basic services. Looking towards 2024, the Fund will continue to encourage innovative ideas and sustainable solutions on the ground.

Promoting the Centrality of Protection

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) is a paramount concern within the framework of the Syria cross border Humanitarian Fund. SCHF prioritizes the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse throughout their operations. This commitment entails robust measures aimed at creating safe environments for all individuals, especially those affected by emergencies and crises. Within SCHF work, stringent policies and guidelines are established to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of sexual exploitation and abuse promptly and effectively.

Measures to prevent SEA include training staff and partners, implementing codes of conduct, establishing reporting mechanisms, and ensuring support services are provided to survivors. By prioritizing PSEA, SCHF endeavors to uphold the dignity, safety, and rights of all individuals, fostering an environment of trust, accountability, and respect within humanitarian action.

In 2023, the Fund conducted PSEA training sessions to partners and their staff before each key allocation, reaching a total of 274 staff with 10 sessions dedicated to SCHF partners, including WLOs and cluster staff. The trainings were embedded in the preparation sessions ahead of the first

and third Reserve Allocations, aimed at promoting the centrality of protection in the proposals received during the critical Earthquake Response Allocations (Phases 1 and 2).

In October, HFU organized extended sessions ahead of the first Standard Allocation about Inclusive Programming, including interactive workshops on Gender, PSEA, Protection mainstreaming, and AAP with the contribution of the Protection cluster and Gender, PSEA, and AAP advisors.

In ensuring the inclusion of disabled persons in the Fund's work, it is essential to prioritize accessibility, consultation, and participation of disabled individuals and organizations in planning and implementing humanitarian projects. By integrating disability inclusion into all aspects of its work, SCHF has better addressed the specific needs of disabled individuals and contribute to building more inclusive and resilient communities in north-west Syria. In 2023, the fund targeted 480,300 people with disabilities with different assistances and interventions, including under Protection, Education, WASH, Shelter, Early Recovery, Health, amongst the others. Project proposals were expected to demonstrate how information about disability is collected in a sensitive manner and assessed against this criterion.

Strengthening Accountability to Affected People

As part of its commitment to ensuring effective Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) and addressing PSEAH related risks, SCHF contrib-

uted to enhancing the ongoing dialogue between crisis-affected communities and humanitarian organizations through allowing targeted population to identify and prioritize their needs and develop solutions on how to better address them. In 2023, the Fund continued to support the north-west Syria Safeline Hotline. This hotline was initially established in 2019 as the inter-agency SEAH Community-based Complaint Mechanism (CBCM) and in 2023 evolved to include also AAP and corruption, fraud, and aid diversion in line with the communities' requests. During the year, the hotline proved to be an effective tool for information dissemination (28 per cent of calls), to respond to the cases of dissatisfaction with services (12 per cent), to requests services and assistance (24 per cent), to report humanitarian workers misconduct (6 per cent).

The SCHF continued to support common coordination and systematic accountability and assurance requirements for the response in north-west Syria. In March 2023, following the DRHC request, the SCHF via the second Reserve Allocation supported the continuation and strengthening of the Risk Management Unit (RMU), which aims to mitigate risks related to fraud, corruption and aid diversion and foster a more harmonized approach among UN, NGOs and donors.

In addition, in the aftermath of the earthquake, a rumor tracker was quickly established by the AAP Task Force, with support from the SCHF, to combat misinformation and disinformation in north-west Syria, feeding into risk snapshots.



Post-natal care unit in a child healthcare center funded by SCHF, providing specialized services.

Credit: Sham Humanitarian Foundation (AHF)

A noteworthy trend was observed after one year of social listening and tracking: numerous rumors deemed high-risk often showed up within a month as complaints. The system eventually played a crucial role in promptly alerting relevant stakeholders to issues that demand immediate attention enhancing the response's efficiency and effectiveness ensuring that resources are allocated where they are most needed and mitigating potential reputational risks that misinformation can cause.

Provided that the funding is available in 2024, SCHF would invest in training the locally-based volunteers on efficient tracking of community sentiments on social media and in face-to-face encounters in north-west Syria as well as enhance the volunteers' skills of classifying and verifying higher-risk rumors.

The most widespread rumors revolved around fears, followed by general complaints regarding poor projects implementation or their inadequacy to meet the population needs and the delay or lack of aid, especially in the final months of 2023. This is as potential indication of increased need or decreased access to certain areas.

