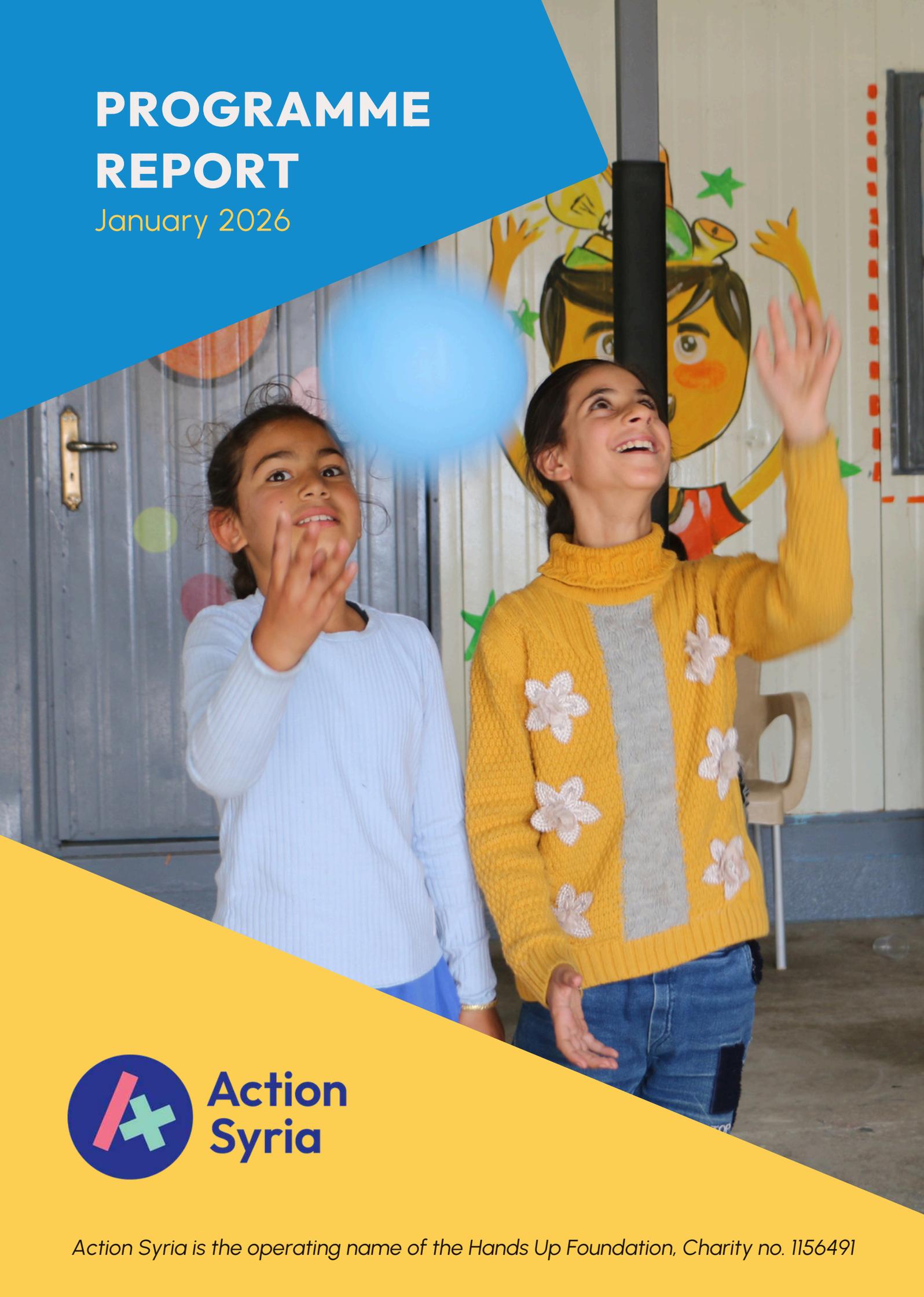


PROGRAMME REPORT

January 2026



**Action
Syria**

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



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OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

In the second half of 2025, Action Syria helped **1510 people**.

We worked with three local partners to provide:



Education for **116 Syrian refugee children** in Lebanon.



