

PROGRAMME REPORT

January 2025



**Action
Syria**

Action Syria is the operating name of the Hands Up Foundation, Charity no. 1156491



CONTENTS

Our Impact

Introduction

Our Programmes:

- Health
- Education
- Emergencies

Thank You

References

3

4

5

5

10

14

21

22



People lining the arches at the entrance to Souq Al-Hamidiyeh, Damascus, after Assad's fall, December 2024

OUR IMPACT

In the second half of 2024, Action Syria helped **17,695 people**.

We worked with three local partners to provide:



Over **17,661** medical consultations.



Salaries for **10** medical staff, **6** education staff, and **47** support staff.

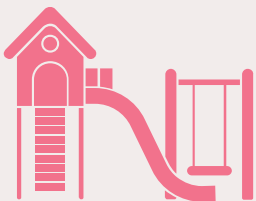


Education for **80** children.



650 displaced people (130 families) with emergency supplies and **550** displaced people (110 families) with hot meals.

Support for **975** people with limb difference, including **13** prosthetics, **76** orthotic devices and physiotherapy.



A safe place to play in **two** playgrounds for **2,400** children affected by earthquakes, displacement and conflict.

56% of those reached were **women and girls**.
53% were **children**.





INTRODUCTION

December 2024 marked **an extraordinary, unexpected shift in Syria** which ended over 50 years of brutal, authoritarian rule under the Assad family. This has mammoth implications for all Syrians both in and out of the country, as well as for organisations working there. Syria holds a uniquely strategic place in the heart of the middle east, and what happens there affects the entire region, and indeed, the world. As Syrians start to rebuild, there is a palpable wave of **hope and optimism** that many Syrians haven't been able to feel for decades. Talking to our Syrian colleagues in recent weeks and seeing their demeanour change into something visibly lighter has been moving, as has the ability to go to Damascus, Homs and Aleppo and see old friends in their home country. At the same time, nothing can replace nor change the **depth of sorrow and outrage** at the lives, homes and livelihoods that have been lost.

The change in Syria presents a genuine opportunity to **rebuild a new, just, diverse and more tolerant** nation, and we owe it to Syrians everywhere to support the communities already doing this (who, in fact, have been working on it for years). While the change fosters opportunity, it does not remove the reality facing millions of Syrians; **16.7 million** people need humanitarian assistance, **7.6 million** are displaced and **90%** of the population live in poverty. It will take time, hard work and money to address these challenges. As the delivery of international aid from the likes of USAID is called into question by the new administration in the US, the work of Action Syria and our partners becomes even more critical - as does your support. **Our promise is to be there for as long as we are needed.**

Over recent weeks we have been reviewing our programmes, listening to our partners and colleagues on the ground and establishing where and how we can **make the greatest difference.**

As we look ahead to making more positive change with our Syrian friends and partners, it is also important to look back. This report covers the second half of 2024, and the work we achieved with our local partners in that time. We are proud of everything that we do with the support of our generous donors and the expertise of our brilliant partners. Together, we are changing lives for the better.

Our Programmes

Health





Primary Health Centre

Jindires, NW Syria – SAMS

Every person deserves the right to good quality medical care

As Syria begins to rebuild, the infrastructure of health services will be a key focus area. Throughout the 14-year war, health facilities were systematically targeted [1], while huge numbers of medical professionals left the country. Today, in Syria, almost **15 million** people need health assistance [2]. For several years we have worked with SAMS Foundation to fund primary health services in north-west Syria.

From June to November 2024, we worked with SAMS to plug a funding gap for one of their Primary Health Centers (PHC) in the sub-district of Jindires, Aleppo Governorate. The aim was to ensure continued access to medical care for the local community of over **47,000** people. For **23,000** of these, this PHC is the sole provider, delivering critical care including dental services, midwifery, reproductive health, and chronic disease management. During the project, the team of **20** provided **17,661** consultations, and helped **12,975** people. Of the latter **45%** were children, and **58%** were women and girls.

Antenatal care is a critical component of the centre's services. **80%** of surveyed households in Jindires reported that pregnant women in their families visited the PHC at least **four times** during their pregnancy and **100%** of surveyed households stated that women who had given birth attended the PHC within **12 hours** of childbirth. Data collected also revealed that **93%** of surveyed households identified this PHC as their primary health facility for accessing essential healthcare and medication free of charge.