In the second part of the year, the rumor tracker began increasingly recording information related to corruption and fraud. Consequently, the system revealed its potential to become a source of broader information covering a variety of risks within the scope of the Risk Management Unit, thereby also supporting it.

The Fund continued to support Humanitarian Field Officers project whose primary objective is to enhance the presence, data and feedback collection in the field through regular reports on the humanitarian situation and context, contributing to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the coordinated response, including through providing comprehensive support to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group.

Addressing Gender Equality and Responding to Gender Based Violence (GBV)

SCHF promotes gender equality and addresses Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), as part of CBPS' and OCHA's priority areas that are often underfunded. In 2023, the Fund ensured systematic consideration of gender in allocation strategies and funding decisions, working closely, and aligning with the Protection cluster strategic approach revision. This shift towards a compre-

hensive approach included tailored GBV services, community empowerment, economic support, and CVA interventions, effectively targeting individuals at heightened risk particularly following the earthquake and the escalation of hostilities that created subsequent waves of separated families and resulted in an increase of unaccompanied children and CAAFAG.¹ The first Standard Allocation in particular was carefully crafted to support this coordinated effort.

Through the year, dedicated gender experts and focal points were integrated into decision-making processes and review committees, with gender-balanced representation achieved regularly. With the introduction of the GBV marker, SCHF enhanced the engagement of partners and tracking of the component, resulting in 98% of the 158 funded projects incorporating GBV considerations, including 6 projects with GBV objectives and 26 encompassing specific components. Over \$4.8 million were invested in GBV prevention and response actions, benefiting over 213,000 individuals.

Recognizing the crucial role of WROs/WLOs, SCHF initiated a partnership with UN Women to enhance their role in north-west Syria. The SCHF in collaboration with the Gender Working Group, and AAP, Protection and Inclusion advisors trained 82 partner, cluster, and review committee staffs in four dedicated sessions², on Quality of programming including Gender, PSEA, AAP, Protection mainstreaming, disability inclusion before allocations

SCHF's initiatives in 2023 reflect a commitment to addressing gender inequalities and preventing and responding to GBV risks, ensuring marginalized groups receive necessary support and assistance. Continued partnerships and capacity-building efforts aim to strengthen gender-responsive approaches and enhance the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian interventions.

Enhancing Complementarity with CERF and other Funding Streams

Upon the early days of the earthquake, the SCHF had insufficient resources to launch a wide emergency response. Despite donors being quick to pledge contributions, payments would not be completed in time. The Türkiye approached CERF Secretariat to examine if a "CERF-loan" would be pos-

¹ Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

² All sessions are either held in Arabic and English or includes an interpretations service

sible to kick-start the SCHF earthquake response; the loan was a temporarily measure to ensure financial resources to SCHF to rapidly scale up the earthquake emergency response and provide time for the pledged contributions by many donors to be received. The CERF Secretariat agreed with the request initially approving a \$20 million loan, but only \$10 million was eventually required with CERF being refunded after a period of two months.

In response to the earthquake that hit Syria and Türkiye on 6 February 2023, an Operational Peer Review (OPR) mission to Syria took place from 2 to 13 July 2023. The purpose of the OPR was to provide the humanitarian actors managing the earthquake response in Syria with an opportunity to review the direction and performance of the ongoing response and reflect on future planning. The OPR report specifically mentioned the SCHF allocations highlighting the CERF-loan as an innovative approach in sudden emergencies and “a best practice of pooled fund complementarity that should be repeated”.

Anticipatory Action: establishment of wastewater treatment system in Idleb to reduce pollution of agricultural lands

People in North-West Syria continue to suffer from communicable diseases such as acute watery diarrhea and acute bloody diarrhea since the be-

ginning of the mass displacement of people that resulted from armed-conflict in the year 2011. The issue has exacerbated with the outbreak of cholera in the year 2022. Despite numerous preventive measures taken up by WASH cluster and the lead agency UNICEF, the incidences of these preventable diseases continue endangering over five million people. Since the beginning of the outbreak in 2022, at least 202,548 suspected cases were recorded. The most affected were women and children, whose immune systems are affected with frequent bouts of diarrheal diseases, adding to further malnutrition and stunting.

Indiscriminate disposal of wastewater into the Idleb reservoir from communities and camps in and around Idleb may be responsible for the pollutions of groundwater aquifer that is a source of drinking water for millions. In addition, untreated wastewater that is frequently used for irrigation is spreading communicable diseases as people often consume salads that is based on the vegetables grown with the use of polluted wastewater.

