



Save the Children®



Seven Years of War on Childhood - Helping Children during the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis

March 2018

Photo: Fatima* stands with two of her children next to the abandoned gas station they called home after fleeing violence in their village in Raqqa Governorate, Syria. Innumerable families impacted by seven years of fighting live in abandoned buildings or out in the open with no protection from the elements, bombing or shelling.

Photo: Save the Children

*Name changed for privacy

A Message to Our Donors

The unthinkable cruelty of the seemingly endless war in Syria can test anyone's confidence in the good of humanity. But your support for Save the Children's longstanding response to the suffering gives me great hope. Many thanks for reaching out with your helping hands right beside ours.

My colleagues and I see daily how girls and boys impacted by this conflict lose their childhoods to hunger, deprivation, chronic anxiety and unspeakable acts of violence. An entire generation of Syrians has known nothing but dehumanizing warfare. Yet, as the conflict spills into its eighth year, all of us at Save the Children remain resolute in our commitment to reach vulnerable children caught in this crisis — motivated by the families we serve and the compassion of those individuals, foundations and corporations that make our work possible. Our programs have successfully reached over 4.2 million people to date.



Tom Krift speaks with his colleague Jasmine Jahromi, a Save the Children Humanitarian Operations Adviser, in a camp for displaced persons in Iraq.

Photo: Save the Children

Sadly, the humanitarian situation inside Syria and host countries is worsening. As fighting in Syria escalates once again, access to besieged areas is severely limited and significant displacements create more desperation among families. We are seeing a disturbing rise in violations committed against children, including the purposeful bombing and shelling of schools and homes, and the use of starvation, maiming and killing. This exceptionally cruel and protracted crisis is causing serious harm to the development and long-term mental health of an ever-growing number of children. And the longer fighting continues, the fewer opportunities children will have to become healthy, happy and capable members of society, with the capacity to rebuild their country. In response, Save the Children is compelled to act.

To be effective in our work, we must continually adapt our Syria response to evolving needs. Today, mental health challenges are among the most pressing issues for children. In response, Save the Children, one of the world's leading experts in children in conflict, is now initiating discussions with fellow humanitarian organizations, governments and higher learning institutions to explore the creation of a regional university-level diploma in Child and Adolescent Mental Health in Complex Conflicts with a specific focus on the Middle East. This first-of-its-kind diploma program would build essential professional capacity for qualified aid workers and others to better meet the mental health needs of conflict-affected girls and boys. Caring people like you make it possible for our teams and partners on the ground to pursue important new initiatives like this, while sustaining essential humanitarian services for those who need us the most.

On behalf of my colleagues and every child you have helped by generously supporting our activities, I sincerely thank you.

Tom Krift
Save the Children Regional Director, Middle East Eurasia

Seven Years of War

The Syrian conflict completes its seventh year this month. According to the United Nations, 13.5 million Syrians who remained inside Syria were gravely affected by war in 2017 and needed essential assistance. This number represented over half of Syria's entire population.

Despite diplomatic efforts this past year, de-escalation zones failed to provide any measure of dependable safety. Children risked death, illness, abuse and exploitation on a daily basis. Most Syrians displaced in 2017 lived in abandoned buildings, open spaces and in temporary camps lacking basic necessities. Schools became targets and shuttered their doors. With displacement and conflict all around them, countless children were denied their right to a quality basic education. Most children in areas affected by fighting had been displaced more than once, compounding their vulnerability. At year's end in 2017, frigid winter conditions posed additional serious risks to children living without proper clothing and weatherized shelters.

Countries neighboring Syria remained under immense strain as they continued to accommodate Syrian families within their borders. The number of camps grew and conditions deteriorated with overcrowding. Many refugee families lacked access to basic sanitation and health services—as well as access to clean water, food, medicine and psychosocial support.