The basic medical care that the team provides is life-saving, particularly in cases of preventable and/or treatable diseases.



PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Ahmed's Story, PHC, Syria

Ahmed is five years old and was brought to the PHC in a critical condition, having been suffering from a high fever of **39°C** that was not responding to treatment. He had cold hands and feet, blue lips and was very lethargic. The team diagnosed purulent tonsillitis and anaemia. With the right tests and corresponding treatment and care, Ahmed recovered swiftly and, at his next appointment five days later, he had transformed back into a smiling boy, full of energy.

Ahmed's parents were grateful for the **swift, high-quality care provided**. This story emphasises the critical role of skilled doctors, efficient diagnosis, and comprehensive treatment in both saving lives and earning the trust of the communities they serve.

Patients waiting outside the PHC, Jindires





Prosthetics

A'zaz, NW Syria – PAC

Every person with limb difference deserves the right care and support

Three million Syrians were injured during the conflict, including **86,000** people whose injuries led to amputations [3]. In reality, this number is likely far higher, particularly following the earthquakes which struck the Turkish-Syrian border in early 2023. We have worked with our partner, PAC, since 2022, supporting patients through the provision of prosthetics, physiotherapy, rehabilitation and psychological support. The aim is to enhance their living conditions and give them the opportunity to regain independence, pursue employment, education, and sporting activities.

With PAC, we cover the salaries of **5** prosthetics technicians and **3** support staff, and contribute to those of a further **4** support staff. We are so proud to ensure the Hope Step Centre (the only one of its kind providing these services for free in A'zaz) can continue its work, while supporting the livelihoods of the staff who run it.

Our prosthetics programme has evolved through the years, adapting to meet the needs on the ground. The latest iteration of the programme started in March 2024 and includes orthotic services (supporting the function of limbs / torso). Since July, the team have provided **13** prosthetics and **76** orthotic devices, reaching a total of **975** people. The number of services provided in total was **2,055**, including physiotherapy and maintenance for prosthetic and orthotic devices.

Hala, age 7

34% of patients at the clinic in the reporting period were **children**.





PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Dalia's Story, Prosthetics, Syria

Dalia, nine, was born with the absence of fully formed limbs, with her upper arms extending to just below the elbow and her lower limbs to just below the knee. Dalia moves by walking and kneeling on her knees, so she can only go short distances at home and is unable to walk longer distances outside. Her arms allow her to perform a few daily activities, but these are a challenge. She had not tried prosthetic limbs before.

After assessing her, the team confirmed that prosthetic limbs could be fitted. Once these had been measured and made, the physio team worked with Dalia to help her learn how to use her new limbs. The **smile on her face and the hope in her eyes** were inspiring to see. Dalia remains under the observation of the team to make sure the prosthetics are compatible with her condition, comfortable and a positive improvement to her life.

*Dalia, age 9
a young patient at
the Hope Step Centre*



Our Programmes

Education





Education for Syrian Refugees

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon – SAWA for Development & Aid

Every child deserves the right to education

1.5 million Syrian refugees live in Lebanon [4]. The fall of Assad has opened the opportunity for Syrians to return to Syria, but it remains to be seen how many wish to and how many are able to. While Israel's assault on Hezbollah, which had a devastating effect across the country in late 2024, has ended and new leadership is in place, the country is still in a state of economic collapse and fragile both politically and security-wise [5]. Education for Syrian refugee children remains a critical need, which we continue to respond to with our partner SAWA.

44% of Syrian school-aged refugees in Lebanon do not attend school [6]. This leaves them vulnerable to child labour and child marriage, significantly limiting their future opportunities. The economic crisis in Lebanon means there are not enough spaces in schools and, even if they can find a space, many are unable to afford transport or school stationery. With SAWA, we are doing all we can to address these barriers, providing a school for **80** Syrian refugee children (**54%** girls) in the Bekaa Valley. Each day, the children arrive from neighbouring camps to learn Arabic, English, science and maths. We provide buses to get our students safely to and from school, as well as the materials they need to study. Without this centre, many of these children would have no access to education at all.

