

Syrian Refugee Crisis: Facts to Help Canadian Donors Give Intelligently.



Photos of Aylan Kurdi's tragic drowning hit home the tragedy of the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing Syrian refugees. Yes, this is a time for Canada's government to cut red tape and fast track refugees' settlement. To date, Canada has committed to resettle 11,300 Syrian refugees by 2017¹ (both government sponsored and private sponsored) – the sooner, the better - and has contributed \$403.5 million in humanitarian aid.² Canada can do more.

September 19, 2015 Update: The Canadian government announces it will speed up the refugee processing in an effort to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees by September 2016, 15 months earlier than anticipated, at an additional cost of \$25 million.

Given the scale and duration of the Syrian crisis, aid is falling drastically short of what is needed. This is an opportunity for ordinary Canadians to help. At this time, **Charity Intelligence's top picks for donating are Doctors Without Borders, UNHCR, and Islamic Relief.**

The Syrian refugee crisis is different from other international disasters and requires giving to different charities. This brief gives donors information to give intelligently.

¹ <http://www.international.gc.ca/international/syria-syrie.aspx?lang=eng>

² <http://www.international.gc.ca/international/syria-syrie.aspx?lang=eng>

Humanitarian aid, not reconstruction. Syria's on-going brutal civil war requires a different donor response than aid to victims of natural disasters. When earthquakes or typhoons hit, the event happens and passes. There is a need for emergency response and then recovery and rebuilding. In these situations, giving to Canadian charities with expertise in international development is fine. Tragically, the on-going war inside Syria likely renders rebuilding and redevelopment foolish at this time. Donors need to adjust and consider different ways to help and different charities to support.

Strong states, weak states: The Goldilocks solution. News reports are currently focusing on the 428,000 Syrian refugees who have made it to Europe. These European countries can be considered "strong states" – countries that have infrastructure, money and the social capital to help. Charity donations to aid European work are likely less essential.

At the other end of the spectrum, for the 7.6 million refugees still in Syria, tragically, the violence of the ongoing civil war is beyond the resources for charities to operate safely or effectively.

Donations can be most effective helping those refugees caught in the middle. Over 4 million Syrian refugees are living in "weaker states" like Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt. Firstly, this is ten times the number of refugees that have made it to the relative safety of Europe. Furthermore, the lack of financial aid to date has led to cutbacks in food and welfare assistance to these refugees. These refugees have been living off what they could bring out of Syria. These resources are quickly depleting. **It is these 4 million refugees that could likely benefit the most from Canadian donations, particularly the largest groups in Lebanon and Jordan.**

The Syrian Refugee Diaspora	Registered Syrian Refugees	%
Turkey ³	1,939,000	43%
Lebanon	1,113,940	25%
Jordan – majority living outside refugee camps	628,890	14%
Iraq – Dohuk, Domeez, Erbil and Kawargosk camps	248,500	6%
Egypt	132,375	3%
Total Syrian applications in Europe	428,735	10%
Total UNHCR Registered Syrian refugees	4,491,440	100%
Source: UNHCR estimates updated Aug.25.2015		

Donations best meeting refugees needs: Another point for donors to consider is providing the humanitarian aid the refugees are asking for. A 2012 survey of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon⁴ reported that what they wanted most were food (75%), shelter (69%), and household items/non-food items (64%) like cooking fuel, stoves and pots. Fewer refugees reported the need for education (26%) or mental health counselling (12%). Most refugee families have remained together; children are together with their parents, their most important support, and are less vulnerable. While there are many charities focused on supporting children, this is not the greatest need as self-reported by Syrian refugees.

³ While Turkey has taken in the most Syrian refugees, aid is provided solely by the Turkish government and no charities are listed as running programs inside Turkey. Lebanon has requested US\$449 million and Jordan has requested \$380 million.

⁴ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=58> 2012 survey by World Vision in Lebanon.

Canadian Government Matching Donations

Update: September 12, 2015 the Canadian government will match donations one-for-one until December 15, 2015. The Canadian government will donate these funds to experienced Canadian and international humanitarian organizations to meet needs arising from the crisis in Syria.

Similarly, funding education is popular with Canadian donors. Again, not the greatest need according to the refugees themselves.

The best charities that come first to mind on the Syrian crisis are:

Doctors Without Borders Canada operates 6 medical facilities in northern Syria and directly supports more than 100 field hospitals and clinics throughout Syria, particularly in the besieged area around Damascus. Following ISIS's kidnapping of 5 international staff in January 2014 (released in May 2014), Doctors Without Borders withdrew its international team and closed its health facilities in areas now held in ISIS-controlled areas. Doctors Without Borders' Syrian staff still operate three hospitals, one in Atmeh and two in Aleppo, in addition to three clinics in Northern Syria. Doctors Without Borders tries to provide both materials and distance training support to Syrian medics but this is increasingly challenged by the August 2015 siege blocking essential medical aid getting through to medical units.