Throughout it all, Save the Children and its partners were there—bringing essential help to children in Syria and in host communities across the Middle East. None of our efforts to keep war-affected children safe, healthy and learning would have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors. Because of your compassion, our teams and partners have reached over 4.2 million people, including over 2.7 million children, affected by this relentless conflict. On behalf of all the children and their families we have helped since the beginning of our Syria response, we extend our deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks.



A young boy walks through the deep mud in front of his family's makeshift tent in northwest Idlib, Syria. Displaced families living in crude shelters like this one have little or no protection from heavy rains, snow and frigid winter temperatures. Photo: Save the Children

“Families’ tents are drowned from the rain and mud. A child was soaked in water from his head to his toes, and they do not have any dry clothes for the children. There are children who died because of the cold weather. Some children even died due to malnutrition.”

- Reem, aid worker, Idlib, Syria

Highlights of Programs for Displaced Families inside Syria

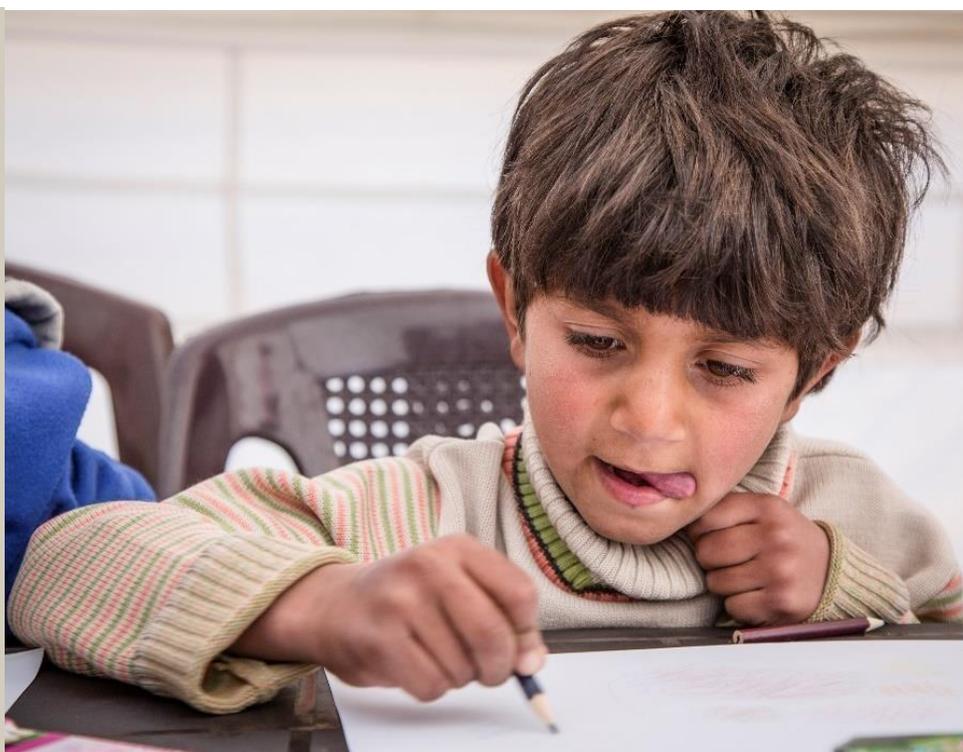
Northeast Syria

Save the Children focused on five key program areas here in 2017: child protection, access to education, food security and livelihoods, sanitation and hygiene and distribution of essential materials to displaced families and those in host communities. We provided children in camps with access to temporary learning spaces, rehabilitated schools, supplied learning materials and trained teachers. Following the October 2017 exodus of 300,000 people from Ar-Raqqa, we improved sanitation services in camps that absorbed new arrivals to prevent the spread of disease.

Ibrahim*, age 7, draws during an activity at Save the Children's child-friendly space in Al Hol Camp, Hasakah Governorate, Syria.

Extensive child development research shows that artistic expression has powerful therapeutic and educational value, especially for children like Ibrahim who must process their traumatic experiences of war.