Rehabilitated classrooms for **1241 children** in Syria.



Salaries for **6** education staff and **12** support staff (including a social worker, school cleaner and a school guard)



Training for **21 teachers** in rural Damascus focused on safeguarding, psychosocial support and interactive teaching methods

40% of those reached were women and girls. **90%** were children.

THE FACTS

- **90%** of Syria's population live in poverty
- **16.7 million** people, including **7.5 million** children, are in need of humanitarian aid [1]
- At least **7000 schools** are damaged or destroyed
- **Over 2 million** Syrian children are still out of school [2]

INTRODUCTION

One year on from the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, the situation in Syria remains complex and fragile. For many Syrians, who have endured 14 years of conflict and displacement, this new chapter has brought a sense of **renewed hope**. An estimated 3 million displaced Syrians have returned home in the last year [3] and communities have begun to look towards the possibility of **building a more just, inclusive and tolerant society for all**. The lifting of some sanctions, including the US's Caesar sanctions, has prompted some optimism about the possibility of rebuilding efforts [4].

However, the road ahead is **long and uncertain**. While the end of the Assad regime has opened up new possibilities, Syria's political and economic landscape remains unstable, threatening an already fragile peace and bringing the risk of additional conflicts in the country. Against this backdrop, **daily life for Syrian communities remains immensely challenging**. Schools are under-resourced, damaged or destroyed. Healthcare is scarce and 90% of the population live in poverty [5]. Millions remain displaced — and many Syrian refugees who wish to return have no homes or jobs to go back to. Despite these significant needs, international aid is fading [6].

Amid these challenges, our commitment remains the same: **to support Syrian communities with the medical care and education they need, every day and when emergencies strike**. Since the fall of Assad, we've been reviewing our strategy and programmes to consider how we can continue to make a meaningful difference alongside Syrian communities.

As part of this process, Action Syria has begun working in previously regime-held areas of Syria for the first time in July 2025, by launching **two new partnerships** with Abjad Initiative for Education and MARS Organization. These partnerships have supported vital school rehabilitations, providing safe and comfortable learning spaces for children whose education has been severely interrupted, and training teachers in interactive and inclusive teaching, classroom management, and psychosocial support. We have also continued to support education for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon with our partner SAWA, enabling access to education for children with no other options.

As Syrian communities begin the long journey to recovery, we are committed to stepping up our support for local partners working with communities who fall between the cracks of large-scale recovery efforts - to ensure that those who are often forgotten are not left behind. **Our promise is to stand with Syrian communities for as long as we are needed.**

This report covers our work between July 2025-January 2026. **We are proud of the work we have achieved in this time, with the support of our generous donors and the expertise and commitment of our brilliant local partners. Together, we are making a real difference for Syrian communities.**



OUR PROGRAMMES

Education



EDUCATION



Education is an **essential pathway to recovery**. Through our education projects in Syria and Lebanon, we are supporting children with the **education they need to shape their futures**, beyond conflict and displacement.

Education for Syrian Refugees

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon – SAWA for Development & Aid

Approximately **1.3 million** Syrian refugees live in Lebanon [7]. While the fall of the Assad regime has created the opportunity for some Syrians to return home, significant challenges exist for those who wish to do so – including having the correct paperwork, the financial cost and the reality that many homes in Syria have been reduced to rubble. For those who remain in Lebanon, education for Syrian refugee children remains a critical need. **Only 50% of Syrian school-age children living in Lebanon are attending school** [8], with the cost of transport and school books, as well as a lack of paperwork, being key barriers to school attendance. This leaves many children vulnerable to child labour and child marriage, significantly limiting their future opportunities.

