

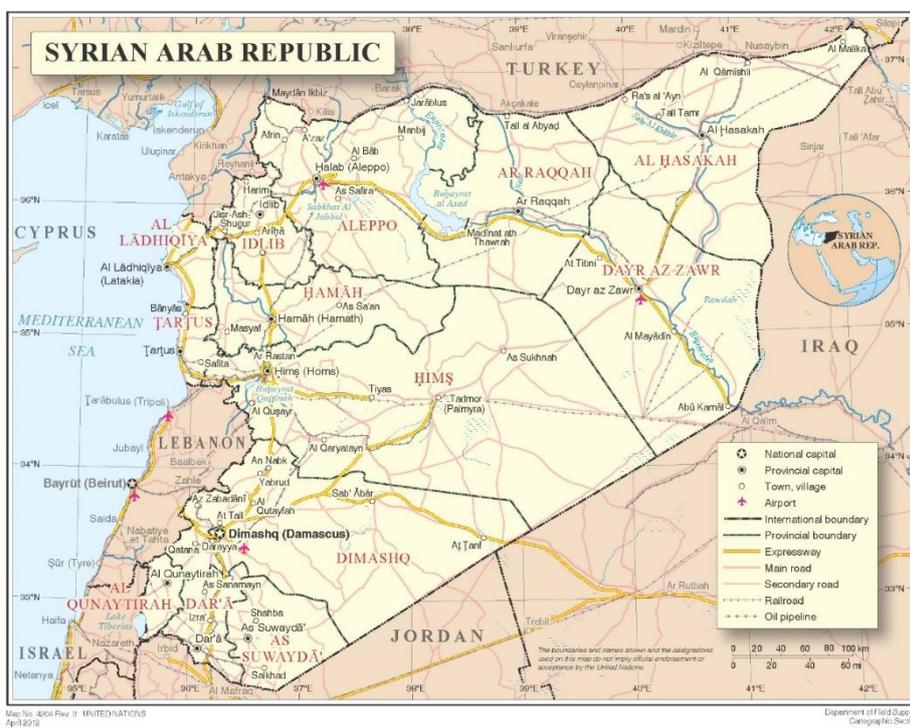
Executive Summary

In 2015, the funding target for the ERF Syria was US\$30 million. By the end of the year, the Fund had received \$31.5 million through contributions from the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Kuwait, Germany, India, Norway, Spain, South Korea, Malaysia and Luxembourg. Out of this amount, \$13 million was spent on 19 projects in 2015 across the sectors WASH, Health, Shelter & NFIs, Food Security & Agriculture and Logistics.

Funds were allocated during two standard allocations and through reserve allocations. Two standard allocations worth \$6.9 million were conducted in 2015, funding a total of eight projects. The first standard allocation (worth \$4 million) funded projects in response to a severe winter storm which hit Syria in January 2015. The second standard allocation (worth \$2.9 million) funded critical WASH, Shelter and NFIs projects in collective shelters in Aleppo in September 2015.

Another 11 projects worth \$6.1 million were funded through reserve allocations, reaching over 1.8 million beneficiaries.

While donors made generous pledges, nearly half of the funding (44 per cent) was received in the last quarter of 2015, which led to a carryover of \$18.5 million into 2016. Additionally, pledges for 2015 amounting to \$6.5 million were paid to the ERF in early 2016.



Overview: The Syrian Emergency Fund

The Syrian Emergency Response Fund (ERF) is a country-based pooled fund which receives and allocates funds from multiple donors to partners in order to respond to critical humanitarian needs in a timely and strategic manner.

The Fund was established in March 2012 to support the humanitarian response in Syria and neighbouring countries under the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (RHC). In June 2014, the increased operational complexity and scale of the Syrian crisis led to the establishment of three separate ERFs in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon with an additional pooled fund in Turkey. The Funds are led and managed by the respective Humanitarian Coordinators with OCHA offices in each country supporting the delivery of country-led response plans.

For the ERF Syria, the HC for Syria has the overall authority and accountability over the Fund, and is also the chair of the Syria ERF Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board, comprised of donors, international NGOs, and UN agencies, provides oversight over the Fund and ensures that its strategy reflected views from across the humanitarian community and its stakeholders. Funds were allocated to national and international NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and UN Agencies, including IOM. As a matter of priority, the ERF proactively reached out to existing and potential NGO partners in order to support their capacity to apply for and secure ERF funding, as the ERF strategy aimed to allocate more funding to NGO partners. Projects were reviewed by Strategic and Technical Review Committees and approved by the Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure the project's complementarity to on-going humanitarian activities.