Photo: Save the Children
**name changed for privacy*



Northwest Syria

Save the Children supported feeding services for infants and young children through seven nutrition centers and community outreach activities and ran primary health services through mobile clinics and one maternity hospital. We supported 60 learning spaces run by our partners—offering recreational activities such as music, drawing, sport and dance to over 2,000 children. Our child protection monitors referred over 1,000 at-risk children to specialized services. Our emergency education programs in camps of displaced families offered children basic literacy and numeracy education. Additionally, we helped provide vocational training for youth and adolescents. We distributed household supplies, shelter and winterization kits and newborn kits throughout the year.

Central and Southern Syria

Our partners helped us to deliver essential materials, keep children safe and learning, provide psychosocial support and address health, nutrition and food security and livelihood needs. We provided school supplies, refurbished classrooms and trained teachers. Our school feeding program fed 1,100 children to support their learning. We rehabilitated four wells and built two underground water reservoirs to irrigate farmland for future food sources. Together with our partners, Save the Children reached 7,600 children (ages 6-16) with informal educational activities and 1,280 children (ages 5 to 6) with early childhood education and development activities. Our mobile teams brought learning activities to children unable to attend our child-friendly spaces.

Our efforts in Syria across all program sectors since 2012 has provided support to over 2.5 million people, of whom 1.7 million were children.

Serving Refugees in Host Countries

Syrian refugee children in Cairo, Egypt, participate in a mental health awareness activity organized by Save the Children. Studies have shown that continuous participation in such activities can lead to more confident and secure children who are more capable and more likely to learn. This program also uses the arts to make math, vocabulary, literacy and history lessons more interactive, engaging and fun for girls and boys.

Photo: Ahmed Bially/ Save the Children



Iraq

Almost all 246,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq resided in northern Iraq in camp and non-camp settings in 2017. Their arrival compounded a crisis created by the internal displacement of large numbers of Iraqis caused by conflict in their own country. To respond to overwhelming need, we served both Syrian and Iraqi children to ensure equity in service delivery. We focused on shelter and winterization, child protection, education, psychosocial support, food security and livelihoods, and improving water, sanitation and hygiene conditions to prevent the spread of disease. Over 3,200 children in camp schools received new school supplies last year, and we had 2,100 books printed for English-language learning in camp schools. Our activities here have

benefitted almost 160,000 people, including over 78,000 children, since we began our Middle East response in 2011.

Egypt

As of late 2017, there were over 126,000 Syrian refugees in Egypt—43 percent of whom were children. The government estimated that an equal number of Syrians were residing in Egypt unregistered. Almost 1,700 Syrian children (ages 5-15) learned proper hygiene practices and received hygiene kits. We continued offering literacy and numeracy programs, teacher trainings, parenting workshops, health screenings, antenatal and postnatal care and distributed winterization and shelter kits. Egypt's refugee population is spread out across the country, creating challenges to those providing aid. Despite these challenges, Save the Children has helped over 70,000 refugees, including 40,000 children.

Lebanon

By end of 2017, Lebanon was host to 1.4 million Syrian refugees. This number equaled approximately 25 percent of the country's population. In Lebanon, Save the Children's work included child protection, education, food security and livelihoods, clean water, hygiene and sanitation, shelter and winterization of families' shelters. We ran early childhood development and education programs and gave trainings on fire prevention. Our teams distributed household supplies, hygiene kits and newborn care kits. We helped over 1,000 children through our 47 psychosocial support groups. In total, our work has reached over 189,000 people, of whom over 107,000 are children.



Two Syrian brothers stand outside their shelter in a camp in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. We recently helped their family replace their shelter after a fire in the camp.

Photo: Ahmad Bayram/Save the Children

Jordan

Over 650,000 registered and approximately 650,000 unregistered Syrian refugees lived in Jordan in 2017, and half of them were children. One-third of refugees in Jordan lived in the region's largest refugee camp, Za'atari Camp. In 2017 we fed children and families, monitored their health and nutrition, provided education and vocational skills training. In Za'atari we distributed 17 tons of bread daily for the World Food Program and gave out food vouchers. Syrian children took part in our homework clubs, where they received help with English, Arabic, math and science. We also introduced a digital learning tool for use in camps and host

communities. Further, we provided gender awareness and vocational skills training to enhance life skills and livelihood prospects of adolescent girls and boys. We have reached 790,560 refugee children and over 430,000 adults through our work in Jordan.