Many of our students have experienced conflict, forced displacement, and do not know life outside of the camps. The majority of their **six teachers** are from the same community and have lived through similar experiences. Action Syria funds the salaries of these teachers plus **six** support staff to provide a safe, supportive environment and the education these children need for a brighter future.

Israel's offensive in Lebanon in late 2024, meant that the academic year started late, both to keep children safe and to provide shelter for those fleeing bombs (see p15-19 for detail). We are pleased to report that school opened on 1 December 2024, with online learning in place before then to keep the children engaged.

PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED



Hoda's Story, Education, Lebanon

At first, Hoda, aged 9, was a quiet presence in the classroom, preferring to observe rather than be in the spotlight. Hoda's Arabic teacher noticed this, and wanted to help her explore her potential. During a poetry lesson, Hoda recited a poem she had written, and the whole class was captivated by her performance.

Encouraged by her teacher, Hoda began to embrace her passion for poetry, experimenting with different styles and themes. Her teacher provided guidance and mentorship, showing her how to refine her work and express her emotions through the written word. Together, they explored classic poets, delving into the rich history of Arabic literature.

As Hoda's confidence grew, she started to share her poetry with classmates. Initially nervous, she discovered that performing made her happy and her peers enjoyed it too. The more she performed, the more she connected with her audience, who were moved by her words. Her talent is now recognized throughout the entire school, and she has come out of her shell.

*Hoda, age 9.
One of the students
at our school in Lebanon*



Mr Mohammad

We are deeply proud of what we do and the amazing teachers, doctors, physiotherapists, field and support staff who we have the privilege of working with. We talk often – and rightly – of the positivity, hope and opportunity they foster and create which makes our work so powerful. It is sometimes also hard, difficult and unbearably sad.

In September, we were heartbroken to learn that one of our teachers, who taught so brilliantly at the centre for several years, had been killed. Mr Mohammad, originally from Syria, brought light, hope, and knowledge to every student who had the privilege to learn from him. Fearing the threat of deportation and the escalating crisis in Lebanon, Mohammad made the difficult decision to embark on a dangerous journey in search of safety for his family. Tragically, that journey ended when the boat he was on, headed for Europe via Libya, sank. He leaves behind his wife, and two children. [You can read more about Mr Mohammad's legacy here.](#)

This is a choice Mr Mohammad should never have had to make, and it throws into sharp relief the stark reality that faces so many Syrians who are unable to return home. We continue to do all that we can to honour Mr Mohammad's memory, by supporting his family, and his community in Lebanon through education.



Mr Mohammad
*a brilliant teacher,
husband and father of
two.*

Our Programmes

Emergencies



Our Programmes

Emergencies



Lebanon, September – November 2024

From September 2023, a prolonged exchange of bombardments between Hezbollah in Lebanon and Israel caused chaos in Lebanon. In September 2024, Israel intensified its attacks, directly targeting Hezbollah members through exploding electronic devices and assassinating Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, before launching an intense air campaign across Lebanon and a ground invasion of the south of the country on 1 October. The offensive killed around **4,000** people (many of whom were civilians) and displaced **1.2 million**. A ceasefire was announced on 27 November. This ceasefire has broadly held, although there are still regular attacks in southern Lebanon^[7].



Emergency supplies en route to families displaced by the fighting.

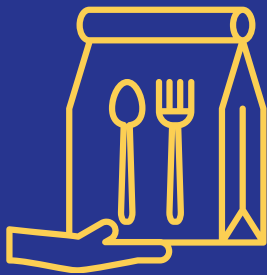
Our strong network with local partners is critical in emergencies. It means we can move quickly to establish where needs are greatest and how we can get funds there safely to make the most difference. In September, we worked quickly with our partner, SAWA for Development & Aid, to see how we could help, and worked on two programmes together.



Emergency supplies

When the offensive started, tens of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes, seeking shelter away from the bombs, leaving them without access to essential supplies, such as food, clean water and warmth. Syrian refugee families were amongst those affected, and faced additional challenges due to financial and legal constraints which prevented them from accessing services provided by the Lebanese state. With SAWA, we reached a total of **130** families, with an average of five members per family (a total of **650** people). Of those supported, **65%** were children and **60%** were women and girls. To avoid duplicating aid where families had already received supplies from other NGOs, we provided **120** families with hygiene kits, ready-to-eat kits and sleeping kits to offer dignity and comfort, reduce the risk of disease outbreak and prevent hunger. A further five families received hygiene kits only and another five families received ready-to-eat kits only.