Humanitarian Context

The largest global protection crisis continues to unfold in Syria and civilians remain the primary victims of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. An estimated 250,000 people have been killed in the conflict, including tens of thousands of children.

As highlighted in the Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2015, an estimated 13.5 million people, including six million children, were reported to be in need of some form of humanitarian assistance and protection. A total of 6.5 million people, including 2.8 million children, were displaced within Syria and 4.2 million were registered as refugees in neighbouring countries and North Africa. On average, since 2011, 50 Syrian families have been displaced every hour of every day. Well over 1.2 million people have been displaced for the second or third time. Increasing numbers of civilians are prepared to risk their lives to reach Europe.

Inside Syria, a number of drivers, including insecurity, unilateral economic and financial measures imposed on Syria, the deepening economic decline, and reduced availability of basic services, contributed to the exacerbation of the humanitarian situation over the past year. Soaring food and fuel prices, and disrupted markets have further added to the extreme vulnerability across the country. Three in four Syrians now live in poverty and people increasingly resort to on negative coping mechanisms. An estimated 8.7 million Syrians are unable to meet their basic food needs, and 70 per cent of the population lacks access to safe drinking water.

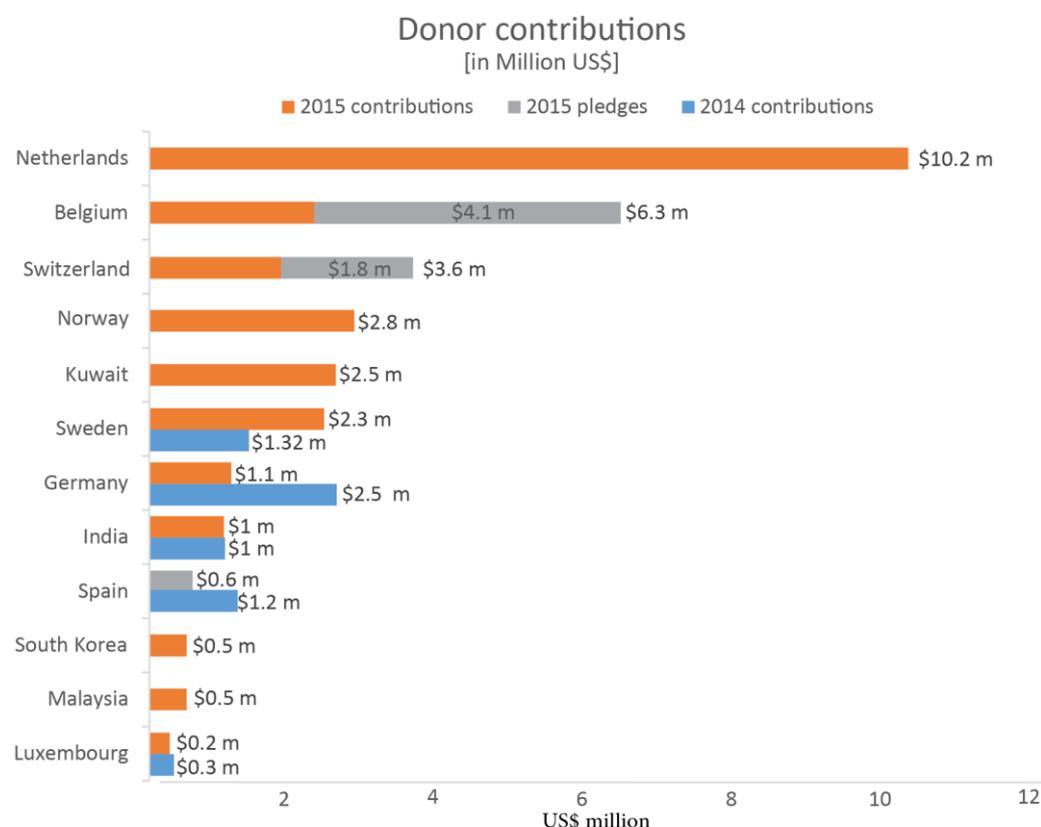
In addition, attacks against schools, hospitals, water networks, electricity plants, and places of worship, and other civilian infrastructure continue unabated and affect the lives of civilians. At the same time, limited access to the affected people security concerns remain the main constraints for humanitarian organizations providing assistance and services inside Syria.