Refugee children in Jordan wait to enter classrooms at a center run by Save the Children. Classroom programs are facilitated by adults trained in teaching methodology and child protection.

Photo: Lucia Zoro/Save the Children

Turkey

Turkey hosted almost 3.4 million registered Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 2017, the majority of whom were Syrian and almost half of whom were under age 18. We provided access to education, child protection, health and nutrition. With a massive influx of school-age refugee children, schools were short on space, teachers and supplies. In response, we operated temporary education centers, supported the rehabilitation of 16 schools and the construction of three schools, distributed 500 teacher kits to 100 schools, and provided transport for over 1,700 children. Our teams fed hungry children in 1,847 households in partnership with the Turkish Red Cross, and gave hundreds of new mothers newborn care supplies. We provided psychosocial support to severely traumatized children, and gave trainings on parenting skills, proper hygiene practices, childcare and nutrition. We have reached over 47,000 beneficiaries, including over 38,000 children.

Save the Children and Global Refugee Advocacy

In addition to our work for displaced and refugee Syrian children and families in the Middle East, we continued our global advocacy on their behalf. One in six children live in conflict zones today, and although all parties are obliged to protect children, the reality is that horrific attacks on girls and boys happen daily and the perpetrators are not being held accountable. What is more, the number of grave violations against children in conflict is climbing—largely due to an increasing lack of compliance, lack of monitoring and reporting, an increase in urban warfare and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Conflicts are also more intense and complex than ever before, and are lasting longer.

We are witnessing this alarming phenomenon in Syria. Not only are Syrian children caught in the crossfire or treated by combatants as expendable collateral damage, but are often deliberately and systematically targeted. They are bombed in their schools and in their homes. Siege tactics and starvation are being used as weapons of war against civilians to force armed groups or whole communities to surrender. Tactics such as this are putting more children at greater risk than we have seen in decades. Unless urgent action is taken, the long-term impact of this horrific trend will be devastating.

“All wars, whether just or unjust, disastrous or victorious, are waged against the child.”

-Eglantyne Jebb
Founder, Save the Children

Save the Children is compelled to shine a light on the growing atrocities committed against children caught by war in Syria and around the globe and relentlessly advocate for their resolute protection. Our global report, [The War on Children](#) launched last month, is a first-of-its-kind study that takes a closer look at the 357 million children currently living in conflict zones. It highlights their experiences and details the truly devastating, potentially long-lasting impact war has on children. By bringing this grim reality to light, we hope to inspire others to speak out and demand that all children, the most vulnerable in conflict, are protected and that perpetrators are held accountable.



Children affected by conflict, like this Rohingya girl in Bangladesh, are incredibly resilient. With the right support they can recover from their experiences, but this becomes less likely when communities and services are crippled by conflict.

Photo: GMB Akash/Panos Pictures/Save the Children

Humanitarian Need Grows as Fighting in Syria Intensifies

As this report is finalized, increased bombing and shelling in Eastern Ghouta, Northern Hama and Southern Idlib Governorates is causing one of the worst surges in displacement since the start of the conflict in 2011. Thousands of families trapped by the fighting are in makeshift underground shelters and completely dependent on outside aid for survival. Children risk illness and disease in the absence of hygiene items and sanitation.

In these areas of intensified conflict, as the security situation allows, we are working to alleviate the immediate needs of displaced families. Save the Children and its partners are distributing food, water, emergency shelter kits, hygiene kits and emergency health kits. Our mobile child protection monitors are identifying at-risk children and are provide specialized support as resources allow.

In addition to our humanitarian work on the ground, Save the Children is actively advocating the UN Security Council to implement Resolution 2401 and demand a cessation of hostilities across Syria to allow for medical evacuations and humanitarian access.