Thanks to SCHF funds UNICEF was enabled to design a project to collect and treat wastewater generated from 144,000 people residing in three communities namely Idleb, Kafer Jales and Masha had and 16 informal settlements/camps. With the completion of the plant, the treated wastewater

Aerial view of the wastewater treatment plant realised by UNICEF. Once completed, it will provide safe irrigation water for 144,000 people in Idleb.

Credit: UNICEF



will be directly used for irrigation, reducing the chance of pollution of agricultural lands. Thus, the potential infections spreading through raw-vegetables used as salad and aquifer pollution are expected to reduce, enhancing health and quality of life. Once completed in April 2024, the project is expected to benefit at least 1.225 million people in north-west Syria.

Additionally, capacity building workshops equipped stakeholders with essential skills for effective CVA implementation. These initiatives underscored the SCHF's commitment to innovative and tailored approaches, enhancing humanitarian aid delivery to vulnerable populations in north-west Syria.

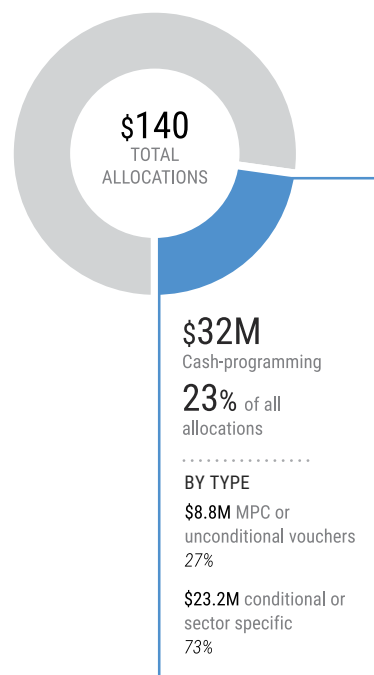
Advancing Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)

In 2023, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) in north-west Syria saw notable advancements with 1,3 million people assisted by 34 partners with a total value for \$161,5 million across nine sectors³. Mobile money transfers facilitated by local telecom providers streamlined cash assistance delivery in Aleppo, while comprehensive market assessments in Idlib ensured targeted aid distribution by the partners. Voucher programs for essential goods, including food and hygiene items, supported local vendors and stimulated economic activity. With the key support of the SCHF, that invested 23 per cent (\$32 million) of its resources in CVA, including supporting stand-alone Multipurpose (MPC) cash interventions for the first time the Cash Working Group has developed Multipurpose Cash (MPC) Guidance and key recommendations⁴ aimed at harmonizing approaches, installments, monitoring processes and ultimately enhance cost-efficiency and effectiveness and uphold the highest level accountability to affected people and ensure the use of CVA remains relevant and flexible.

³ See Northwest Syria Cash And Vouchers Assistance Dashboard [here](#). Sectors supported are Early Recovery And Livelihoods, Education, Food Security And Livelihood, ESNFI, Nutrition, WASH.

⁴ To know more about Multipurpose Cash (MPC) transfer values, see [here](#).

TOTAL CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE



Women employed through Cash for Work program for debris removal after the earthquake



Credit: UNDP

Marei at his shop.

Credit: Takaful Al Sham



Today I can provide for my family again... this is a dream come true”

MICROGRANTS TO REBUILD: MAREI'S STORY

Marei, a happy family man with four children from Palmyra, was forced to flee his home due to the conflict and moved to Al-Raqqa with his family, but after two years of hardship, found no stable work and was forced to move again, this time to Maarat Misrin in Idlib, home to many IDP families with dozens of camps. Arrived in Idleb, Marai was only able to afford renting an unfinished apartment for three months.

“Leaving everything behind was unimaginable,” Marei says, recalling the double displacement.

Finding a job in Maarat Misrin seemed impossible, with many people in search and knowing no one, but a kind neighbor offered him a restaurant job and donated some furniture for his house.

Marei quickly became a skilled cook, using these skills also at home, preparing food with his wife to sell to neighbors for a little extra income. As their customer base grew, Marei dreamt of opening his own shop.

Years of hard work and some little savings allowed him to rent a shop, but he lacked funds to maintain a proper stock and inventory.

“Finally, a grant opportunity emerged,” Marei recalls.


Through Takaful Al-Sham and SCHF funding, Marei received a \$1,200 grant in 2023. He used it to improve his shop and buy supplies, so now his business is faring well and in future he is planning to finish his house and make it more comfortable for his wife and children.

Marei is one of 466 individuals supported by this project alone, which revitalized the local economy and gave hope for a better life to many.