The crisis requires an urgent political solution. Pending such a solution, humanitarian actors continue to work together to extend a lifeline to the most vulnerable people in Syria while aiming to enhance protection and to strengthen individual- and community-level resilience across the country. Humanitarian actors – in particular Syrians themselves – are making remarkable efforts to deliver assistance, despite significant operational constraints and major funding shortfalls.

These efforts continue to require even more support, including longer-term and flexible financial commitments, if the humanitarian community is to continue to save lives, alleviate suffering, enhance protection, and provide opportunities for greater resilience, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Information on the Contributors

In 2015, the Syria ERF received a total of \$31.5 million in funding from twelve donors: the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Kuwait, Germany, India, Norway, Spain, South Korea, Malaysia and Luxembourg. These numbers represent both an increase in the total number of donors and the amount of contributions compared to the previous year: Contributions increased four-fold in 2015, and the donor base increased from five donors to twelve.

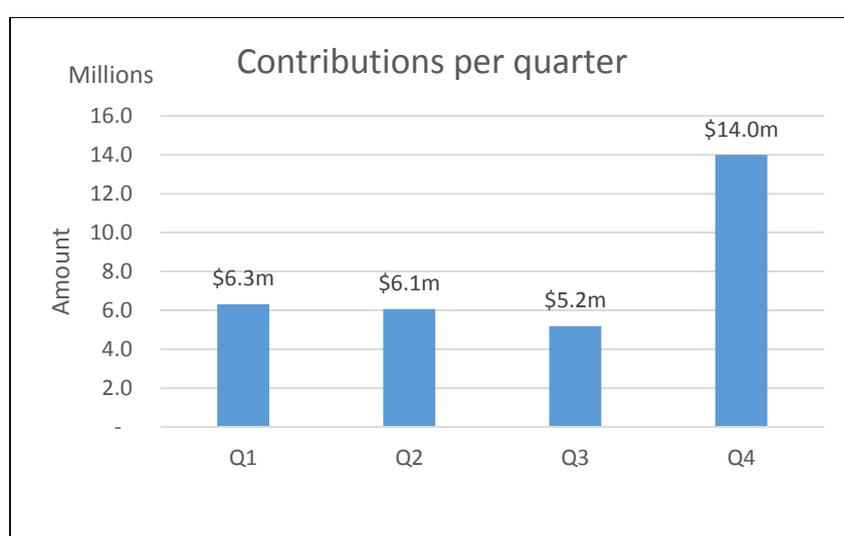


Donor Contributions per Quarter

In 2015, all funds received in the first quarter constituted carry-over from 2014, with new contributions being received from the second quarter onward.

Although donor contributions in 2015 were more generous than in the previous year, 44 per cent of all funding was not received until the last quarter of the 2015, which made it difficult for the ERF to allocate funds earlier throughout the year.

Pledges from Switzerland, Belgium and Spain for 2015 amounting to \$6.4 million were paid to the ERF in early 2016.



Contributions and Allocation Trends

Allocations of funds for 2015 were informed by existing needs, but also affected by the availability of funds. The availability of money in the Fund often had to take precedence over the escalating humanitarian needs in the allocation process. Hence, the two standard allocations took place in January and September 2015 when contribution levels were relatively high.

1. Allocation Overview

1.1. Allocation Strategy

In keeping with the programmatic framework of the 2015 Syria Response Plan, the ERF enabled the delivery of humanitarian assistance by focusing on the following areas:

- Promote needs-based assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles;
- Improve the relevance and coherence of the humanitarian response by strategically funding priority needs as identified in the 2015 Syria Response Plan;
- Strengthen coordination and leadership, primarily through the sector system and function of the HC;
- Support and strengthen priority sectors and sub-national priorities in accordance

with the assessed needs; and

- Respond to critical needs, with a particular focus on the most acute needs in the most underserved areas, including besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

Given the importance of broadening partnerships in order to reach people in need in the most underserved areas, the ERF proactively reached out to potential NGO partners to enable them to apply for and to secure ERF funding.

1.1.1. Eligibility Criteria

All UN agencies, including IOM, national and international NGOs registered in Syria and Red Cross/Red Crescent movements were eligible to apply for ERF funding. The HC, in consultation with the Advisory Board, determines the eligibility criteria for partners to qualify for funding.

1.1.2. Application Process

All applicants had to complete a due diligence exercise and both national and international NGOs had to go through an additional capacity assessment process which evaluated their administrative, financial, technical and operational aptitudes.

