

Displaced persons

50% of refugees are helped by the Red Cross



A rucksack, a shopping bag. Just the clothes on their backs. Everything else left behind. Millions of Syrian children, women and men took this courageous step last year. The short breaks on the long journey into the unknown are extremely important: Snapshot of a refugee infant on the Greek island of Chios.



Swiss Red Cross





Food parcels for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Red Cross aid for refugees –

SRC support along the migration route, in the field in Lebanon, and in Switzerland and Germany

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RESULTS OF OUR WORK | September 2015 – April 2016

Red Cross aid for 650,000 people

Every other refugee has received help from the Red Cross along the journey from their homeland to their arrival in Europe. More than 650,000 people have received medical care and more than 8.9 million meals, over 1.8 million blankets or warm items of clothing have been distributed. In the five years up to the great migration of autumn 2015, the Swiss Red Cross spent over CHF 7 million, mostly directly in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, but also in Italy and Bulgaria, to help the refugees. We now plan to spend another CHF 5 million to extend the aid we provide in Lebanon and Syria and to help displaced persons on the move.

Lebanon

1,000 particularly vulnerable families received food parcels. The SRC funded two additional emergency relief teams deployed by the Lebanese Red Cross in the greater Beirut area. This means improved access to outpatient care for about another 6,500 sick and wounded people. In partnership with the Lebanese Red Cross, the logistics facilities have been reinforced so that suitable measures can be taken quickly and efficiently in the event of emergencies and disasters. During the cold months from October 2015, the SRC also stepped up its winter aid. 3,000 families living in the higher altitudes received blankets, mattresses and tarpaulins to help protect them from the cold.

Support along the migration route

The SRC spent CHF 812,000 along the migration route across Europe to Germany on urgently needed relief supplies, such as clothes, toiletries, mattresses and sleeping bags. The SRC deployed 45 volunteers and 10 specialists to provide support for its partner Red Cross Societies in Greece and Germany with logistics, medical assistance, setting up refugee camps and taking care of refugees. The SRC has deployed a migration coordinator on the island of Lesbos.

Aid in Switzerland

When the number of people seeking refuge in Switzerland increased towards the end of last year, the SRC quickly built a refugee centre in Buchs (St Gallen Canton). From November 2015 to the end of January 2016, 171 Red Cross volunteers took care of 1,889 refugees.



Home and playground of many internally displaced refugees in Syria:
a boy plays in the ruins of a house in Qussayr near Homs.

The dangerous passage to Europe

How great must suffering be before people are prepared to take their infants by their hand, leave their whole lives behind them and then board a rubber dinghy that we would barely dare to use on a wave-less Swiss lake?

Countless pictures showed us people by the thousands, all fleeing broken lives. Across fields, along motorways, from the station to the bus, and bus to station. Fathers with infants in their arms, men supporting their weaker companions, invalids in wheelchairs. In 2015, western Europe was faced with the alarming fate of people drowning as they crossed the Mediterranean to Italy or Greece. Not a day went past without headlines, no news reports without pictures of infants wrapped in emergency foil blankets. Distress in an endless loop.

Along the coasts of Greece and in German railway stations, we observed the warm welcome. The solidarity was staggering. However, it quickly became apparent that the European reception facilities were overwhelmed, and the EU Member States disagreed over the issue of the urgently needed proportional allocation of refugees. Borders were closed. Now, many people see themselves abandoned to their fates.

The waves of refugees fleeing the war in Syria are the largest since the Second World War. They are above all a huge humanitarian challenge for the countries sharing borders with Syria. The refugees have in common that they are living in difficult circumstances and re-settle in regions that are not easy to access. These people need international protection and support, but are living under the toughest conditions and are quickly sliding into poverty.

Giving people hope

It is the duty of the Red Cross to give these people hope. We maintain the facilities when they are available, or build them where necessary. To re-establish the social structures on which the younger generations can rebuild their lives.

DISPLACED PERSONS IN FIGURES

5.6 million

The number of vulnerable children in Syria goes far beyond the imagination. Many of them have almost no access to clean water, food or medical care.

11 million

The war in Syria has displaced more than 11 million people. About 7 million have sought refuge in another region of their own country.

Over 4 million

Most of the people who have fled Syria have settled in the neighbouring countries, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.

1.18 million

Since 2015, as many as 1,180,578 people have fled to Europe. 1,006,806 made their way through Turkey and Greece. Another 173,772 crossed the Mediterranean to Italy. Status 11 April 2016, IOM.