“Today, I can provide for my family again,” Marei says with pride. *“This is a dream come true.”*

[Read more impact stories on StoryHub.](#)


SECTOR /CLUSTER ACHIEVEMENTS





Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items

8,146  Dignified Shelter units constructed or rehabilitated and delivered to host **39,000** Internally displaced people and host community

Granted **\$8.3M** in cash assistance, aiding **27,000** families in home rental or rehabilitation post-earthquake


Distributed **5000** Non Food Items and kitchen sets, benefitting **18,000** individuals 

 Rehabilitated **20km** of roads within camps, clearing debris




Food Security


Provided in-kind food assistance to **384,000** people in **15 subdistricts** of Idlib and Aleppo post-earthquake


Distributed **1M** bread bundles to **8,000** internally displaced families over 3 months and **rehabilitated 56 bakeries**, providing bread for **169,000 families** 


 Supported **400** farmers with fertilizers to improve production and distributed 87.5 tons of seeds to **1,100 families** allowing restart their farming




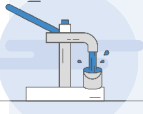
Early Recovery and Livelihoods

Reactivated **175** markets and warehouses, supporting **120,000** people post-earthquake 




Initiated **840** family businesses through cash grants, benefitting over **4,000 households** 


Created **6,500** short-term jobs. 


Installed **333** solar energy systems for **3,000** IDP households 



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Rehabilitated Kafr Rouhin Dam and wastewater treatment stations, serving **144,000** people with safe water. Implemented **4** sewage networks for **327,000** people. Established **67** water stations for **1.8 million** people.   

Delivered **3,077** truckloads of water for **37,000** IDPs post-earthquake. Installed **331** latrines for **34,000 people** 




Protection

Set up and supported **37** Child Friendly Spaces that welcomed **15,000** boys and girls as well as **9** Women and Girls Safe Spaces for **18,000** marginalized and heightened risk females 


Offered mental health and psycho-social support to **107,000** people and supported **161,000** individuals with Gender Based Violence prevention or response 

Provided Land and Property Legal Services to **147,000** individuals and trained **120** legal and humanitarian staffs, and community actors on Civil Support Documentation and HLP

Education




Set up, rehabilitated, and supported **1,500** schools and learning spaces.
Constructed **2,100** classrooms, accommodating **70,000** school children.




Supported **342,000** school-aged children with access to formal and non-formal education. Distributed winter clothing and kits to **120,000** children.
Provided **300,000** liters of fuel to **283** schools during winter.


Nutrition

Distributed **431** metric tons of nutrition commodities to **57,500** children to prevent and treat Moderate Acute Malnutrition. 

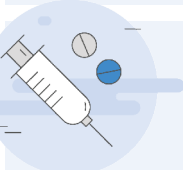
Established **14** mother-baby and feeding spaces for over **10,000** breastfeeding mothers and children.





Equipped **2** hospitals to serve **200,000** pregnant women and children, treating moderate and acute malnutrition.





Health




Rehabilitated and supported  **95** hospitals and clinics. Served **242,000** patients with primary, secondary, and specialized healthcare.


Operated  **72** ambulances, facilitating transportation for **35,000** patients.

Offered  **300** **Computed Tomography scans** to enhance diagnostic capabilities.

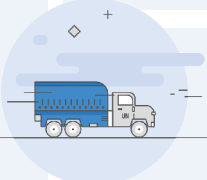
Delivered  **414** **incubators** to healthcare facilities


Camp Coordination and Camp Management



Set up **65** IDP camps, including equipping **175** fire points and 2,000 fire extinguishers. Established **26** collective and reception centers for IDPs. 

Logistics



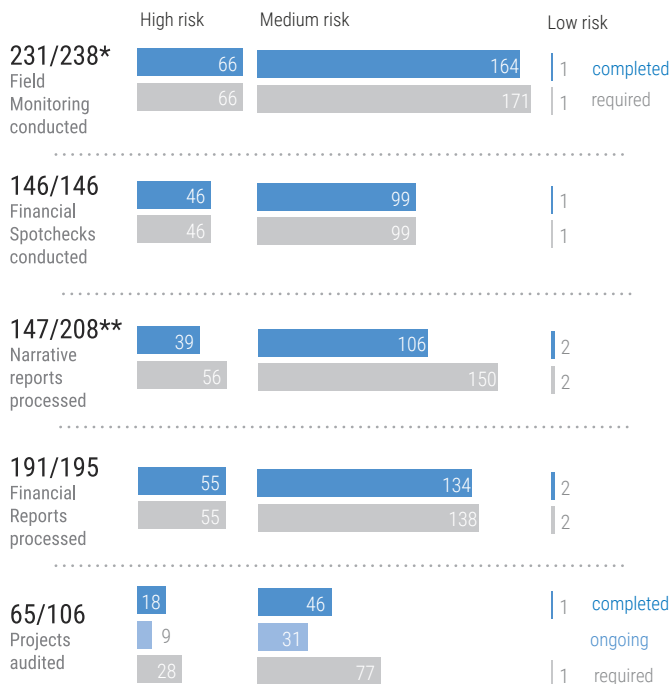
Delivered **846** truckloads of humanitarian relief supplies through border crossing points. Transported **730** truckloads of food and nutrition supplies. 