Within the application process, proposals were benchmarked against the following criteria:

- Access:** The location of the project was clearly identified; applicants had a physical presence in the proposed areas of operation and/or proven access to the proposed areas of operation;
- Objectives:** The objectives of the proposal were aligned with the strategic and sectoral objectives as outlined in the SRP; the objectives were compliant with the terms of the call for proposals; the proposed activities were to be conducted within areas of special focus of the Fund and address real-time humanitarian needs in priority areas; and
- Risk management:** Risks were realistically identified using the ERF Risk Management Framework that broadens the definition of risk beyond programmatic and financial risks associated with implementing partners, and identifies the key factors of risks faced by the Fund in the context of Syria and proper mitigation strategies were put in place.

Projects could be funded for a maximum of twelve months while the maximum allowable amount for funding was determined by the Advisory Board (up to \$2million per project). For NGOs, funds were disbursed in one, two or three tranches depending on project duration, partner capacity and risk levels, and in line with OCHA's global guidelines on country-based pooled funds.

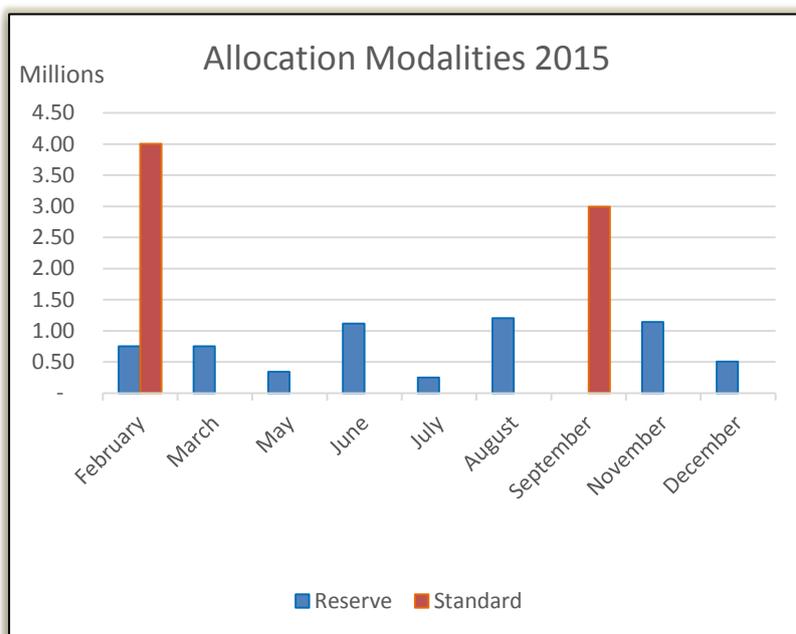
1.1.3. Allocation Windows

In 2015, there were two allocation modalities, namely reserve and standard allocation.

	Standard Allocation	Reserve Allocation
<i>Purpose</i>	Aligned to the priority needs as identified in the Strategic Response Plan	Focused mainly on unforeseen needs that had to be addressed urgently
<i># of projects funded</i>	8 projects	11 projects
<i>Amounts allocated</i>	\$7 million	\$6 million

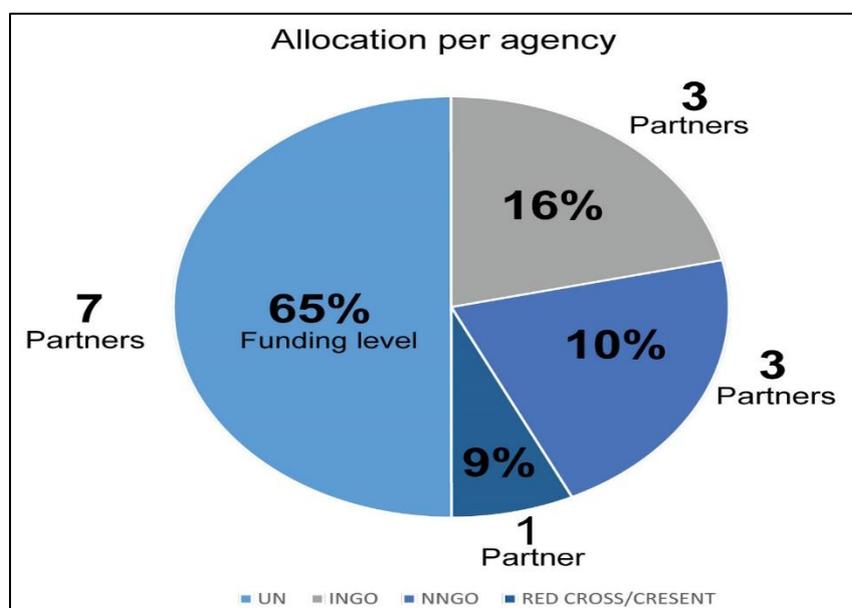
<i>Description of Projects</i>	(\$4m and \$2.9m) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first standard allocation responded to needs following a severe winter storm hit Syria in January 2015 • The second standard allocation funded critical WASH and Shelter & NFI needs in collective shelters in Aleppo in September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four projects (three WASH and one Shelter & NFIs)
<i>Review process</i>	Projects were reviewed by the respective sectors in Strategic and Technical review committees.	