Doctors Without Borders also works in refugee camps in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, provides medical aid to thousands of refugees in Europe, and on the Mediterranean in boats rescuing refugees and North African migrants.

Having worked in Syria for the last 4 years, in 2014, Doctors Without Borders Canada provided \$2.4 million in support to Syrian Crisis relief efforts. Doctors Without Borders assesses it needs \$3.9 million for its work with Syrians this current year. The numbers are changing fast, but to date \$100,000 has been raised.

September 15, 2015 Update: Doctors Without Borders has taken the tough decision not to participate in the Canadian government's donation matching fund. This maintains its neutrality in the conflict, allowing it to continue to gain medical access.

Charity Intelligence rating ********

[Charity Intelligence report on Doctors Without Borders Canada](#)

[MSF Canada website](#)

UNHCR, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, co-ordinates all global refugee issues. The UNHCR works inside Syria and neighbouring countries, handling more than 4 million Syrian refugee claims, and co-ordinating with governments for placement. The UNHCR processes the majority of refugee claimants and gives them refugee status. Reports are that it is overwhelmed by this, the largest influx of refugees since World War II. The UNHCR is not a registered Canadian charity but, as a UN agency, donations are tax receipted.

The funding need for the Syrian Refugee Crisis has initiated the largest UNHCR appeal in history for US\$5 billion. For the 1st 6 months of 2015, UNHCR reports providing legal aid to 58,000 refugees, iris scanning and registering 1.6 million refugees. These processes and registration help manage the response process and needs assessments. UNHCR provided 44,000 families with cash assistance to meet basic living needs. Through a generous donation from the IKEA Foundation, UNHCR distributed mattresses and blankets to 95,000 families living in refugee camps. It cleared 16,730 refugees for resettlement. The UNHCR's total annual cost per refugee is \$336. With a significant funding shortfall, UNHCR reports a decrease in the distribution of family kits from 20,000 to 8,000 per week to families inside Syria.

No Charity Intelligence rating

[UNHCR website](#)

Islamic Relief Worldwide, while not a well-known household name to Canadian donors, has one of the most extensive relief efforts underway for Syrian refugees. IRW is running programs in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt covering most aspects of refugee support including welfare, protection, schools, and occupational training. Islamic Relief has been on the ground inside Syria since the outbreak of the civil war. Islamic Relief also identifies resilient refugees and provides job training in addition to cash transfers. In addition, Islamic Relief is helping in the Mediterranean distributing humanitarian aid in Italy, Germany and Greece.

Charity Intelligence rating ****

[Charity Intelligence report on Islamic Relief](#)

[Islamic Relief website](#)

Other Canadian Charities listed as providing Syrian Relief assistance:⁵

(click on the Charity Name underlined to read Charity Intelligence's profile on the charity) and Charity Intelligence star rating. In most cases, the Canadian charity will be fundraising and passing on the donation to its regional partners providing the humanitarian assistance in the region.

CARE Canada ** operates in Jordan and Lebanon providing cash assistance, core relief items and protection. In Jordan, CARE's expertise with Palestinian and Iraqi refugees is now extended to 24,000 Syrian refugee families primarily in cities⁶. In Lebanon, Care provides core relief items, food and water and sanitation.

Catholic Relief Services runs programs with Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Egypt. In Beirut, CRS provides community services and HIV/AIDS programs. In Egypt, CRS provides education, education grants, and livelihood assistance. No research report or rating by Charity Intelligence.

Canadian Red Cross **** operating primarily in Iraq, continuing on from its efforts to address the 1980 Iran-Iraq war. In 2012 the Red Cross/Red Crescent reports visiting 38,161 people detained by Iraqi and Kurdish authorities, worked on clarifying the fate of people missing as a result of the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, 7 operations

⁵ The list of Canadian registered charities listed on the Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

⁶ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=82> June 2014.

to exhume and transfer remains. The Red Cross reports helping 11,857 female-headed households with livelihood support projects, improved access to water and primary health care. With refugees, the Red Cross helped 36,264 refugees with emergency assistance including food, water and household supplies.

Samaritan's Purse *** had no activities reported in the Syrian refugee response although reports to have 6 people on the ground running programs and providing aid. No details on where these program are located.⁷

Save the Children Canada **** programs are throughout Lebanon, Jordan and in Erbil and Anbar, Iraq providing the full gambit of relief support including child protection, community services, core relief items, health and information management.