At Action Syria, we are responding to this need by continuing to support our local partner SAWA for Development and Aid. Working with SAWA, we are providing a school for **116 Syrian refugee children** (45% girls) living in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. **Without this school many of these children would have no access to education at all.**

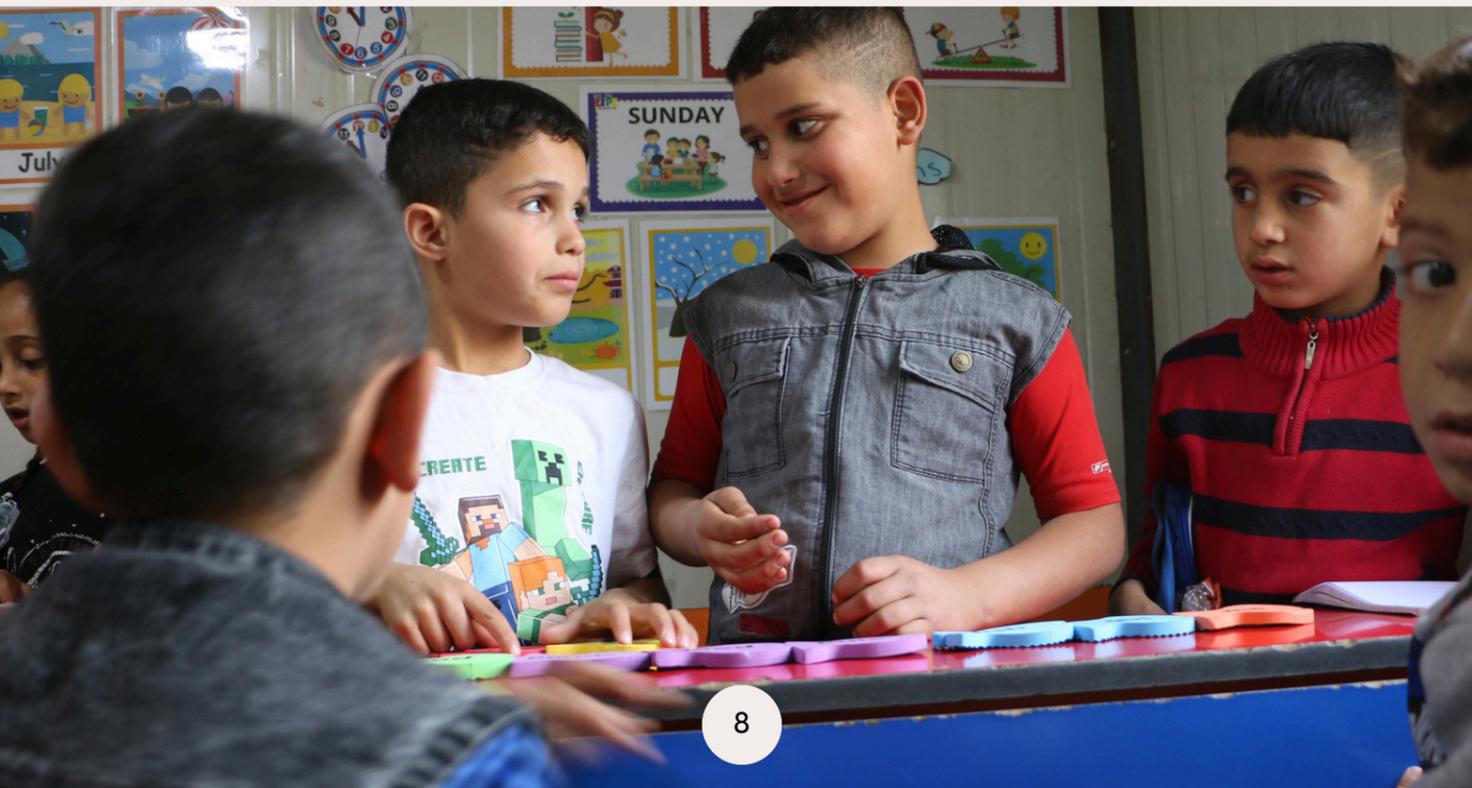
Each day, the children arrive from neighbouring camps to learn Arabic, English, science and maths, as well as participating in Life Skills and Physical Education classes. The school focuses on providing a **safe and holistic learning environment**, developing the student's skills, strengthening their psychosocial wellbeing, and creating a space where they can play and learn peacefully – like any other children. We provide buses to get our students safely to and from school, as well as the materials they need to study.

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 twelve support staff, creating a safe and welcoming environment for the children, and **providing a stable income for the school's staff** which enables them to support their families.