Standard allocation were launched twice in 2015, while reserve allocation happened continuously throughout the year.



1.2. Allocation Breakdown

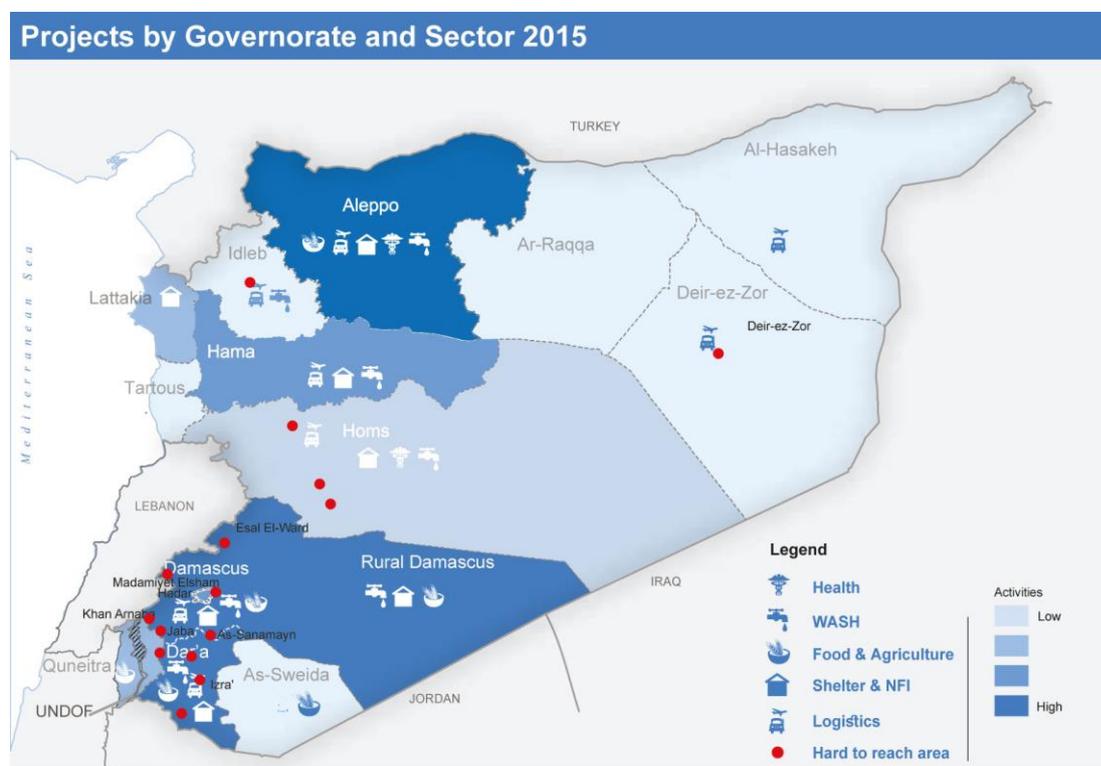
A total of 19 projects to the value of \$13 million were funded in 2015 across five sectors (WASH, Health, Food Security & Agriculture, Shelter & NFIs, and Logistics). All in all, 65 per cent of the funds went to UN agencies, while 16 per cent went to INGOs, ten per cent of national NGOs and nine per cent to the Red Crescent movement.



Although the Syria ERF aimed to allocate half of all grants to projects implemented by national and international NGOs, and Red Cross/Red Crescent movements, only 35 per cent went to these recipients. A limiting factor for a higher NGO participation were long government-administrated clearance processes for NGOs that made it impractical to rely on NGOs as implementing partners that when a quick response to the harsh winter conditions were required during the winterization standard allocation. Additionally, during the second standard allocation, one NGO project and an IOM project recommended for funding did not receive government clearance which further decreased NGO participation. No reason was provided for the two projects not receiving clearance.

