



## New study finds child marriage rising among most vulnerable Syrian refugees

An alarming rise in child marriages has been seen among the most vulnerable Syrian refugee populations in Lebanon, according to a newly completed survey conducted by UNFPA, the American University of Beirut and Sawa for Development and Aid.

The survey covered some 2,400 refugee women and girls living in Western Bekaa, and found that more than a third of those surveyed between the ages of 20 and 24 had been married before reaching age 18.

Among refugee girls currently between ages 15 and 17, some 24 per cent are married.

Before the devastating conflict erupted in Syria, child marriage was significantly less common among Syrians. Estimates vary, but some show child marriage rates to be four times higher among Syrian refugees today than among Syrians before the crisis. This indicates that displacement, instability and poverty are driving the underage marriages.

Even some of the data collectors, who were selected from the community being surveyed, are struggling with the pressure to marry off their daughters.

"I am convinced that no girl should get married before the age of 18. But when it comes to reality, it is different," said Iman\*, a Syrian refugee who was one of the data collectors.

She explained that, as a widow and the sole breadwinner for her family, she has trouble supporting her three children and ageing father.

"For this, reason my cousin, out of his good heart, wanted to help out by getting engaged to my daughter and supporting us financially," she said. Her daughter is 15.

### Awareness needed

The survey was conducted in August and September 2016 in Bar Elias, Kab Elias and Marj, areas in Western Bekaa selected because of their large refugee populations and high levels of vulnerability.

The survey showed that school enrolment declined among girls as they aged. At age 9, over 70 per cent of surveyed girls were enrolled in school; at age 16, less than 17 per cent were. Girls with less education are more vulnerable to becoming child brides, reports have indicated.

Among all surveyed women aged 20 to 24, nearly 35 per cent were married before reaching 18 years old. Another way to look at the figures – as a percentage of married women – shows that 47 per cent of married women, ages 20 to 24 years old, were child brides.

The study also had clear recommendations for addressing the trend. For example, it called for improving school enrolment among girls, especially as they transition into secondary school, and for better enforcement of policies barring child marriage.

It also recommended raising awareness of the consequences of early marriage among refugee communities. These consequences include an increased risk of pregnancy-related complications for girls, as well as worse health and economic outcomes for themselves and their children.

Such information can be powerful. "Because of what I have learned and

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

DURING JANUARY 2017

**UNFPA Jordan resumed providing services to Syrians stranded in the no-man's land "the berm" between the Jordanian and Syrian borders, after months of disruption of services due to security reasons**

**UNFPA Jordan with working with a local implementing partner established a new reproductive health clinic at the berm to serve more than 70,000 Syrian people living in dismal conditions.**

**Meanwhile UNFPA Syria delivered 170,600 reproductive health and GBV services to the crisis-affected people across the country**

experienced, it is impossible for me to let my daughter get married at an early age," said one parent who learned about child marriage from a UNFPA-supported outreach programme in the southern city of Saïda.

### Youth reject child marriage

These outreach programmes are engaging parents, community leaders, health-care workers and others. UNFPA is also supporting safe spaces, legal counselling and psychosocial care for vulnerable women and girls, including those affected by early marriage.

Young people are also being empowered to advocate for change. Through the UNFPA-supported Y-Peer programme, youth – including refugees – are spreading the word about the harms of child marriage to their friends and peer networks.

Youth leaders have been eager to take on the challenge.

"It is up to us to spread awareness on its negative effects to our family and friends," said Sara, part of a peer education programme in Baalbek.

"When I saw my cousin getting married at the age of 15, my heart ached," said Mohamad [not the Mohamad pictured], who received peer education in Beirut. "The man should be buying her toys instead of a wedding dress."