Working tirelessly: As the children arrive in Lesbos, the Red Cross welcomes them on the beach with insulating blankets and food...

"Help alleviate the suffering."

"It's encouraging to see there are so many of us," says SRC logistics expert Danièle Wyss, who was deployed on her second mission to Lesbos this spring, the island where many people landed after a dangerous journey across the sea.



Since early February I have been on an SRC logistics mission on the Greek island of Lesbos. My work involves helping our partner the Hellenic Red Cross to provide emergency aid. The logistics challenges in providing the refugees with the bare essentials are enormous. Hundreds of thousands of people have arrived in Europe via Greece since last summer. Since the Balkan route was closed, tens of thousands of people have been stranded here. We still need to see what will happen now that the EU has finalized its readmission agreement with Turkey. Large numbers of people are still arriving here.

On Lesbos where I am stationed and where the majority of refugees arrive, we distribute relief supplies six days a week, alternately in two different refugee camps. In parallel, the local migration



Danièle Wyss with her Greek colleagues and refugees.

coordinator from the Hellenic Red Cross is constantly recruiting new volunteers to help out with distributing relief supplies and patrolling the beach at night. The migration coordinator was taken on thanks to support from the SRC. Apart from me there are currently another two SRC logistics experts deployed in Greece.

...offers medical care to
displaced persons...



... and provides them with essentials:
dry clothing, foodstuffs, toiletries, and in the
colder months blankets.

Since the borders to western Europe closed, the humanitarian challenges have changed. Whereas before, the refugee families were travelling through and rarely stayed longer than 25 hours, now many remain stranded and need to be taken care of for much longer. We give the families a duffel bag containing dried fruit, nuts, cans of tuna fish, crackers, water and toiletries. They also receive warm blankets and baby products if needed. In all, about 250 relief organizations and groups are working on Lesbos, many of which hand out hot meals, clothing or shoes.

Sinking boats

Since NATO has become involved and started patrolling the Mediterranean, more boats have been intercepted at sea and the passengers brought directly for registration to Mytilini, the main port on Lesbos. At the same time there has been a drop in the numbers of those arriving on the north of the island, just eight kilometres from the Turkish coast that can be spotted with the naked eye on a clear day. Most boats arriving in Lesbos are hopelessly overloaded and many of them are just a few centimetres from sinking. For some time now there have been more and more unaccompanied women and children.

Helping to alleviate the suffering

As a coordinator, I find it difficult to go to sleep at night knowing how many men, women and children have to spend the night under such awful conditions. Often I wonder what I can actually do to help these people. At best I can only relieve their suffering a little. It's encouraging so see there are so many of us. We're not only working hand in hand in Greece. All along the migration routes, the Red Cross is there to help people out. It provides medical assistance, distributing relief supplies, helps reunite families that have lost sight of each other along the way, and works tirelessly to protect people and their dignity. It feels great to be part of this network.



The SRC remains committed wherever help is needed



Each month, the SRC and its partner the Lebanese Red Cross distribute 1,000 food parcels.

The Swiss Red Cross has been helping Syrian refugees since 2012. And not just since August last year when the people displaced by the war in Syria became visible in Europe. Thanks to its local networks, the International Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement has always been able to react quickly. Both in Syria's neighbouring countries and on the refugees' route through Europe. Everywhere.

Lebanon

Lebanon. In the 1970s known as the Switzerland of the Middle East, Lebanon nowadays is groaning under greater and greater debt, shrinking resources and more and more Syrian refugees seeking refuge. Lebanon is one of the first destinations for people who have had to flee Syria. So far it has taken in more than a million Syrian refugees – for a population of around 4.2 million in a country four times smaller than Switzerland.

The majority of the refugees live in precarious circumstances in improvised camp-sites scattered

throughout the country. Officially Lebanon doesn't have any refugee camps. The conditions in the camps are disastrous. The children are often ill, suffering from respiratory diseases and sometimes malnutrition. Many of the refugees are in bad health or were wounded in the war.