Similarly, the ERF's objective to allocate half of the funds to projects implemented in hard-to-reach and besieged areas could not be met in 2015. This notwithstanding, the Fund proved to be effective in reaching the most vulnerable in the least served areas with five out of 19 projects being at least partially implemented in hard-to-reach areas. By the end of 2015, an overall ten per cent of beneficiaries were located in hard-to-reach areas, compared to 25 per cent as reported during the third quarter of the same year. This drop was due to significant increase of beneficiaries of WASH projects towards the end of the year (five projects with over two million beneficiaries in accessible areas).

As indicated in the map below, the ERF managed to reach 15 hard-to-reach locations through projects funding with some individual projects being spread over more than one governorate with the same type of assistance.



2. Project Monitoring

A total of 27 projects were monitored during 2015: 19 of which were funded in 2015 and eight in 2014.

All eight projects funded in 2014 were monitored through field monitoring visits. For the 2015 projects, nine projects were physically monitored and ten were monitored by desk review. Out of the latter ten projects, five were located in hard-to-reach areas and as such not accessible for monitoring teams. The remaining five were not monitored because of delays in their implementation due to a delay in fund disbursement for two projects and a delay in obtaining approvals from local authorities for the remaining three. These projects will be monitored in 2016.

In 2015, the monitoring methodology was predominantly based on an assessment of the projects work plans and their respective progress against indicator targets. OCHA staff conducted interviews with local counterparts and beneficiaries alike to ensure accountability and transparency of the project activities. At the end of each mission, monitoring mission reports were drafted and shared with all stakeholders for follow-up and corrective action where appropriate.

For projects which could not be monitored by OCHA staff, desk reviews were conducted through the revision of distribution reports, progress and status reports submitted by partners, in addition to geo-tagged photos of project activities.

Out of the 27 monitored projects, 23 were implemented as planned, reaching the targeted number of beneficiaries. Two projects were delayed and had to request changes in their planned activities due to developments related to the security situation in the project area. In this context, monitoring findings suggested that ERF-applicants often overestimated their ability to reach beneficiaries in hard-to-reach and besieged locations. This led to a number of projects requiring re-programming to shift their geographical destination. As a mitigation strategy, the ERF will consider the applicants' previous ability to successfully implement projects in hard-to-reach or besieged areas during the application process.

2.1. Project Overview by Sector

	WASH Sector	
	Budget: \$4,382,181	Number of Projects: 8
	Reached beneficiaries for completed projects: 799,300 (20,700 short of plan)	Targeted beneficiaries for outstanding projects: 2,037,702
	Implementing Partners: UNICEF, WHO, OXFAM, GVC, Armadilla	
	<p>Summary: Four projects were implemented by UN agencies (three by UNICEF and one by WHO). A further four projects were implemented by INGOs (two by OXFAM, one by GVC and one by Armadilla).</p> <p>The projects aimed at providing emergency WASH services and items to IDPs and host community members in accessible and hard-to-reach areas in Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus and Dar'a. Projects also targeted quick repairs of damaged infrastructure and improved access to drinking water and sanitation services.</p>	
<p>Project Results Monitoring results for four INGO and four UN-implemented WASH projects show that most partners faced difficulties and delays in project implementation due to a lengthy government approval process. Beneficiaries interviewed during field visits indicated high levels of satisfaction with the water trucking activities as they had previously experienced water shortages.</p> <p>Three out of the eight projects were completed by the end of 2015. However, the deteriorating security situation hampered access to targeted communities and increased the cost of delivery of humanitarian items and consequently the total operating costs. One organisation had to reduce the number of beneficiaries and eventually reached 20,700 fewer beneficiaries than planned. Of the reached beneficiaries, 417,512 were female and 381,788 male.</p> <p>Five additional projects continue to be implemented, aiming to reach 2,037,702 beneficiaries.</p>		

 	Shelter and NFIs Sector	
	Budget: \$3,751,537	Number of Projects: 5
	Reached beneficiaries for completed projects: 113,720 (25,515 in excess of plan)	Targeted beneficiaries for outstanding projects: 3,000
	Implementing Partners: UNRWA, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, The Syria Trust for Development	
	Summary: Four projects, implemented by UN agencies and IOM, provided winterization items, winter supplies and kits to IDPs and host community members. The NNGO-implemented project focused on the rehabilitation and improvement of collective shelters in Jibreen, Aleppo.	
	Project Results: Four of the five projects were completed and one project is still under implementation, after faced a delay due to a change in location as per the request of the local authorities. The total number of beneficiaries reached was 113,720, 25,515 more than planned. This was due to UNRWA and IOM reaching additional beneficiaries because of local procurement and exchange rate gains as a result of hyperinflation in Syria. Of the reached beneficiaries, 57,297 were female and 56,423 male. Project beneficiaries in Rural Damascus, Idleb and Deir Ez-Zor governorates indicated that the projects had improved their living conditions, protected them from weather elements and gave them a sense of privacy.	