Since our last programme report, a new academic year has begun, bringing renewed hope, motivation and optimism for the students. Over the reporting period children took part in interactive learning activities. This included autumn-themed crafts, a "Numbered Clothesline" activity in maths to arrange numbers and identify missing values, and a "Vowel Theatre" activity in Arabic. On 8 December 2025, SAWA School engaged the students through activities that encouraged them to express their hopes for the future and their **belief in the role of education in rebuilding Syria.**

Behind these activities are the children and families whose lives are being transformed by access to education.

Students at SAWA School taking part in an interactive lesson.



PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Laila's Story, Education, Lebanon

Twelve-year-old Laila was displaced from Syria, with her family, during the conflict. She has been attending SAWA School for six years, along with her younger siblings, and there she has received the **teaching, psychosocial support and encouragement from her teachers to help her thrive.**

In particular, the school's focus on personal and social development has helped Laila to **grow in confidence**, both in her studies and her ability to make friends. Now, Laila is one of the top-performing students in her class. She regularly supports her friends and siblings with their homework and has participated in activities like life skills classes, and the school's robotics programme.

When we asked Laila about the future, she said:

"I would never leave my school unless they tell me I'm too old to stay. I wish the school day could last all day, not just five classes."

— Laila, age 12



School restoration in Zamalka, Syria

Zamalka, rural Damascus – Abjad Initiative for Education



The need for school rehabilitation inside Syria is immense. 14 years of conflict have left at least **7000 schools damaged or destroyed**, and an education system in ruins [2].

In Zamalka, rural Damascus, years of fighting, siege and neglect had left Zamalka Primary School in disrepair. Classrooms were damaged, overcrowded and unsafe for learning, and the school's basic infrastructure – like toilets, water and electricity – was unusable or missing. This made learning difficult, contributing to high drop-out rates, depriving children of their fundamental right to education.

Working in partnership with Abjad Initiative for Education, **Action Syria supported the full rehabilitation of Zamalka Primary School**, restoring and upgrading the school's basic infrastructure, as well as ensuring that the school is accessible for children with disabilities. The work included securing electricity and water services, repairing desks, doors, and windows, repainting and refurbishing walls, and insulating the school's roof to protect the building from harsh weather. Now, the school is safe, inclusive and child-friendly, and can accommodate **900 students** in a healthier and more supportive environment with smaller class sizes.

But more than just repairing walls and fixing classrooms, this project has **created lasting change for children, teachers and the wider community in Zamalka**. Since the rehabilitation was completed, our local partner Abjad Initiative have trained **21 teachers** in interactive and inclusive teaching, classroom management, and psychosocial support. **50 parents** have also attended awareness sessions, learning more about the importance of a supportive educational environment — making the community an active partner in sustaining change.

Through this partnership with Abjad Initiative, the result is not only a renovated school, where children can safely grow and learn, but also **more sustainable education opportunities in Zamalka**. For teachers, parents and children alike, the school now represents hope, pride, and the promise of a better future.

PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Khaled's Story, Education, Syria

Twelve-year-old Khaled is a student at Zamalka School. Before the school rehabilitation, he found school a difficult place to learn. Broken desks, damaged windows and dark classrooms negatively impacted Khaled's motivation to study, and he was frequently absent from classes – significantly impacting his grades and confidence.

For Khaled, **the school rehabilitation – supported by Action Syria – was a turning point**. Zamalka School became a safe and welcoming learning environment, and Khaled attended a summer learning club for those who had dropped out of school. This enabled him to make up for the learning he had missed, and even more importantly, grow in his confidence again. Now, Khaled is attending school regularly, and even waking up early, excited to put on his school uniform and begin learning.

"I want to become an engineer so I can help rebuild my country, Syria."

— **Khaled, age 12**

The impact has not been limited to Khaled. Since the project was completed, Khaled's parents are sending him to school with confidence, knowing the environment is child-friendly, engaging and helping Khaled access the education he needs.



"Now he opens his reading book on his own, asks about maths problems, and tells us what happened in class.