Source: [unfpa.org](http://unfpa.org)

## Syrian Arab Republic from all channels

**186,385** reproductive health services delivered to Syrians

**19,868** deliveries supported, including **7,842** C-section deliveries

**29,229** family planning services

**6,555** gender-based violence response services provided to Syrians

**888** women accessed women safe spaces

### In neighbouring countries affected by the crisis

**31,098** reproductive health services delivered to Syrian refugees

**7,523** Syrian refugees received family planning services and consultations

**2,090** clients received gender-based violence services

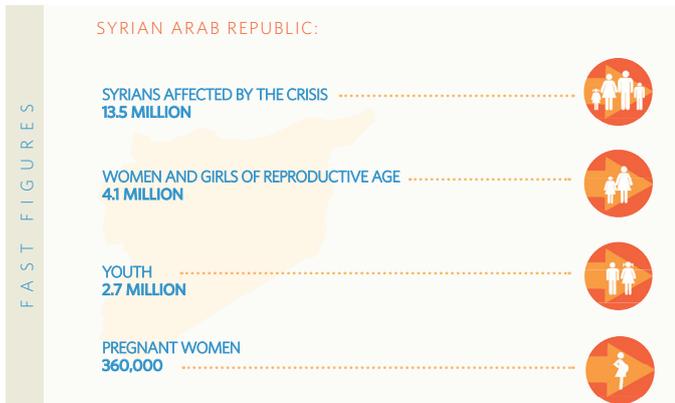
**14,134** Syrian refugees accessed women safe spaces and participated in activities in camps and host communities

**2,419** Syrian refugees reached with gender-based violence related messages

**2,417** dignity kits distributed

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

### SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC FROM ALL CHANNELS



Source: UNHCR, OCHA and UNFPA January 2017

### UNFPA RESPONSE IN SYRIA

#### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SAFE MOTHERHOOD

##### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

##### 146,828 reproductive health services

- 9,586 normal deliveries
- 6,932 C- section deliveries
- 12,066 ante-natal care services
- 3,150 post-natal care services
- 23,086 family planning services
- 1,463 pregnancies under 18

OTHER RH SERVICES **42,697** clients

#### GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

RESPONSE SERVICES **4,326** women and girls

WOMEN ACCESSING SAFE SPACES **23,789** women and girls

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES **20,977** clients

SUPPLIES **750** dignity kits distributed

TRAINING **275** participants

#### UNFPA-SUPPORTED FACILITIES IN SYRIA



Number of women's spaces

18



Number of field reproductive health clinics or mobile teams

53



Number of health facilities

912

#### RESPONSE THROUGH CROSS-BORDER MODALITY

##### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SAFE MOTHERHOOD

##### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

##### 25,372 clients received services in the northern part of Syria:

- 1,245 normal deliveries
- 369 C-section deliveries
- 147 pregnancies under 18
- 7,626 ante-natal care services
- 355 post-natal care services
- 5,254 family planning services

##### 14,185 beneficiaries received services in the southern part of Syria:

- 1,195 normal deliveries
- 541 C-sections
- 480 pregnancies under 18
- 4,515 ante-natal care services
- 4,618 post-natal care services
- 889 family planning services
- 33 reproductive health kits distributed

##### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

**4,063** women reached through outreach activities in the northern part of Syria

**375** women reached through outreach activities in the southern part of Syria

#### UNFPA-SUPPORTED FACILITIES IN THE SOUTH OF SYRIA



Number of women's spaces

10



Number of mobile clinics

3



Number of health facilities

19

#### GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

##### RESPONSE SERVICES

**1,280** clients received gender-based violence services in the northern part of Syria

**949** clients received gender-based violence services in the southern part of Syria

##### GBV AWARENESS & OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

**350** Syrians reached through outreach and awareness activities in the northern part of Syria.

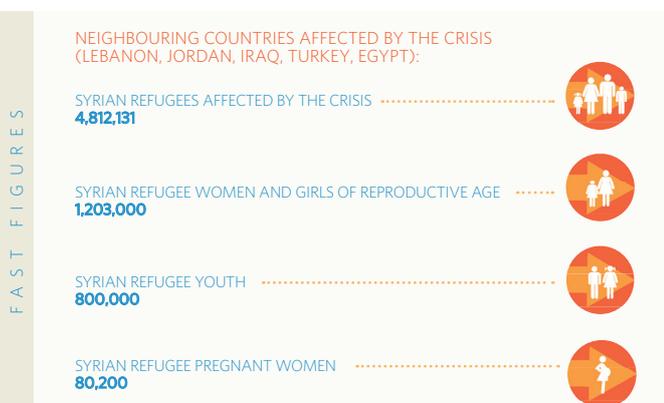
**331** Syrians reached through outreach and awareness activities in the southern part of Syria.