Conclusion

Children are profoundly affected by their experiences of war. Injuries, death, witnessing horrific acts, displacement, separation from family, poverty, food insecurity and deprivation all take their toll. But with committed humanitarian partners by their side, war-affected children can receive the care and support that is absolutely essential for their physical and emotional well-being.

Save the Children staff and heroic partners operate inside Syria and across the Middle East to aid children affected by the Syrian crisis. Your flexible funds have allowed us to provide essential care to forcibly displaced and refugee children and their families and react quickly to rapidly changing scenarios over the years. On behalf of all children we have helped through our Syria response, we thank you for your untiring support.

It's been four days that we are here. We haven't left at any point and the planes are bombing. We've not been able to go to school -- they shelled the school, the teacher was killed. There is no food and we can't go outside. The shops are closed."

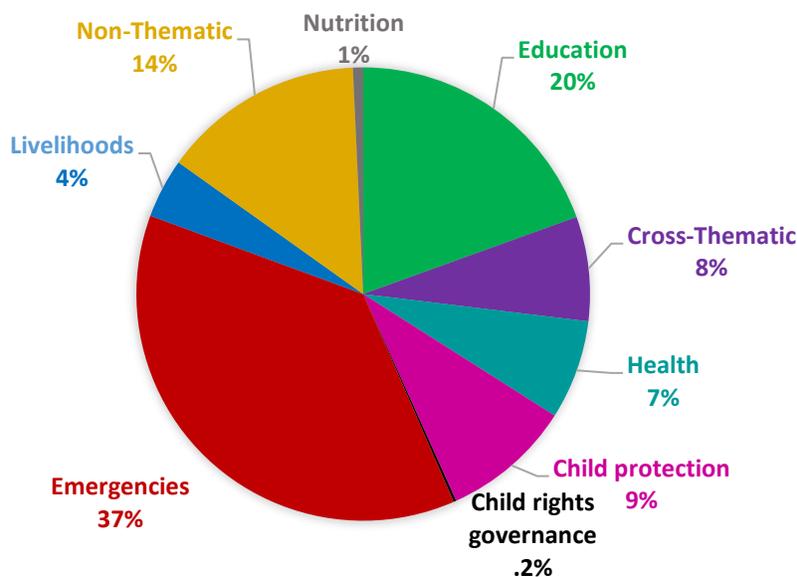
– Ahmed, a young boy trapped in a basement in Eastern Ghouta, Syria



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Support for Children and Families Affected by the Syria Crisis in 2017

In 2017, Save the Children's global movement spent a total of \$78,844,051 on humanitarian relief in response to the crisis in Syria. The following chart illustrates total amounts spent per program sector.



■ Emergencies*	■ Child Protection	■ Livelihoods
\$29,284,030	\$7,313,004	\$3,347,553
■ Education	■ Cross-thematic***	■ Nutrition
\$15,359,996	\$5,870,635	\$572,862
■ Non-thematic**	■ Health	■ Child rights governance
\$11,364,814	\$5,583,575	\$147,581

* Funds that are pooled for use in any program sector, or are used for several programs.

** Funds that are required to run country offices and support programs.

*** Funds related to program management, monitoring and evaluation and advocacy across more than one sector.

Stories from the Field

Recovering from Severe Trauma

“I want you to hear my story.”

13-year-old Rasha* wants everyone to know what happens to a child when war breaks out. Rasha was standing by the gate of her school when a bomb obliterated the building.

“What I saw was truly terrifying,” she remembers. “Many of my friends were injured and people were dead. One of my friends died in front of me and I saw the blood.” Rasha, who was only 7 at the time, was taken home.

That afternoon, her neighbor’s house was bombed and destroyed. Rasha didn’t feel safe – would her home be next?

“I didn’t want to leave,” Rasha says, “I didn’t want to say goodbye to my brother.” But she had to. Rasha’s parents took her to Jordan, where another of Rasha’s brothers lived. Her brother helped the family find a place to stay.