Today, I send him to school with peace of mind." - Khaled's father

Restoring learning in Daraya, Syria

Daraya, Syria – MARS Organization



Years of conflict have left many schools in Daraya damaged with classrooms that are no longer fit for learning. Cracked walls, broken furniture and poor insulation have made it difficult for students to concentrate, particularly during Syria's harsh winter. These conditions have **directly affected students' motivation and teachers' morale.**

In partnership with MARS Organization, Action Syria supported the 'Light in the Classroom: Restoring Learning in Daraya' project at Al-Ghouta Al-Gharbiya Boys School. The project focused on **rehabilitating four classrooms to create safe, comfortable and welcoming spaces for students** whose education has been repeatedly disrupted by conflict.

From the outset, **students were actively involved** in discussions about what needed to change in their classrooms. They shared priorities such as repairing windows, desks and lighting, and repainting walls to create calmer learning environments. This helped make sure the improvements reflected what students actually needed, and gave them a stronger sense of ownership over their classrooms.

The work included repainting classrooms, fixing desks and windows, and making the spaces clean, safe and ready for learning. Alongside standard classrooms, the project included an interactive classroom and a laboratory. As these are used by all students, far more children benefited than originally expected — **341 students in total.**

After the work was finished, teachers noticed **clear improvements in student behaviour and engagement.** Students took more care of their classrooms, joined in lessons more confidently, and were more motivated to come to school. Through this partnership with MARS, **Action Syria helped create not just better classrooms, but a greater sense of stability and hope for students in Daraya.**

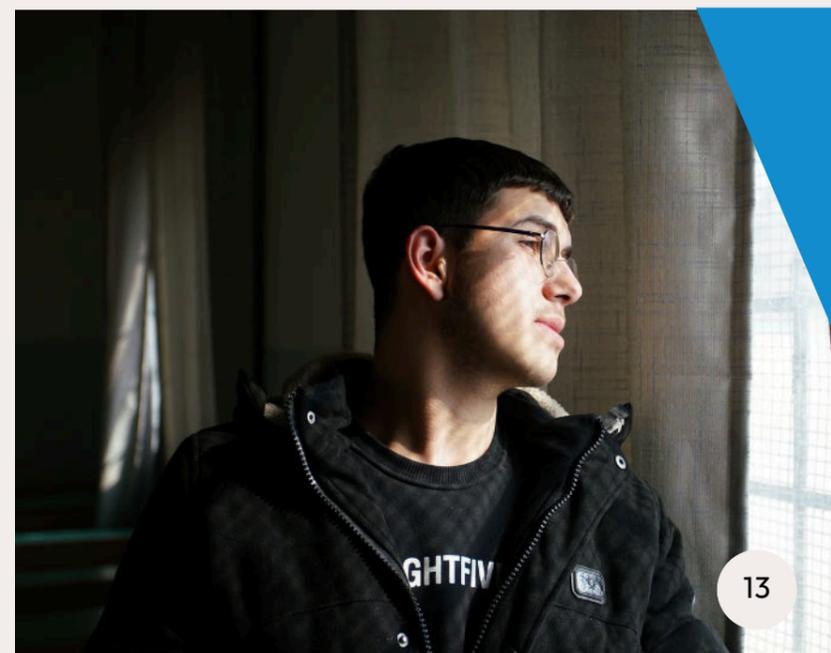
PEOPLE WE'VE SUPPORTED

Ahmad's Story, Education, Syria

16-year-old Ahmad is a student at Al-Ghouta Al-Gharbiya Boys School in Daraya. For him, the most meaningful part of the Light in the Classroom project was being asked for his opinion and **having a real say in what changed at his school.**

Being involved in decisions about the classroom made Ahmad feel more connected to his school and more responsible for the space he learns in. Since the improvements were completed, he feels more confident taking part in lessons and more motivated to attend school each day.

“When we were involved in setting the priorities, I felt that the school truly became my school, and that I have a responsibility toward it. After years of studying in difficult conditions, the classroom has become a place that protects us and encourages us to learn. Today, I feel proud to belong to my school.” — Ahmad, age 16



Watch Ahmad talking about his experience of the school rehabilitation in Daraya.



OUR PROGRAMMES

Health



HEALTH



Syria's healthcare system remains in crisis. Over 15 million people require urgent health assistance [9]. Almost half a million children are at risk of severe malnutrition [10] and only 37% of primary healthcare centres are fully functional [9].