##### TRAINING

**14** persons trained in the southern part of Syria

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

### NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY THE CRISIS



SOURCES: UNHCR, OCHA and UNFPA



### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SAFE MOTHERHOOD

TURKEY	
SERVICES	<b>11,298</b> services for Syrian beneficiaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>405 ante-natal care services</li> <li>749 post-natal care services</li> <li>2,138 family planning services</li> <li>72 pregnancies of women under 18</li> </ul>
AWARENESS SESSIONS & OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	<b>7,102</b> clients
SUPPLIES	<b>450</b> brochures distributed

JORDAN	
SERVICES	<b>14,681</b> reproductive health services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>156 normal deliveries</li> <li>63 pregnancies under 18</li> <li>988 family planning services</li> <li>3,466 ante-natal care services</li> <li>544 post-natal care services</li> </ul>
AWARENESS SESSIONS	<b>2,578</b> clients
TRAINING	<b>49</b> participants

IRAQ	
SERVICES	<b>5,119</b> reproductive health services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4,397 family planning services</li> <li>130 normal deliveries</li> <li>61 C-section deliveries</li> <li>356 ante-natal care services</li> </ul>



### GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

TURKEY	
SERVICES TO SURVIVORS	<b>938</b> services
WOMEN AND GIRLS ACCESSING SAFE SPACES	<b>5,972</b> Syrian women and girls
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	<b>226</b> clients
SUPPLIES	<b>2,397</b> dignity kits distributed

JORDAN	
RESPONSE SERVICES	<b>1,108</b> services
WOMEN AND GIRLS ACCESSING SAFE SPACES	<b>5,929</b> women and girls
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	<b>1,742</b> clients
TRAINING	<b>35</b> participants

EGYPT	
RESPONSE SERVICES	<b>44</b> services
WOMEN AND GIRLS ACCESSING SAFE SPACES	<b>775</b> women and girls
TRAINING	<b>83</b> participants

IRAQ	
WOMEN AND GIRLS ACCESSING SAFE SPACES	<b>1,458</b> women and girls
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	<b>451</b> clients
DIGNITY KITS	<b>21</b> dignity kits distributed

#### UNFPA MISSION:

UNFPA believes that every Syrian woman and girl has the right to have access to affordable reproductive health care and be effectively protected from gender-based violence. UNFPA and partners are scaling up efforts to empower and improve the lives of Syrian women and youth and impacted communities inside Syria and in host countries, including by advocating for human rights and gender equality, to better cope with and recover from the crisis.

UNFPA: Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.





## SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

### JORDAN

YOUTH PROGRAMMING **1,409** young people

### TURKEY

YOUTH PROGRAMMING **530** young people

### EGYPT

YOUTH PROGRAMMING **47** Syrian young people

### IN THEIR WORDS

"I can't describe how happy I am... you boosted my self-confidence, to an extent that my husband and my children felt that my happiness is reflected on them after I was desperate and sad," said one Syrian woman who attends activities at one of the women safe spaces in Egypt.



Women attend a "first aid" training organised in Giza women safe space, Egypt

### TURKEY- CROSS BORDER



An operation room at a UNFPA-supported hospital in Homs

### TURKEY- cross border

"Women like vocational training the most because they are income generating and these activities help empower them," a field staff working for a women and girls safe space in Idlib, Syria told UNFPA.

"Services provided here are better than in other places, I would have chosen to go to another location, but this one is better," said a client in Ghanto Hospital inside Syria.

"We have received training about case management, which is very important due to the nature of the environment we deal with. We communicate with specialists and psychological therapists working with us regarding case management and health referrals," said a worker in women and girls safe space managed cross border from Turkey.