15 of the families supported (**100** people), were sheltered in our school and SAWA's protection centres and **115** families (**550** people) were sheltered in collective shelters in the Bekaa Valley.



Ready-to-Eat Kits

- 2 cans of tuna
- 4 cans of sardines
- 4 cans of beans
- 2 packs of 250g mortadella
- 1 kg of jam
- 4 packs of cheese
- 2 bottles of 500 ml olive oil
- 1 pack of 500g thyme
- 10 packets of noodles
- 4 cans of lentils
- 4 cans of hummus
- 1 kg of Halawa (baklava)



Hygiene Kits

- 6 bars of soap
- 1 bottle of shampoo
- 2 tubes of toothpaste
- 10 toothbrushes
- 3 packs of sanitary napkins
- 4 medium-sized towels
- 1 kg of washing powder



Sleeping Kits

- Mattress
- Blanket
- Pillow

PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Zarifa's Story, Emergency, Lebanon

"Because of the heavy bombing, I was running, thinking that my children had been killed because I couldn't see all of them. I was just running to survive, to be able to protect them. I didn't even notice how the stones under my feet were hurting me—I was barefoot, but I had to keep going."

Zarifa, like many others displaced by the fighting, fled her home with little more than the determination to protect her family. Once on the move, she struggled to meet her family's basic needs; food, hygiene and somewhere safe and warm to sleep.

The support and supplies we worked with SAWA to provide gave Zarifa breathing space and allowed her to focus on the daunting task of rebuilding her life. Zarifa explained how this rekindled hope for her family and gave them the strength to persevere.

Zarifa, who was supported by our emergency supplies response with SAWA





Community Kitchen

Following our initial response providing emergency supplies, it quickly became clear that hot food was a priority for families who had been displaced. With SAWA we provided hot meals over **15** days in November to 110 displaced Syrian families (**550** people in total) in the Bekaa Valley. Of those supported, **65%** were children and **60%** were women and girls.

By November, **12** of these families were sheltering in our school, **11** families were in SAWA's Protection Centre and **87** families were in collective shelters in the Bekaa Valley.



Each hot meal includes

- rice
- chicken
- vegetables
- sweets/baklava
- yogurt



PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Ali's Story, Emergency, Lebanon

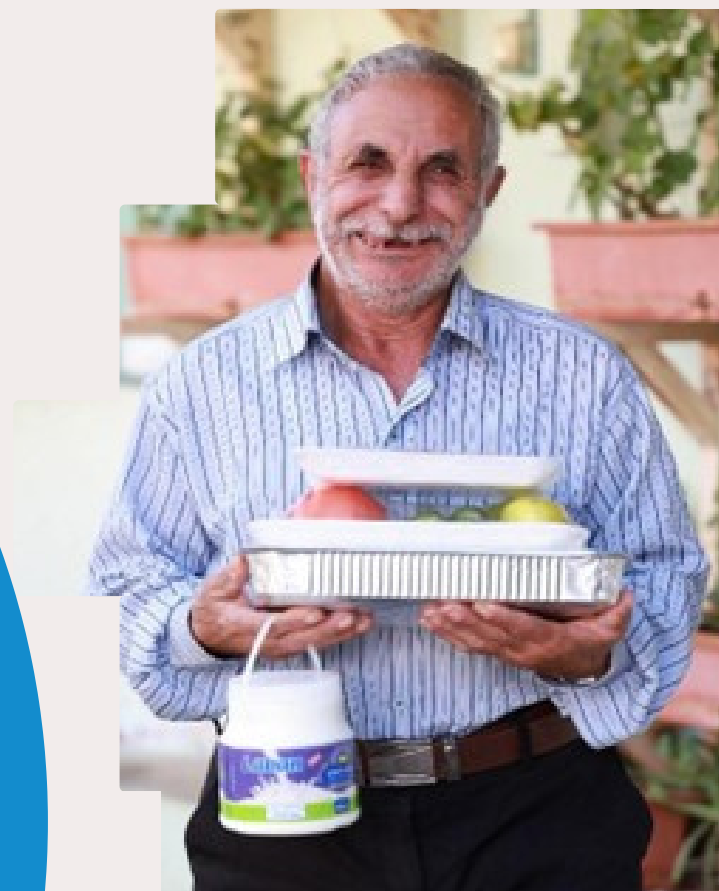
"Thank you for bringing light into the darkness of our lives," he says. "You didn't just feed us; you gave us hope to carry on."