From our very beginnings, Action Syria has funded medical care — starting with prosthetics and growing to support primary healthcare services in some of Syria's most underserved regions.

We are not currently funding our health programmes — **not because the need has gone, but because the funds aren't there.** We are seeking new support to resume this vital work. Moving forwards, we are prioritising support for health programmes that focus on mental health services, reproductive health, disability and rehabilitation support, and healthcare assistance for vulnerable groups.

You can read more about our new programme strategy on page 20. Below are some examples of the healthcare projects we have funded in the past:

Primary Health Clinic, north-west Syria

Until November 2024, we partnered with the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) in Al Freiriyeh to provide essential healthcare services for over 41,000 people. This included services from maternal health, to chronic conditions like diabetes, and dental services.

Prosthetics Programme, north-west Syria

With 86,000 Syrians facing amputations, we worked in partnership with Physicians Across Continents (PAC) to provide essential prosthetics services until May 2025, helping children and adults resume everyday activities — like riding a bike or writing.

OUR PROGRAMMES

Updates from the ground



VISITING OUR PARTNERS

In December 2025-January 2026, Action Syria's Interim CEO, Anas Darkawi, was delighted to be able to **visit the three projects we support** in Syria and Lebanon.

These visits gave us the chance to see first-hand the challenges facing children, teachers, and communities living with the long-term consequences of displacement and conflict. Across every visit, one thing was clear: **education matters** — not just as an essential service, but as a foundation for stability and future possibility.

Lebanon: The role of education in long-term displacement contexts

While visiting SAWA School, Anas spent time in classrooms and spoke with students and teachers. He was struck by the **quality of the teaching** and the **high-level of care** given to each student, particularly given the complex environment the school operates in.

Many of the students attending the school do not know life outside of the informal camps where they live. Daily life in these camps is hard, and many families struggle to meet their basic needs. As a result, some children take on small jobs alongside their studies to support their families.

For these children, the school offers structure, safety and consistency. Continuing to support the school is a **commitment to children whose displacement has become long and uncertain.**

Students at Zamalka Primary School, rural Damascus.



Syria: Rehabilitating schools and restoring access to education

Anas also visited both of our local partners in Syria – Abjad Initiative for Education and MARS Organization – to see their **school rehabilitation projects**. Through these projects, Action Syria is helping to restore safe, functional and welcoming learning environments to Syrian communities rebuilding after years of conflict and neglect.

Beyond fixing classrooms and repairing infrastructure, these projects are **creating lasting change in their communities**, helping rebuild trust in education and supporting children (especially girls) get back to learning after years of disruption.

Education across Lebanon and Syria

In both Lebanon and Syria, education is a long-term necessity, essential for helping children recover and build brighter futures. Our local partners are delivering high-quality education projects, that are sensitive to the context and needs of communities on the ground. They create safe spaces to learn, encourage inclusion, support girls' education, strengthen teaching practices, and rebuild confidence in education.

With over 2 million children in Syria still out of school, **continued and sustained support for education remains essential** [2]. We are committed to maintaining and expanding our support for education programmes, which are a cornerstone of future possibility for children in Syria and Lebanon.

Action Syria's Interim CEO, Anas Darkawi, being welcomed by the staff and students at SAWA's school.

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Health: listening and learning during partner visits

Alongside visiting our education projects, Anas also spent time with local organisations working to address health needs in both Syria and Lebanon. Through these visits, he heard directly from partners about the **challenges families are facing in accessing basic healthcare**, particularly in communities affected by long-term displacement and fragile public services.

These conversations helped deepen our understanding of where health needs are most acute and how local organisations are responding, often with limited resources. These conversations are **shaping Action Syria's support for community-led health initiatives** throughout 2026.

Visiting Zamalka School with our partner, Abjad

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OUR STRATEGY

Working inside Syria: A summary of our evolving programming strategy

Our vision is still the same: **to help Syrians rebuild their lives with health, opportunity and hope**, while ensuring that Action Syria remains focused, effective, and sustainable. However, as this report shows, for the first time in over a decade, we have the opportunity to support partners **working with communities across all regions inside Syria**, marking an important shift in how we support Syrian communities during this fragile transition.