Risk Management



Throughout 2023, the SCHF maintained its steadfast commitment to risk management. By diligently overseeing partner capacity and performance, the SCHF effectively mitigated risks and ensured the smooth execution of humanitarian initiatives. Aligned with its ongoing efforts to prioritize localization, the SCHF utilized a comprehensive array of accountability mechanisms, demonstrating its dedication to transparency and effectiveness. Continuously striving for improvement, the SCHF made concerted efforts to refine its accountability frameworks, thereby enhancing oversight and governance across its operations.

PROGRESS ON RISK MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



* Additional monitoring was conducted other than as required by the Operation Manual

	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk	Total
HFU field visits	9	46	0	55
TPM	39	169	0	208
Proxy	6	21	0	27

Total completed: 290

** Due to the inactive status of the OneGMS reporting module in 2023, there has been a delay in the submission of reports in the system. These reports are currently under review by the HFU team. Revised and up-to-date data will be disseminated in the first 2024 SCHF Dashboard.

Risk management of projects

In 2023, the final financial reports submitted and approved remained consistent with the previous year, totaling 121 compared to 123. However, there was a notable surge in monitoring activities within the SCHF, increasing from 151 in 2022 to 290 in 2023. This substantial rise can be attributed to the increase in caseload, with projects approved in 2022 progressing to implementation and subsequent monitoring in 2023, adhering to operational modalities' timelines. Furthermore, this trend was augmented by the addition of projects approved for implementation in 2023.

It is noteworthy that subsequent to the severe earthquakes, the Fund regained access to north-west Syria, enabling the HFU to resume direct monitoring activities. This facilitated notable savings within the Fund's cost plan. Throughout 2023, the HFU conducted 55 field visits in addition to 208 reports produced by the TPM service providers. Additionally, 170 financial spot checks were conducted. In an effort to ensure robust accountability measures, the HFU exceeded the mandatory number of spot-checks as outlined in operational modality. This approach ensured that partners addressed the comments and findings from respective spot-checks, thereby integrating them into future projects.

Partnerships and Risk Management

SCHF prioritized funding to the best-positioned partners in 2023, considering the risks associated with the chosen modalities and the targeted locations. The Fund utilized the Partner Performance

Index (PPI) in OneGMS to update partners' risk levels on a rolling basis. During the year, the risk level of four partners reduced from high to medium, while three partners had their risk levels increased from medium to high and one partner from low to medium.

Through the different assurance activities, partners were made aware of areas of improvement for their internal control systems, including HR record keeping, asset register and procurement related documentation. Action plans were developed to help partners strengthen their internal processes.

In 2023, 88 per cent of the total funding was allocated to high-risk partners due to high volume of partners under this category. The Fund aims to continue managing and mitigating the risk associated with high-risk partners by identifying and anticipating potential risks that may arise during project implementation. This includes increasing communication with partners through assurance activities to resolve any issues that may impact their performance, providing recommendations, and developing corrective actions to improve their skills and enhance mitigation measures in similar situations.

Risk management of funding

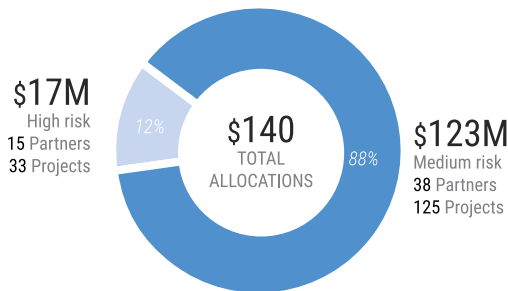
The Risk Management and Compliance Section's function within the HFU was pivotal in enhancing oversight, especially given the increased funding granted to partners over the preceding four years. Narrative and financial reports followed by audits helped to ensure the accuracy, quality and consistency of information provided by partners.