"Thanks to the centre and the continuous care, I have for the first time become able to stand up and discuss very serious matters with my husband. Issues that affect my entire life and change it positively," said one woman who attends activities in one of the women and girls safe spaces.

## UNFPA-SUPPORTED FACILITIES



Number of women's spaces

**56**

Lebanon

5

Jordan

15

Iraq

7

Egypt

5

Turkey

24



Number of field reproductive health clinics or mobile teams

**74**

Jordan

18

(8 in host communities, 10 in camps)

Iraq

18

Egypt

12

Turkey

24

Lebanon

2



Number of youth centres and safe spaces

**27**

Lebanon

5

Jordan

11

Iraq

5

Egypt

4

Turkey

2

## STORIES FROM SYRIAN REFUGEES

### JORDAN

#### Fleeing violence

**Ferial**, a 27-year old Syrian woman, fled her country to Jordan in May 2016. Along with her husband and three children, she was relocated to Azraq camp.

**Ferial** was physically abused by her husband; he hit her almost every day. After being inflicted with regular violence, Ferial decided to leave her husband and move to her brother's house along with her children. Ferial was pregnant when she took this decision. She stayed at her brother's place for four months, during which her husband provided her with no support and withheld food vouchers, clothes and other items from her and the children. He also refused to help with the expenses needed to take care of their children.

**Ferial** disclosed her situation to the case manager at the UNFPA-supported women and girls' center at Azraq camp and asked for help to get a divorce from her husband. The case manager provided her with the needed information. She was also referred to ARDD for legal consultation and assistance in acquiring relevant documents.

With the help of the case manager, Ferial started the needed process and managed to get a divorce from her husband and managed to obtain the official documents to register herself and her children as refugees. In addition she was provided with the support needed to register her newborn, as she faced problems due to not having documents about the father, which he was not willing to provide. "Thank you for standing by my side and supporting me. Due to this support, I managed to get my life back. I feel more confident and free now," Ferial told the case manager.



UNFPA Youth center presented in a panel titled 'Innovations from the Field'. Photo credit: UNFPA Jordan

#### UNFPA conducts a mock session for neonatal resuscitation

Based on the action plan of the neonatal assessment conducted in Zaatari and Azraq camps by the Gates Foundation and UNHCR, in collaboration with UNFPA and UNICEF in March 2016, a mock session for neonatal resuscitation was conducted by the pediatrician in the UNFPA-supported maternity clinic in Zaatari camp. The mock training was preceded by a summary of Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP) guidelines and the scope of the activity. One obstetrician, two midwives, and two nurses participated in the resuscitation simulation; a scenario for a premature delivery was prepared. The mock session was followed by a debriefing session where gaps and challenges were discussed.

A Space for Change, focusing on the UNFPA-supported youth centre in Zaatari camp, was presented at the "Fishbowl" panel on innovation from the field by the UNFPA Youth Officer. The model was also selected to be included in the Compendium on Good and Innovative Practices: Volume II published by UNDP and UNHCR.

### NEWS FROM INSIDE SYRIA



Judy, a young Syrian girl said she is passionate about learning Coding. Photo credit: UNFPA Syria

#### Bringing positive change through coding knowledge

UNFPA Syria organised "Change Makers" courses, where 20 young people attended a 15-week class to learn coding basics and to discuss topics that help young people identify their passion.

"Change Makers", is a youth friendly space, supported by UNFPA-Syria, that stimulates youth's innovation and catalyses positive social change by providing them with skills, tools, opportunities and a global network of like-minded entrepreneurs and innovators. The initiative was launched during 2016 and will continue through 2017.

Its goal, broadly, is to create the future generation of innovators and problem solver, as well as minimise the gender gap in computer sciences.

"Web development is an interactive subject where boys and girls can engage in learning. We at UNFPA Syria are committed to support youth and when girls learn how to code, they become more active and confident of themselves," said Massimo Diana, UNFPA country Representative.

"Learning how to code changed my perspective about life and made it more organised," said Baraa, one of the participants. Loulia, another youth participant, said: "her communication skills have been developed notably throughout the course and she is now more encouraged and motivated to stand up to talk in public".