UNICEF Canada **** UNICEF is the United Nations agency focused on children's well-being. In Syria, UNICEF's Back to Learning initiative aims to reach 1 million children with school supplies and help 315,000 students who are not attending school in 2015-2016. UNICEF is seeking \$185 million to build, supply and staff new schools⁸ inside Syria that it estimates will help education 1.6 million children, according to Stephen O'Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. In response to the siege with water used as a war tactic, UNICEF scaled up its water trucking intervention delivering 2.5 million litres per day providing 200,000 people with clean drinking water. One major breakthrough, UNICEF was able to deliver 100,000 litres of water disinfectant to Raqqa. This will clean the water supply for more than 2 million people. It has been 18 months since supplies could reach this region.

War Child Canada **** Current operations in Za'atri camp, Jordan, since 2013 with plans to expand into Iraqi camps in 2014 dependent upon receiving funding of US\$545,000.

World Vision Canada **** Operations in Lebanon providing core relief, schools, food and water and sanitation.

Other ways to give: Supporting Syrian refugees isn't just about giving money. **Lifeline Syria** is a year-old, grassroots organization co-ordinating private sponsorship of Syrian refugees in the Greater Toronto area. Its goal is to help private groups, like churches, university students and social clubs, sponsor 1,000 Syrian refugees over the next 2 years. Up to January 4, 2016, charitable donations can be made through Lifeline Syria's website and will be receipted by the Aqueduct Foundation (Scotiabank's public foundation for donations).
No Charity Intelligence rating

[Lifeline Syria website](#)

For those who feel passionately about this cause, Lifeline Syria recommends:

- 1. Contact your local MP's** constituency office and the federal government to increase international aid and accept more refugees.
- 2. Become a private sponsor.** Canadians can volunteer to support an individual or a family for one year, and they don't have to do it alone. You can collaborate with friends, neighbours, colleagues, professional organizations and social clubs

⁷ <http://globalnews.ca/news/2212184/how-much-of-your-donations-go-directly-to-refugees-in-the-syrian-crisis/>

⁸ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51769#.VfsQBhFVhBc>, September 1, 2015

to provide the time and money commitment necessary. Government estimates place the cost of settling an individual refugee around \$12,000. A family of four costs about \$25,000.

Background on the Syrian Conflict 2011

In the Arab Spring, Syrian people took to the streets to demonstrate against the Assad regime's extreme response to anti-government graffiti and the lack of political progress. The Assad government responded brutally, escalating into a civil war. Syria is now divided into territory controlled by the Assad government, rebel fighters and ISIS extremists.

The Syrian civil war has killed more than 200,000 people⁹ and caused more than 4.1 million Syrians to flee and take refuge in neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq and Egypt. An estimated 7.6 million people are displaced from their homes inside Syria and also need urgent help.

By early August 2015, large numbers of Syrian refugees crossed into the European Union reaching 428,735 UNHCP applications.¹⁰

For Canadian context, in 1979 in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, 7,000 Canadian groups sponsored 29,269 refugees through grassroots organizations. More than 60,000 refugees were welcomed to Canada.¹¹

Focus on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Lebanon, a country of 4.2 million people, now hosts 1.5 million Syrian refugees, in addition to Palestinian refugees. Today, one in every three people in Lebanon is displaced. Lebanon has managed to successively absorb large waves of refugees until it finally closed the border late in 2014. Four years since the Syrian refugees started to arrive, Lebanon is now showing signs of vulnerability. "The population influx is straining municipal budgets for solid waste removal and water."¹ "Cash-for-rent aid first began in Lebanon in June 2012 in a limited approach as alternative shelter was available and Lebanon has been very welcoming and eager to assist. However, once refugee numbers began to rise dramatically, with refugees quickly using up their financial resources in rental accommodations, pressure increased on the rental markets, evictions became more frequently, and cash for rent caused tensions with Lebanese families in the same neighbourhoods."

For Syrian refugees in Lebanon, being registered to receive international support requires that they pledge not to work. If found working, they risk being repatriated to Syria. As such, some refugees choose not to register and pay a resident permit costing \$200 for one year, simultaneously making them ineligible for international assistance.

As of May 6, 2015, UNHCR has temporarily suspended new registration as per Government of Lebanon's instructions.

⁹ <http://www.international.gc.ca/international/syria-syrie.aspx?lang=eng>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugees_of_the_Syrian_Civil_War

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?_r=1

¹¹ <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/09/03/we-can-all-do-more-for-syrian-refugees.html>

About Charity Intelligence: Charity Intelligence researches Canadian charities for donors to be informed and give intelligently. Charity Intelligence's website posts free reports on over 600 Canadian charities, as well as in-depth primers on philanthropic sectors like Canada's environment, cancer, and homelessness. Today over 215,000 Canadians use Charity Intelligence's website as a go-to source for information on Canadian charities and have downloaded over one million charity reports. Through rigorous and independent research, Charity Intelligence aims to assist Canada's dynamic charitable sector in being more transparent, accountable and focused on results.

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