Overall, information from collaboration between the various sections of the HFU and the assurance measures – audits, financial spot checks, field monitoring and reports – ensured a coherent and streamlined management of risks. The Fund maintains a dedicated and confidential feedback and complaint email to promote reporting of possible misconducts.

In 2023, four new cases were reported. 28 incidents/cases are ongoing, of which 24 are cases and 4 are incidents.

Common compliance issues observed throughout the year included weaknesses in cash management and procurement and documentation

IMPLEMENTATION BY PARTNER RISK LEVEL TYPE



UPDATED RISK LEVEL BASED ON PERFORMANCE INDEX



OVERVIEW 2023



processes. In addition, audit findings included inadequate internal audit systems and non-compliance with local laws and regulations.

OCHA HFU conducts trainings and lessons learned exercises for partners to avoid repeating common programmatic errors prior to any corrective measures being taken. SCHF is transparent in its reporting of compliance cases, engages with humanitarian organizations operating cross-border to identify and manage risks, and exchanges information on risk to strengthen partners' risk management capacity.

SCHF management; compliance and cost effectiveness

The SCHF has proven to have efficient management in compliance with the CBPF Global Handbook guidelines. Due to significant events in 2023, the Fund was unable to update the SCHF



8
REPORTED INCIDENTS
4 CLOSED
4 OPEN



24
ONGOING CASE

Bakery Restoration after the earthquake and bread distribution.

Credit: BAHAR



Operational Manual in accordance with the new guidelines. The new SCHF Operational Manual, was endorsed in March 2024, with the Advisory Board's approval to be utilized, retroactively, for all 2023 allocations.

The cost of managing the Fund for 2023 was expected to be at US\$3.5 million. Nevertheless, the actual expenditure was less by the end of the year, reaching 78 per cent of the allocated amount. The 2023 cost for OCHA HFU to manage one of the largest OCHA pooled funds amounts to US\$2.7 million, representing only 2 per cent of the total funds allocated during the same year (\$140 million). The SCHF for another year is proving to be a funding mechanism that is cost-effective, efficient and context appropriate.

The reasons leading to a lower expenditure rate than anticipated stems mainly from a series of earthquakes in February 2023 which impacted not only the response in north-west Syria but also caused a significant change on the HFU operational modality. Following the earthquake and approval of United Nations personnel entering north-west Syria, HFU staffing requirements had to be modified to personnel experienced in field monitoring and evaluation, in addition to pooled funding knowledge. HFU conducted its own monitoring field visits, which led to significant savings of the HFU cost-plan.

Savings from the HFU cost-plan were returned to the SCHF to be incorporated in future allocations.

Annexes

Annexes list		Annexes title
30	ANNEX A	2023 SCHF ADVISORY BOARD
31	ANNEX B	COMMON PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

ANNEX A

2023 SCHF ADVISORY BOARD

STAKEHOLDER	ORGANIZATION
Chairperson	Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (DRHC)
NNGO	Shafak Organization
NNGO	Takaful Al-Sham
NNGO	SEMA
INGO	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
INGO	Global Communities
NGO	CARE International
UN	United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF)
UN	World Food Programme (WFP)
UN	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Donor	Netherlands
Donor	United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
Donor	France
Observer	All other donors contributing to SCHF and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) attend as observers
Secretariat/OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

ANNEX B

COMMON PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The SCHF measures its performance against a management tool that provides a set of indicators to assess how well a Fund performs in relation to the policy objectives and operational standards set out in the CBPF Global Guidelines. This common methodology enables management and stakeholders involved in the governance of the Funds to identify, analyze and address challenges in reaching and maintaining a well-performing CBPF.

CBPFs embody the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and function according to a set of specific principles: Inclusiveness, Flexibility, Timeliness, Efficiency, Accountability and Risk Management.





Dignified shelters in Idleb post-earthquakes

The Shuayb Camp, located in the northern Idleb countryside, currently hosts some 370 displaced families. In November 2022, families were moved out of tents into dignified shelters as part of the humanitarian community's implementation of the Action Plan on Dignified Shelter and Living Conditions launched in March of the same year. These shelters were implemented by Mercy-USA and funded by the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF).


These shelters have windows and doors that lock properly and have been all raised above the ground to protect families against floods. Their conditions were largely unaffected by the earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February 2023.

Credit: OCHA/Ali Haj Suleiman

SCHF Syria Cross-border
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