Ahmad Sufian Bayram, one of the mentors, who joined the team in an online discussion on technology and entrepreneurship said: "Innovation is limitless. Success is not limited to an age. Experience is what makes it happen."

"According to studies, almost half of the routine jobs will disappear in the future. Young people should be aware of that to choose what they want to continue their education in," he added.



Participants in "Change Makers" initiative. Photo credit: UNFPA Syria

## STORIES FROM SYRIAN REFUGEES

### JORDAN CROSS-BORDER

#### Combating GBV

"Before visiting Mseifrah safe house, I thought that I deserved to be beaten and insulted. After going to the centre, I discovered that it is my right to live with dignity. Thank you for supporting and helping me," said Lana, one of the beneficiaries from Mseifreh Safe House in Daraa, Syria.

#### Basic reproductive health services

Nasra had been suffering from a painful uterine fibroid for about one year. After the tumor became bigger and the pain became unbearable, she decided to visit Al Noor hospital that is supported by UNFPA to undergo a medical check. Doctors there decided to conduct a fibroid excision surgery for the patient. After the surgery, Nasra had some complications, but doctors were able to follow her case closely and stabilise the condition. Nasra spent five days in hospital and after being discharged, she recovered at home. Nasra was extremely grateful to the care she received and for her safe recovery. Without the help of medics at Al Noor hospital, she would have been forced to travel to Damascus to receive the needed medical health, which was almost impossible due to the security situation and lack of money.



UNFPA supported clinic at the "berm" in no man's land between Jordan and Syria. Photo credit: UNFPA Jordan

#### UNFPA Jordan opens RH clinic at the Berm

UNFPA with the support of its implementing partner JHAS established a new reproductive health clinic at the berm, near the north eastern border of Jordan, to provide life-saving reproductive health services to more than 70,000 Syrians living at the berm. Services provided at the clinic include antenatal and postnatal care, family planning, and treatment for reproductive tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases and referrals for emergency deliveries to Ruwaishid hospital. UNFPA is also in the process of procuring a full scale mobile maternity unit designed to operate in inhospitable terrains and equipped to provide comprehensive emergency obstetric care (CEmONC) services to the affected population. The maternity unit will be able to deal with both normal and Caesarean section deliveries. During January 85 patients were provided with reproductive health services at the clinic.

## COORDINATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

### TURKEY

UNFPA took part in the sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) working group meeting that took place in Ankara, Turkey, where participants discussed the draft work plan for the current year.

UNFPA attended protection and health working group meetings and co-chaired the SGBV sub-working group meeting in Gaziantep.

UNFPA participated in the protection working group strategic planning workshop and presented findings of the participatory

assessment on protection as well as on registration, documentation and SGBV for boys and men.

### TURKEY- CROSS BORDER

The gender-based violence sub-committee in coordination with the reproductive health working group organised a training of trainers for 27 participants.

UNFPA presented to partners the framework through which the calculation methodology and HRP indicators and results were presented to 25 partner organisations.

UNFPA conducted the monthly learning session for psychosocial support providers.

UNFPA developed an English-Arabic glossary for gender-based violence technical terms.

UNFPA and the reproductive health group started preparation for the midwifery capacity building training that is scheduled to take place in March 2017.

### JORDAN

UNFPA in coordination with Health Ministry will conduct Implanon NXT a long-acting contraceptive, training for 20 gynecologists who work with UNFPA implementing partners.

UNFPA chaired the reproductive health sub-working group meeting, where reproductive health referral criteria were discussed and a presentation on the findings of focus group sessions for involvement of males in reproductive health was shared with the participants.

### JORDAN- CROSS BORDER

UNFPA participated in the health sector working group for southern Syria, where key issues were discussed including the continued obstacles of organising cross-border training for Syrian staff in Jordan, reporting of three cases of measles in Jizeh facility in Dara'a and the preparations to provide services in southern Syria.

In the aftermath of Aleppo's fall, UNFPA contributed to the interagency preparedness plan and provided the gender-based violence input as part of the health and protection component.