Ali previously lived with his wife, sons and grandchildren in southern Lebanon. When the offensive began, he had to flee with 18 members of his family. They found refuge in one of the collective centres in the Bekaa Valley, carrying little more than their memories and their hope for a safer future.

Ali described how the conflict had stripped him and his sons of their livelihoods, leaving them unable to afford to feed the family. 15 days of food assistance from SAWA's community kitchen were a lifeline for Ali and his family, restoring dignity and hope.

Ali and his family were supported by the Community Kitchen. He said:

"These meals are more than food, they are a reminder that we are not forgotten, that there is still kindness in the world."



Our Programmes

Playgrounds



Salqin and A'zaz, NW Syria – PAC

Every child deserves somewhere safe to play

Syrian children younger than 14 have never known their country in peacetime. Many of them have never had the luxury to just play and simply be children. In 2023, when we asked them what they wanted most, they told us 'somewhere to play'. The importance of these spaces cannot be underestimated. Research shows children process trauma through play, leaving them vulnerable if they do not have the space to do this [8]. Having lived through conflict, the 2023 earthquakes, and for many, displacement and poverty, play is vital. This is why we worked with our partner, PAC, to build two playgrounds in Idlib (Salqin) and Aleppo (A'zaz), two areas affected by the earthquakes and home to many displaced people, with swings, slides, trampolines and more. With extensive experience in child protection and mental health services, PAC are the perfect partner to work with on this innovative project.

The playgrounds, named Basil Buds (Salqin) and Jasmine Buds (A'zaz), were completed in spring 2024, and opened for use. The team held several entertainment sessions over the summer (four per playground) engaging **2,400 children** with music, games, art workshops and sports (**47%** were girls). We're delighted that PAC is continuing to work with our colleagues at Choose Love to continue this programme – maintaining the entertainment programmes and the upkeep of the playgrounds themselves.



Samira, aged 10

"I love playing a lot, but in the camp, we don't have any games. My friends and I play with mud or stones, and I haven't been to an amusement park for a long time because my father can't afford it."



Thank You

The work outlined in these pages would not have been possible without you.

When giving a donation or time, it can be hard to quantify what that really means. For us, it is so much more than a line on a bank statement and, even the feeling of having done something good; it means a Syrian refugee child who wasn't able to engage with her peers at school now can, a young girl whose life has been hampered by limb difference is now able to do more; a mother-to-be now has access to a midwife, and the antenatal care she needs. Thank you to all of you who have taken action and supported us. **Together, we are changing lives.**

True change occurs when we stand together. This year, more than ever, there is scope to do so much more with the Syrian communities we serve. While we hope for a world in which our services are no longer required, we are here for as long as we are needed. We cannot do that alone, but thanks to you, we know we are not.

With thanks from us all,

The Action Syria Team





FURTHER READING

[1] '13 Years of Violence Against Health Workers and Facilities in Syria Demonstrates Need for Accountability: PHR' [[Available here](#)].

[2] 'Health Sector Syria - Health Sector Bulletin, WHO - December 2024'. [[Available here](#)].

[3] 'Nine years of war and internal conflicts in Syria: a call for physical rehabilitation services' [[Available here](#)].

[4] 'UNHCR Lebanon at a Glance' [[Available here](#)].

[5] 'Lebanon: How Israel, Hezbollah, and Regional Powers Are Shaping Its Future' [[Available here](#)].

[6] 'UNHCR - Education Lebanon' [[Available here](#)].

[7] 'Israel-Hezbollah conflict in maps' [[Available here](#)].

[8] 'The psychological impact of the Turkey-Syria earthquake on children' [[Available here](#)].



**Action
Syria**