Rasha had escaped the war in Syria, but she couldn’t seem to escape the things she had seen.

So deeply traumatized by witnessing her friends’ injuries and deaths, Rasha refused to leave her family’s apartment for a year. “I used to listen to the airplanes and get really scared. I couldn’t even open the windows.” When a member of her family started visiting a center Save the Children runs for refugee children and told Rasha about it, she was intrigued.

“(The center) has become a second home to me. I love the classes. I don’t miss a day. We take psychosocial classes, English, life skills, Arabic, math and science.” Rasha finally found a place where she felt safe. She has learned to talk about what happened and has received the support she needed to deal with her trauma.

“I feel much better than I used to. At the same time, there are things you cannot forget.”

* name changed for privacy



Rasha* gained coping skills to deal with extreme trauma through Save the Children-supported activities.
Photo: Lucia Zoro/Save the Children

A Family Rebounding from Devastating Loss

Fateen*, 40, is a Syrian mother of two. She lost her husband and four of her children in the war in her country. She came to Egypt in 2013 after spending a year in Lebanon. Burdened by these losses, she was angry, depressed and had lost hope. Fateen's son, Mohey*, became very attached to her after he lost his father and siblings.

Fateen participated in our Positive Discipline for Everyday Parenting program, which we introduced in January of 2017. It provides advice and encouragement for parents to help them to build stronger relationships with their children. Her two children have also participated in our psychosocial support programs.

“My two children have no one but me to look after them and support them. The first decision I took was to leave Syria. We stayed in Lebanon for a year; it wasn't easy at all to start all over again in a new country without my husband. I worked as a secretary to pay the bills.”



Save the Children's psychosocial programs help families like Fateen's heal from severe trauma.

Photo: Aya Tousson/Save the Children

*Name changed for privacy

“I participated in Save the Children's positive discipline program; this was the turning point in my relationship with my children. I was always very nervous and wasn't paying attention to my children as a result of my grief. But I learned how to deal with my anger and grief. As a family, now there is warmth and understanding. I started to control my temper and understand my children. Jaida*, my daughter, is a teenager and she was moody and unsure about what she wants. Save the Children started to teach her to explore her talents. She loves drawing, learning English and she wants to become a designer.

“My son, Mohey*, was so attached to me. Even when I used to sleep, he would put his hands on my lips to make sure that I was still breathing. Mohey wasn't able to express his feelings and he was always angry and nervous. However, once he started participating in Save the Children's activities, I could see him enjoying his childhood. He waits eagerly for the activities and started writing down what he is upset about. He would leave notes for me on a table and so I started to understand what was going on for him. Save the Children has also taught my children how to express themselves and recognize their rights and responsibilities.”

* names changed for privacy

Finding Hope, Healing from Trauma

Zainab* arrived in Al Hol Camp in northeastern Syria with her mother and two siblings after fighting erupted in Deir Ezzour. Her father stayed in Deir Ezzour to try to continue working to be able to provide for his family. Zainab worries about him and misses him terribly. Zainab and her brothers participate in Save the Children's programming to help them deal with their traumatic experiences, gain coping skills and get back to learning.

"When we left Deir Ezzour, we had to walk and walk and walk. It was absolutely exhausting. In Deir Ezzour, we got used to seeing bad things happen like someone being shot...children have been exposed to war and the weapons of war. We, the Syrian children, have so much stress."

We all need to go back to school so we can study and get an education. There are some people, like my brother, who are failing all their school subjects and have forgotten everything they once knew. When you ask him what is one times two, or one plus one, he doesn't know. A lot of children don't even know the letters of the alphabet.

When we came here, we forgot everything that was in our heads...we found comfort and the things we needed...here (at a Save the Children School at Al Hol Camp) the situation is hopeful. We can relax here. When we came here, the children started playing again."

**Name changed for privacy*



Zainab*, 11, from Deir Ezzour, in her family's tent in Al Hol Camp, Hasakah Governorate, Syria.

**name changed for privacy*

Photo: Save the Children