It's for this reason that the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) has prioritized relief aid in Lebanon since the war started in Syria. It has been working in Lebanon since 2012 and has constantly increased its presence there in support of the Lebanese Red Cross aid to Syrian refugees but also helping Lebanese host families. Every month since April 2015, 1,000 families have been receiving a 35kg parcel containing basic foodstuffs, such as oil, rice, beans and lentils,

salt, various tinned goods, tea and sugar. The parcels have been distributed to Syrian refugee families (80%) and Lebanese host families (20%) in the border regions of northern Lebanon: Akkar, Dinn-yeh, Balbek, Hermel and the southern suburbs of Beirut. During the cold months from October 2015, the SRC also stepped up its winter aid. 3,000 families living in the higher altitudes received blankets, mattresses and tarpaulins to help protect them from the cold.

By building up the Lebanese Red Cross ambulance service, the SRC is promoting a functioning emergency and primary healthcare service. Two extra emergency relief teams improve access to outpatient care for an additional 6,500 sick and wounded who can be transported quicker along often

almost impassable roads. Two emergency stations at very busy locations received financial support to help them cope with the workload. The Lebanese Red Cross ambulance service, emergency service and blood transfusion service, which were also receiving support, are free of charge for Lebanese citizens and Syrian or Palestinian refugees.

In partnership with the Lebanese Red Cross, basic logistics facilities have been created so that suitable measures can be taken quickly and efficiently in the event of emergencies and disasters.

Schools and hospitals are overwhelmed and social tensions are mounting. The SRC is supporting the emergency services in Lebanon (picture, left) and equipping a health centre in Syria.



Syria

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are among the few institutions to have access to the combat zones and other critical regions in Syria. Despite the lack of security in the country, its staff are working tirelessly to provide the civilian population with urgently needed humanitarian aid. Almost a million people receive monthly food parcels, while 1.8 million people have received indispensable household utensils.

The once good healthcare system has been almost totally destroyed. More than 60% of hospitals and

clinics are either lying in ruins or are lacking all medical supplies. Eleven mobile health units and seven clinics provide emergency and primary medical assistance in the conflict zones.

In 2015, in partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Danish Red Cross, the SRC built a healthcare centre in the Suweyda district of southern Syria. It was inaugurated in early 2016. The doctors and nurses can now treat as many as 2,000 patients a month. The priorities are internal medicine, gynaecology, dentistry and paediatrics. The-
rapy is also provided for post-traumatic stress disorders. Primary health care, emergency treatment and medicines are free of charge.

Since September 2015 the Red Cross has been helping displaced persons all along the migration route with survival essentials: protection, shelter, food and water, as well as first aid and medical care.

Greece

At a period when around 6,000 refugees were landing on the coast of the Greek island, they were taken care of by as many as 4,000 Red Cross volunteers. The focus is on food and water, medical care, psychosocial support, and the reunification of children and parents who have lost sight of each other during the journey. The refugee camps provided these people with a moment of peace and protection, while Red Cross volunteers were also present along the borders to Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria to help the refugees with their onward journey. Even today the Hellenic Red Cross still offers longer-term help with asylum applications and runs a hotline to advise refugees in their own language.

So far the SRC has donated CHF 392,000 to its partner the Hellenic Red Cross so that it could finance relief supplies and staff for logistics and healthcare services. In the period from October 2015 to April 2016, two healthcare professionals and four logistics experts were deployed on a one-month rota. Since January 2016 the SRC has also deployed a migration coordinator on Lesbos and since February a coordinator for Red Cross aid on Chios. The migration coordinator liaises with the local authorities, trains Red Cross volunteers, helps distribute relief supplies and provides advice and information to refugees.

Serbia

In Serbia Red Cross volunteers are distributing relief supplies at the busiest border crossings: in the first few weeks foodstuffs, toiletries, warm clothing and rainwear, then in the colder months scarves, gloves, hats, socks, thermal underwear, mattresses, sleeping bags, and winter shoes. The Swiss Red Cross donated CHF 330,000 to its partner the Red Cross of Serbia to help with the operation.



Germany

Last autumn an endless wave of women, children and men poured out of buses, having survived the desperate journey to Germany. Thousands every day. A million throughout Germany by the end of the year. Exhausted, in bad health, and often traumatized after the long journey. Often, all they had left was a rucksack, a blanket to keep warm, and the clothes on their backs. Some of them only wore sandals, without any socks. Children had lost sight of their parents on the way. Elderly refugees often too weak to get out of the bus by themselves. Hardship was written all over their faces. Apathetic. Weeping. But also relieved.