Our current focus:

At Action Syria, we are continuing to work across education, health, and emergencies. Education and health remain the core pillars of our work. When emergencies occur, we will assess the situation with our partners on the ground and respond in ways that are appropriate both to the needs and to our resources as a charity. As Syria begins to rebuild – and as we develop our programmes – we will continue to **prioritise support for Syrian communities that fall between the cracks** of large-scale recovery efforts, ensuring that they are not left behind.

In recent months, we have conducted **consultations and sector-specific webinars**, gaining insights from local experts, and civil society organisations who are working on the ground about the most pressing needs inside Syria. Their input has shaped our priority areas for education and health going forwards.

You can access the Executive Summary of our strategy [here](#) (in English and Arabic).



Education priorities:

Going forward, the key areas we will focus on are:

- Ongoing support for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon
- Mental health support for students and teachers
- Inclusive education for children with disabilities
- Small-scale school rehabilitation and support services
- Teacher training
- Peacebuilding, civic education, and life skills within an educational context
- Digital learning, vocational training, and future skills



Health priorities:

Based on community needs and partner expertise, we aim to focus on:

- Mental health services, especially for women and young people
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Disability and rehabilitation support
- Assistance for vulnerable groups (for example, children with cancer, or abandoned children)

Across all of our work, we're guided by a commitment to act with **care, integrity and solidarity**. We work impartially and inclusively, prioritise safety, and place community voices at the centre of decision-making. We collaborate closely with local partners, civil society and diaspora expertise to strengthen capacity and reduce duplication.

Looking ahead:

Syria is at a pivotal moment, with risks but also opportunities for healing and recovery. Action Syria is committed to supporting communities through thoughtful, partner-led, and needs-based programming, while strengthening civil society and engaging the diaspora.

Rebuilding Syria will require collaboration and creativity, and we are committed to being part of that process for as long as we are needed.

THANK YOU

This report tells many stories, of classrooms repaired, students returning to learning, and communities rebuilding after years of conflict. **None of it happens without your support.**

Because of you, Action Syria has been able to stand alongside children like Khaled and Ahmad — children whose education was interrupted by conflict, displacement and damaged schools, but who are now learning again in safety. We have also continued our long-term partnership with SAWA in Lebanon, where Syrian refugee children still face significant barriers to education, but are able to learn and grow in confidence through consistent support.

More than a year after the fall of the Assad regime, Syria remains in a fragile period of transition. While there is cautious hope, the realities of poverty, damaged infrastructure, disrupted public services and instability continue to shape daily life for many families. Against this backdrop, **the need for community-led support remains as urgent as ever.**

At Action Syria, **our commitment has not changed.** We work alongside trusted local partners who understand their communities, respond to real needs, and remain committed for the long term — whether through education, health, or listening carefully to where support is needed most.

We are grateful to everyone who has supported this work. Your commitment allows us to continue showing up, listening, and standing with Syrian communities where the need is greatest.



With thanks from us all,
The Action Syria Team

FURTHER READING

- [1] UNICEF. 'The situation of children in Syria: A turning point for Syria's children and young people.' (Available [here](#)).
- [2] UNICEF. 'Syrian Arab Republic – Education: Every child has the right to learn.' (Available [here](#)).
- [3] UNHCR. 'Press release: Historic return of displaced Syrians presents opportunity and urgent challenges.' (Available [here](#)).
- [4] UK House of Commons Library. 'Research briefing – Syria one year after Assad: Reconstruction and sanctions.' (Available [here](#)).
- [5] Save the Children UK. 'Syrians return home with hope but struggle to secure homes, schools, jobs.' (Available [here](#)).
- [6] Reuters. 'Syrian refugee returns set to slow as donor support fades.' (Available [here](#)).
- [7] UNHCR UK. 'Where we work: Lebanon.' (Available [here](#)).
- [8] UNHCR Lebanon. 'What we do: Education.' (Available [here](#)).
- [9] World Health Organisation. 'WHO calls for urgent support to rebuild Syria's health system.' (Available [here](#)).
- [10] Save the Children International. 'Over 400,000 children in Syria at risk of malnutrition following aid cuts.' (Available [here](#)).





**Action
Syria**

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