	Health Sector	
	Budget: \$593,679	Number of Projects: 2
	Reached beneficiaries for completed projects: 170 (50 in excess of plan)	Targeted beneficiaries for outstanding projects: 7,900
	Implementing Partners: Child Care Society, Monastery of Saint James the Mutilated	
	Summary: One project aimed to provide secondary healthcare services and emergency obstetric health services by providing medical infrastructure in Aleppo governorate. The project also aimed to build local capacity of health workers through vocational training. The second project aimed at reducing mortality and morbidity rates by providing life-saving health responses to haemodialysis patients in Homs.	
	Project Results: The project in Homs governorate has been completed. In excess to the targeted 120 vulnerable patients, the NNGO reached an additional 50 patients thanks to savings gained by bulk purchases and fluctuating exchange rates. Of the reached beneficiaries, 50 were female and 70 male. Beneficiaries from haemodialysis sessions in Homs governorate expressed satisfaction with the provided services. Additionally, monitoring activities	

	<p>showed that the quality of the materials used and the duration and frequency of sessions met international standards. The project filled a gap in services provided by the Ministry of Health and WHO.</p> <p>The second project continues to be implemented after a no-cost extension related to delays in procurement processes. It is anticipated that the project will proceed as planned with no changes to project activities.</p>
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	Logistics Cluster	
	Budget: \$1,865,029	Number of Projects: 2
	Reached beneficiaries for completed projects: N/A	Targeted beneficiaries for outstanding projects: N/A
	Implementing Partners: WFP	
	<p>Summary:</p> <p>Two projects were funded under the Logistics Cluster and administrated by WFP. The first project aimed to support the Logistics Cluster’s cross-line operations, and to provide 100,000 litres of fuel to vulnerable populations in IDP shelters in Damascus, Homs, and Hama governorates. The second project aimed to augment the logistics capacity needed in order to respond to the immediate needs in the besieged parts of Deir-ez-Zor city.</p> <p>For both projects it is difficult to determine the targeted and total number of beneficiaries, as the Logistics Cluster is a service cluster without direct beneficiaries as such. For the second project, the number of targeted beneficiaries can be equated the population of the besieged parts of Deir-ez-Zor city, approximately 228,000 people.</p>	
	<p>Project Results:</p> <p>The first project was completed successfully. For the second project, WFP requested reprogramming and no cost extensions, due to prolonged delays in approvals needed for the airlift.</p>	

	Food & Agriculture Sector	
	Budget: \$2,455,796	Number of Projects: 2
	Reached beneficiaries for completed projects: 17,700 (5,450 in excess of plan)	Targeted beneficiaries for outstanding projects: 243,760
	Implementing Partners: FAO, SARC	
	<p>Summary:</p> <p>The first project aimed at supporting 1,750 families (12,250 persons), out of which 7,675 lived in hard-to-reach areas, with 20 hens and 100 kg of poultry food per family. The project’s aim was to enable the households to become more self-sustainable through increasing the beneficiaries’ food security and nutrition status.</p>	

	The second project aimed at providing bread to households in Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Dar'a and Quneitra.
	<p>Project Results:</p> <p>The first project was completed and reached more beneficiaries than planned with 2,950 households (17,700 individuals) reached compared to the targeted 1,750 households (12,250 individuals) as a result of bulk procurement as well as exchange rate gains. Out of the reached beneficiaries 8,380 were male and 9,320 were female.</p> <p>The SARC project is on-going after a request for reprogramming and no-cost extension after facing delays in implementation due to a delay in fund transfer from OCHA. .</p>

2.2. Project Monitoring Results for Projects from 2014

Additional monitoring activities were conducted for five projects funded in 2014, but partially implemented in 2015.

Multi Sector projects (Food and NFIs)

Four UNRWA and one INGO projects were monitored through field visits. Three of the UNRWA projects exceeded the planned number of beneficiaries due to savings from exchange rate gains. Feedback from beneficiaries indicated a preference for more canned food items in the food parcels as those can be stored more easily and do not require refrigeration. Distribution appeared to be well organized in all five projects.