Two holding areas were set up in Erding and Feldkirchen, just over the border in Bavaria. From September to mid-December 2015 four logistics experts were on site to help set up the two camps. 45 SRC volunteers worked about 2,190 hours free of charge in 10-day rotas from November 2015 to February 2016 helping the German Red Cross to provide the new arrivals in Erding with essentials. The volunteers helped organize accommodation and medical care, trace missing relatives, or simply provided advice for refugees. Often it was sufficient to lend a sympathetic ear to the refugees' concerns, even though this wasn't always easy owing to the language barrier.

The occasional football match helped give the children some sense of normality. Hearing the children's laughter in this carefree moment did everyone good and gave those housed at the camp a ray of optimism that the dark clouds hanging over them in these difficult circumstances would eventually give way to sunshine.

A little joy: Dianne came from Syria with her parents.



Exhausted, ill, with just the clothes on her back and a children's rucksack. Refugees arriving in Erding. An SRC volunteer answers their questions.

Switzerland

In Switzerland, the amount of concern for those living in the war zone was felt at the very doors of SRC Headquarters. The number of Syrians asking for advice because they wanted to bring their relatives to safety in Switzerland increased considerably last year. The SRC Syria Visa Advisory Service opened 524 new files in 2015 (compared to 430 from late September 2013 to the end of 2014). The consultations were time-consuming because humanitarian visas require detailed advice and a lot of follow-up during the visa application procedure. On account of its experience, the Advisory Service is the first port of call for Syrians living in Switzerland, but also for SRC cantonal associations, legal aid offices and other institutions working with refugees. There has also been an increase in the num-

ber of enquiries to the SRC Tracing Service, which helps locate missing relatives and friends.

When the number of people seeking refuge in the St Gallen region of Switzerland increased towards the end of last year, the SRC quickly built a refugee centre in Buchs on behalf of the State Secretariat for Migration. The refugees were allowed to stay for a maximum of 48 hours, looked after and provided with essential supplies, before they were transferred to the regular refugee reception facilities run by the Swiss government. 171 volunteers from Red Cross cantonal associations, the Swiss Samaritans and staff from SRC Headquarters were deployed from November 2015 to the end of January 2016. They took care of 1,889 refugees. Our partner Coop supported our work by supplying foodstuffs and toiletries.

The SRC remains committed for as long as help is needed



Home and playground for many children: a little girl plays among the rubbish in the Old River refugee camp.

No end to the war in Syria is in sight even after five years. Those braving life in Syria and those who have fled still rely on humanitarian aid. Children are among the most vulnerable refugees. So, the SRC is continuing to develop its aid programme.

Lebanon

The distribution of food parcels to 1,000 families has been extended to the end of December 2016. Since April 600 families have been receiving USD 175 in cash each month that they can use to pay for vital supplies according to their own priorities, together with rent, medical treatment, or their children's schooling. USD 175 does not cover all expenses, but it does make a great difference to the refugees' lives.

Migration route

In the next few months the SRC is working in the asylum centre in Bogovadja, Serbia, and in the adjacent public park. This involves distributing clothing, underwear and shoes, pillows and bed linen,

blankets, rucksacks, raincoats, prepaid SIM cards, and information activities, together with training for Red Cross volunteers. In Greece the SRC continues to support its partner Red Cross Society in the healthcare sector and in logistics.

Germany

After four months (November 2015 to February 2016) the SRC ended the mission for its volunteers in Germany. The situation is calmer now so that Swiss help is not needed for the time being.

Switzerland

Syria Visa Advisory Service: About the same number of enquiries are expected in 2016. However, there are clear signs that the cost per enquiry has risen sharply in comparison with when the directive was published in 2013.

Finance report

Expenditure 1.9.2015–7.4.2016	(in CHF)
AID IN LEBANON Winter aid	251 070
AID IN GREECE Support with relief supplies and manpower • Relief supplies • Human Resources: Logistics, coordination and health • Human Resources: Migration coordinator on Lesbos	230 000 145 000 17 000
AID IN SERBIA Support with relief supplies	330 000
AID IN GERMANY Support with logistics experts and volunteers	90 000
AID IN SWITZERLAND Support with volunteers in Buchs and the Syria Visa Advisory Service • Buchs (on behalf of the State Secretariat for Migration SEM funded) • Advisory service*	50 000
TOTAL	1 113 070

* The total expenditure for the Syria Visa Advisory Service came to CHF 382,581 in 2015. The CHF 50,000 is a contribution to the Advisory Service. We will be pleased to provide you with the detailed report about the Syria Visa Advisory Service on request.