UNFPA also initiated contingency planning discussions directly with the implementing partners and will establish an additional warehouse in Eastern Dara'a in case access is cut.

UNFPA participated in a cross-border convoy from Jordan to Syria.

### SYRIA

UNFPA followed up with donors especially the European Union and the Government of Japan, to ensure timely resource mobilisation.

UNFPA carried out a preliminary needs assessment mission to Aleppo.

### LEBANON

UNFPA led with UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs the monthly national sexual and gender-based violence task force meeting where members reviewed last year's achievements and initiatives.

UNFPA led the monthly sexual and reproductive health sub-working group, where members shared updates on ongoing and new activities and reviewed the group's work plan.

UNFPA led with UNHCR the National Case Management working group meeting of the month dedicated to GBV inter-agency M&E.

## CHALLENGES

### TURKEY



Distribution of mother's kits in Batman, Turkey.

Economic problems faced by Syrian refugees still hinder them from reaching or participating in activities.

The security threat outside the borders of Turkey has had an indirect negative impact on the on-going programme.

The language barrier is still limiting access to some of the services especially in the field of health (lack of Arabic-speaking psychologists, social workers, doctors, etc.).

### TURKEY-CROSS BORDER

Insecurity remains the top challenge that hinders proper project

implementation and beneficiary accessibility.

Difficulties in money transfer and in conducting training to field staff, in addition to the lack of specialised human resources.

### EGYPT

Due to cold weather, there was a drop in number of beneficiaries compared to past few months.

### JORDAN-CROSS BORDER

Due to the deteriorating security situation in Esheh in Syria, UNFPA's supported primary health centre was closed for three days and movement of people in the village, including health care staff, was very limited.

The security situation in the besieged area of East Ghouta, Rural Damascus continued to deteriorate.

Due to the harsh weather conditions, the women and girls safe spaces located in the informal tented settlements in Quneitra were temporarily closed to undergo winterization renovations.

### SYRIA

Cold weather coupled with severe shortage of water and interrupted electricity in Damascus affect the health of all people, including women and youth.

Service providers and affected people, including women, are unable to access many services.

## DONORS & PARTNERS

### UNFPA IS GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING DONORS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SYRIA CRISIS:

UNFPA IS GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING DONORS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SYRIA CRISIS: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Norway, OCHA/CERF, Saudi Fund for Development, United States, United Kingdom, UNDP.

Private sector: MBC

### IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS IN SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC: Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSA), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), Syrian Family Planning Association (SFPA),

Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) IN LEBANON: Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanese Family Planning Association, Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Humedica, Makhzoumi Foundation, Amel Association, International Medical Corps and Caritas Lebanon, KAFA ("Enough Violence and Exploitation"), Akkarouna, INTERSOS, SHEILD, LOST, Heartland Alliance, Makassed Primary Health Care Centres, Mazloum Hospital and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

IN JORDAN: Ministry of Health (MOH), Institute for Family Health (IFH), International Medical Corps (IMC), Jordanian Health Aid Society (JHAS), Family Protection Department (FPD), Jordanian Women's Union (JWU), Youth Peer Education Network (YPE), NCFA (National Council for Family Affairs), Questscope. JORDAN Cross border: Relief International and Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS).

IN IRAQ: Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth (MCSP), Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs (MLSA), AL Massela, START NGO and Harikar.

IN EGYPT: Ministry of Health (MOH), CARE International Arab Medical Union and Regional Centre for Training.

IN TURKEY: The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) of the Prime Ministry of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP), ASAM (Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants), BUHASDER (The Association for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases), HÜKSAM (Hacettepe University Women's Research and Implementation Center), IMPR (International Middle East Peace Research Centre), KAMER (Women's Center Foundation), CVF (Community Volunteers Foundation), Osmangazi University, PYD (Positive Life Association), SPoD (Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation Studies Association)

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Daniel Baker,  
UNFPA Syria Regional  
Response Advisor  
baker@unfpa.org  
+962797225829

### RELEVANT RESOURCES

www.unfpa.org  
www.ocha.org  
www.unhcr.org  
http://syria.humanitarianresponse.info

