Stories From Syria
The ongoing conflict in Syria has become the world’s largest humanitarian crisis since World War II, and has so far generated 4.2 million refugees. Nearly five years into the conflict, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate and is characterized by poor access to basic goods and services, large scale displacements, increasing vulnerabilities of population in need, damages to key infrastructure and restricted movement of goods and people. While the passage of UN Security Council Resolutions 2165 and 2191 enabled cross border assistance into Syria, there is still an estimated 4.8 million Syrians who continue to live without regular access to food or medical care inside hard to reach or besieged areas. According to the figures of the Humanitarian Needs Overview released in October 2015 (HNO 2016), there are 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million IDPs in Syria.
The Future Architect
“I was one of the first in my class at school.”

At the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Mohamad was in the eleventh grade and preparing for the baccalaureate degree in Al-Khalidiya, one of the biggest neighbourhoods in Homs city in western Syria. When he was not in school studying to be an architect, he supported his father by helping him in a carpenter workshop.

Mohamad is the third of seven siblings, two brothers and five sisters.

“On the 21st of December 2011, a rocket hit our building in Al-Khalidiya. One of my sisters died. On the 18th of March 2012, Al-Khalidiya was closed-off and became a besieged area.” In January 2013, Mohamad’s brother was shot by a sniper. “By summer 2013, food and clean water became scarce and available only to those who were on good terms with the armed groups” he says. “On the 5th of August, as I was bringing water, I was shot in the back by a sniper bullet. I kept bleeding for 12 hours because no assistance was available due to the shelling.”

Mohamad remained without medical care for six months until the evacuation operations in Old Homs started. He left Al-Khalidiya on the third day of the operations, at this point paralysed. “When I saw the buses with the big blue signs of IOM, I understood I will survive,” Mohamad remembers.

After staying at Al-Andalous School for the first three days, Mohamad moved to Al-Razi Hospital for seven months. When he concluded his treatment, he returned to his family living in a shelter rehabilitated by IOM.

Despite the hardships and trauma he has endured, Mohamad wants to be optimistic about his future, “One day, I will recover and build a house for me and my family.”
The family from Al-Hajar Al-Aswad is made up of 19 members, three brothers, three wives, and their thirteen children. This large family was displaced in 2012 when violence erupted in Al-Hajar Al-Aswad, a southern area of Rural Damascus governorate. Their houses were destroyed and they fled to Kherbet Al-Shiab, approximately 13 kilometres south of Damascus.

Once they arrived in Kherbet Al-Shiab, the three brothers and their families rented a house. As they could not afford the rent, the family started building a temporary shelter, in which they have been living for three years now. IOM provided the family with a winter shelter upgrade kit including windows, doors, and a water basin.

"My brothers and I don’t have stable incomes, and we can not afford to send our kids to school."

“We are not faceless statistics – we are fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters; we are families – like yours – and we need help,” exclaimed one of the brothers.
Sewing in the Countryside
Abo Khaled is a 70 year old retired father of two daughters, 37 year old Laila and 29 year old Noha. The family of three lives in a one-bedroom house in the besieged countryside of Homs in the village of Al-Rastan. When the conflict erupted, the village was cut off from electricity, food, and healthcare.

Born with a birth defect causing her to lose both legs, Noha requires extra care and special medical attention, including mobility aids such as wheelchairs, of which 5,050 have been provided by IOM since the crisis in Syria began. The mother of Laila and Noha was killed when a mortar shell hit her as she was on her way to visit relatives, leaving Laila, the eldest, to take care of her aging father and Noha.

“I leave the village every three months to collect my father’s retirement allowance. I use the money to buy food and medication.”

Leila used to spend her spare time sewing. “My mother-in-law taught me how to sew and she gave me her sewing machine,” explained Leila. Unfortunately, Leila was forced to sell it to cater to her family’s needs.

“I dream of the day the war will be over so that I open my sewing workshop and make my father and sister proud of me,” added Leila
The Young Breadwinner
Ali is 17 years old, originally from Aleppo city. He used to live in Marjah district with his parents and five siblings. After his father died seven years ago from cancer, he became the sole breadwinner of the family. He completed his primary school education, and then started to work in a sewing workshop. The war started, and forced the family to flee to a safer location. One day they left their house without any belonging and left without any idea where to go.

“We now live in this small house. There’s no electivity nor drinking water, and insulation is poor. That’s the only place we can afford.”

Ali found a new job in one of the small packaging factories of Hama where he works six hours every day. The income barely covers the daily food and drinking needs of the entire family. There is not enough money to send his younger siblings to school.

“I dream of a better future, where I can have a sewing workshop, where my young brothers can get all of the things that I was deprived of, where they go to school and I find a better house where we all live together. I dream of a time when the war is over.”
Farming For Our Future
Khaled Hamdo Khassa farms in the city of Haritan which is located northwest of Aleppo. He is 55 years old and has 11 children.

“Before the war, I was up every day at 4 am to work in my field where I planted wheat and corn. I used to sell it in the market and it was enough to support my family.”

When the war started, one shell fell on the bedroom of my house. My feet and hands got injured. Most of the residents began to flee. His family left everything they owned behind and fled to Khalid's brothers house near the Turkish border.

“My children and I stayed with my brother for almost a year until situation allowed us to return to Haritan. I started by selling some vegetables at the market, but it did not pay enough.”

Thanks to the support of IOM and local organization, and the remittances sent by some of his son who left the country, Khalid has scraped by enough money to begin cultivating his land again.

He looks to the future to continue to build a home for his children and grandchildren, but lives in fear that any steps he takes will be destroyed again by bombing.
Marzouk Alyousef and his wife used to live in Hama with their five children, and Marzouk’s sister who has special needs.

The family had to flee Hama to escape the violence of the conflict. They are now living under a tent in the southern countryside of Aleppo.

‘When we moved to Aleppo, I looked for a house but I could not afford the rent. Too many people fled to Aleppo and the prices went up. I don’t have enough savings to pay a rent, and buy food for my family.”

His five children, all between three and 13 years, are not going to school either.

An assessment done by one of IOM’s implementing partner identify Marzouk and his family as vulnerable and in urgent need of repeated distribution of emergency and winterized kits. IOM will soon start repairing rooms in unfinished buildings for families such as Marzouk’s to be able to live in decent and dignified shelter conditions again.
For 2016 under both the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), IOM is appealing to the international community for USD 254,332,199.

IOM and humanitarian partners will continue to scale up their services to meet the challenges posed by this protracted crisis with a particular emphasis on protection, provision of life-saving assistance, as well as early recovery and resilience to displaced Syrian and host communities inside Syria and in the region.

Moving Forward
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