Coordination project

One coordination project was implemented by UNDSS. The project faced difficulties in obtaining visas for international staff to be deployed to the targeted UN hubs. Monitoring suggested to increasingly rely on local staff to overcome the visa requirement challenges.

3. Fund Performance

3.1. General Overview

Out of the 19 projects funded in 2015 worth \$13 million, nine were completed and ten are in various stages of implementation.

Five projects requested for no cost extensions for re-programming or other reasons:

- One project was delayed because of a prolonged government approval process
- Two projects wanted to utilise savings they had obtained through exchange rate gains
- Two projects could not access the targeted areas due to security concerns

4. Capacity Assessment and Risk Assessment

All applicants had to submit due diligence documents. Also, in line with the ERF strategy and the risk management framework, OCHA undertook capacity assessments for NGO partners from July-December 2015. NGOs that went through the capacity assessment were all either on the list of NNGOs authorised by MoFA to partner with the UN, or INGOs operating in Syria registered with the government.

Out of 42 NGOs that were approached for capacity assessment, 31 national and international NGOs completed the assessment in 2015. Generally, international NGOs had a lower risk profile than national NGOs due to comparatively more experience humanitarian programming in emergency contexts.

Organization Type	Total Assessed	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
National NGOs	18	1	8	9
International NGOs	13	10	3	0

The risk ranking determined the size of grants as well as the frequency of monitoring visit to the project.

5. Conclusion: Challenges and Lessons Learned

Thanks to increased donor contributions in 2015, the ERF was able to fund 19 projects in five sectors. However, more than half of the projects were delayed in their implementation. OCHA carefully reviewed the challenges encountered and, in consultation with the Advisory Board, put the following mitigation strategies in place for 2016:

- **Long approval process for government clearance:** Although all entities were affected, government clearances took longer for national NGOs with an average duration of one month

Mitigation Strategy: The HC will advocate for a quicker process for approval of national NGO-implemented project by GoS. In the meantime, NNGOs will be advised by OCHA to add a two month ‘grace period’ before the planned starting date notwithstanding the need to respond to humanitarian needs as timely as possible.

- **Deteriorating security situation and access constraints:** The evolving security situation sometimes hamper the projects’ ability to reach beneficiaries as planned and/or lead to a shift in the geographic location. The ERF accepted such changes to accommodate new needs of the targeted populations by allowing reprogramming of project activities.

Additionally, some locations that were accessible during project development became later inaccessible due to shifting conflict dynamics. Some projects had to be redesigned to accommodate these new developments.

Mitigation Strategy: Monitoring findings suggest that ERF-applicants often overestimated their ability to reach beneficiaries in hard-to-reach and besieged locations. This has led to a number of projects requiring re-programming and/or a shift geographical coverage.

Therefore, the applicants' previous ability to implement project in such areas will be assessed during the application process. The ERF will also sensitize partners as to what qualifies as hard-to-reach and besieged areas as per the UN definition throughout the project cycle. The Advisory Board agreed to revise the target for projects implemented in hard-to-reach and besieged locations downward to 30%, noting that this number will be reviewed after six months. In the meantime, OCHA will continue its outreach programme for NNGO particularly to those with capacity to work in hard-to-reach areas. The level of monitoring mechanisms particularly in hard-to-reach areas will be increased to ensure resources are used effectively and efficiently

- **Currency instability:** National NGOs who received the grants in local currency incurred losses which affected their capacity to implement their projects. However, currency fluctuation was advantageous for UN agencies and INGOs who received grants in foreign currency and benefitted from positive exchange rates.

Mitigation Strategy: In 2016, to hedge against hyperinflation and exchange rate losses, all NNGOs will receive their grants in three instalments regardless of the capacity risk level.

The mitigation strategies put in place as a result of the lessons learned are expected to contribute to the valuable work of the ERF moving forward. These measures are expected to increase the Fund's ability to reach vulnerable Syrians inside the country with life-saving assistance, while also taking measures to build the resilience of both IDPs and host communities. The ERF plans to build on its successful work during the past year and, in consultation with the Advisory Board, decided to double the target for the Fund from \$30 million to \$60 million for the coming year.

Glossary of Acronyms

AB	Advisory Board
CBPF	Country Based Pooled Fund
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HFU	Humanitarian Finance Unit
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NFI	Non Food Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SRP	Strategic Response Plan
TRC	Technical Review Committee
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
WASH	Water and Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization