

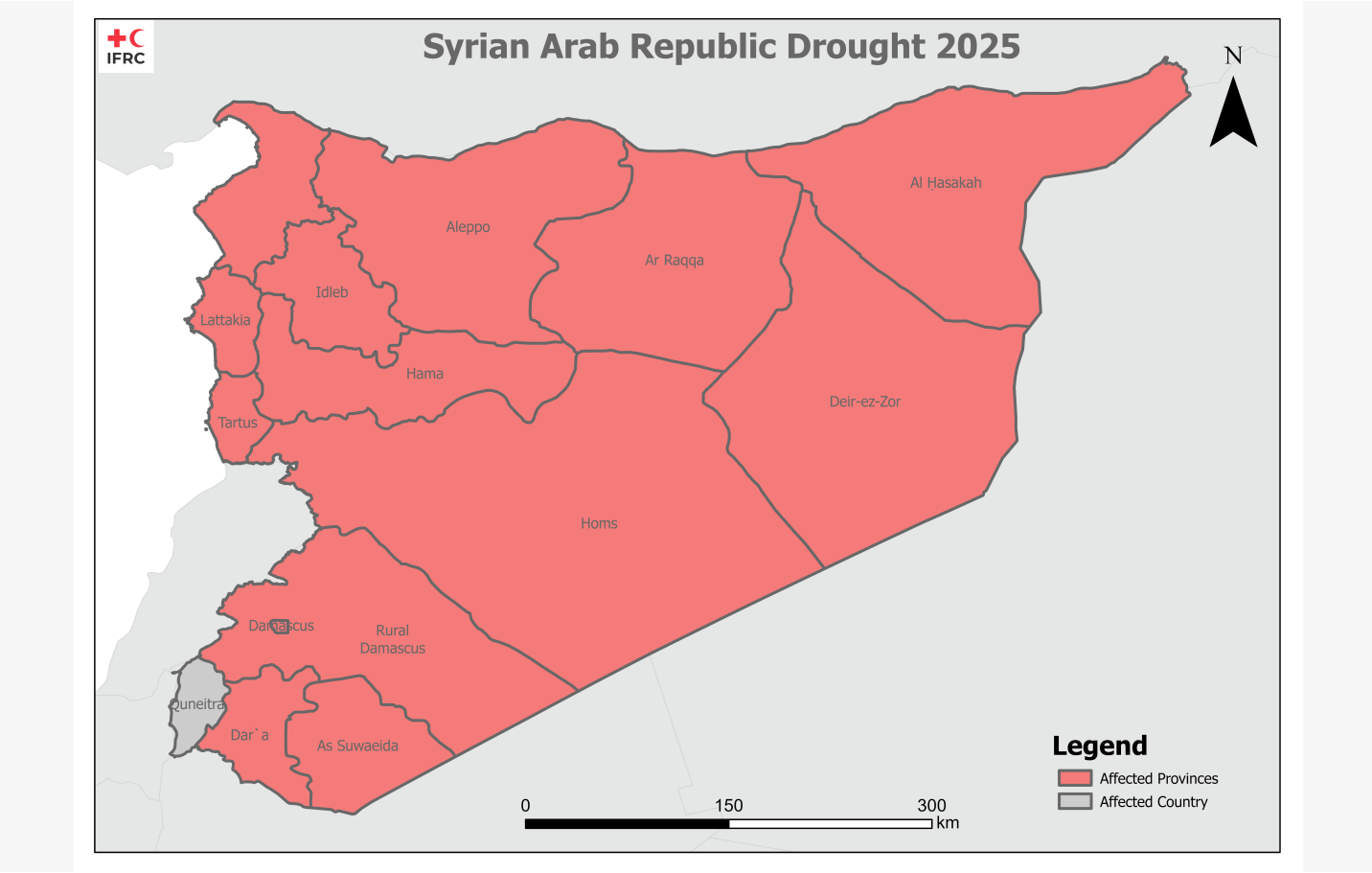
Appeal: MDRSY017	Country: Syrian Arab Republic	Hazard: Drought	Type of DREF: Response
Crisis Category: Orange	Event Onset: Slow	DREF Allocation: CHF 999,893	
Glide Number: DR-2025-000152-SYR	People at Risk: 16,200,000 people	People Targeted: 100,000 people	
Operation Start Date: 29-08-2025	Operation Timeframe: 12 months	Operation End Date: 31-08-2026	DREF Published: 29-08-2025
Targeted Regions: Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Dara'a, Deir Ez-Zor, Hama, Al-Hassakeh, Homs, Idleb, Latakia, Al-Quneitra, Al-Raqqa, Al-Sweida, Tartous			



Description of the Event

Date when the trigger was met

08-08-2025



What happened, where and when?

In 2025, Syria remains deeply affected by the cumulative impacts of over a decade of conflict, economic collapse, infrastructure degradation, and climate-related shocks. More than 16.2 million people across the country require humanitarian assistance, with over 10 million people in need of water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance, and 77.5 percent in acute need to access safe water. The public service delivery system is critically weakened, and widespread inflation, sanctions, and fuel shortages have severely undermined people's ability to meet basic needs, particularly in health, food security, and access to water and sanitation services.

Amid this fragile context, Syria is now facing one of the most severe droughts in its recent history. The country experienced its driest winter since 1958, with rainfall reaching only 25 per cent of seasonal norms, triggering a deepening water crisis nationwide. This extreme weather event has drastically reduced surface-water flows and groundwater recharge, pushing already vulnerable populations into an escalating humanitarian emergency. More than 80 per cent of Syrians are now estimated to be affected by drought-related impacts, including water scarcity, declining agricultural productivity, and deteriorating public-health conditions. Urgent water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs are being reported across both urban centres and remote rural areas, where weakened infrastructure and unreliable access to safe water leave communities increasingly dependent on costly or unsafe sources.

According to UN the drought-like conditions have affected more than 75 per cent of the cultivated crops and livestock grazing resources. The implications are severe, with crop yields collapsing and animal feed prices soaring by 100 to 300 per cent. As a result, livestock numbers have decreased by 40 per cent, and mortality rates among vulnerable animals have increased.

Families throughout the country are facing mounting challenges in securing drinking water, maintaining hygiene, protecting livelihoods, and accessing essential services—underscoring the need for immediate, large-scale humanitarian action.

Scope and Scale

Syria faces its worst water crisis in decades in 2025, with shortages reaching unprecedented levels after years of steady decline. Access to drinking water has become increasingly challenging, with many relying on unsafe sources or expensive private water services.



In Damascus, the Ein al-Fijeh spring, which supplies about 70% of the city's water, has declined to just 2 m³/s in 2025, compared to 10–20 m³/s in previous years, marking the lowest level in over six decades, affecting access to water for more than 3 million people. Due to this scarcity, residents are affected by severe water rationing, with many households receiving water for less than two hours per day. The population has become increasingly dependent on unregulated tanker deliveries, raising protection and public health concerns, especially for low-income and displaced families. Power cuts further impair water pumping and distribution systems across the capital. Rural Damascus suffers similarly, where 1.2 million people grapple with the Barada River's near-total disappearance and failed irrigation networks. Groundwater overuse has pushed reserves beyond recovery, and collapsing sanitation systems heighten risks of deadly outbreaks like cholera and hepatitis A.

In Homs, nearly 1.5 million people are affected by widespread well failures, groundwater depletion, and desertification. Agricultural families are losing livelihoods due to the high cost and limited availability of fuel and irrigation water. Rural communities face increased reliance on informal or contaminated water sources, and many areas report non-functional water networks and sanitation systems. The drought's devastation extends nationwide, with communities in Sweida, Homs, and beyond facing emergency-level shortages. In Daraa, Hasakeh, and Aleppo, plummeting groundwater and broken infrastructure leave rural areas dependent on unreliable water trucking. Conflict-scarred regions like Deir-ez-Zor and Raqqa face compounded crises as damaged systems collapse under drought pressures. The consequences are dire, affecting mainly children who miss school, women who shoulder unsustainable care burdens, and families who risk exploitation while seeking water.

Water scarcity directly affects the livelihoods of farmers and livestock breeders, especially in rural areas. According to FAO, overall, 25,000 square kilometers of cropped areas in the 10 most affected Governorates were affected by severe to extreme drought-like conditions. Pastoral systems are also collapsing. Dry rangelands, water scarcity, and rising feed prices have forced herders to reduce rations, sell livestock or abandon transhumance.

Source Name	Source Link
1. 'Zero season': Syrian farmers face worst drought in decades	https://syriadirect.org/zero-season-syrian-farmers-face-worst-drought-in-decades/#:~:text=Syria's%20cumulative%20rainfall%20during%20the,and%20Agriculture%20organization%20
2. Syria left high and dry as water system evaporates, experts say	https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2025/08/06/syria-drought-crisis-deepening/?utm_source=The+National+newsletters&utm_campaign=352bf785e8-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_01_18_11_48_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-53af5a22d1-59700268
3. Syria battles its worst extreme weather in 60 years	https://www.unocha.org/news/syria-battles-its-worst-extreme-weather-60-years#:~:text=But%20Syria%20is%20dealing%20with,like%20conditions%20on%20wheat%20production.
4. SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC - INTER-SECTOR RESPONSE PLAN FOR DROUGHT-LIKE CONDITIONS (JUL - DEC 2025)	https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/addendum-syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-response-priorities-response-plan-drought-conditions-july-december-2025

Previous Operations

Has a similar event affected the same area(s) in the last 3 years?	Yes
Did it affect the same population group?	Yes
Did the National Society respond?	Yes
Did the National Society request funding form DREF for that event(s)	Yes
If yes, please specify which operation	MDRSY006 (2021); MDRSY011 (2023)

If you have answered yes to all questions above, justify why the use of DREF for a recurrent event, or how this event should not be considered recurrent:



Over the past four years, two DREF operations have been launched to assist the SARC in responding to droughts, with a focus on the most affected governorates: Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ez-Zor, and Sweida. Drought frequency in Syria has increased significantly in recent years and is expected to persist due to the ongoing effects of climate change.

In 2025, Syria is witnessing the worst drought-like conditions that has been recorded in its recent history.

SARC now aims to prioritize areas that were not covered in previous drought responses. Through this DREF intervention, SARC intends to enhance water availability for urgent community needs while strengthening resilience for future drought seasons in the targeted areas.

Lessons learned:

Lessons learnt captured from last DREFs in 2021 and 2023 included

- Capacity strengthening of assessment teams
- Cross departmental coordination and regular information sharing
- Reinforce community engagement and dissemination, communication activities with various stakeholders and communities through different platforms

Based on these Lessons learned from previous DREFs, the following actions were taken before this operation:

- Assessment Coordinator was deployed under another operation, to support and capacitate SARC in assessments. in addition, this operation contains an assessment to be conducted by the DRR sector, coordinated with all SARC departments, involving the response
- An internal SARC working group has been established to follow-up and coordinate on all current operations (4 DREFs and 2 appeals)
- CEA, PGI, and Coms sections are being integrated in all Operations.

Did you complete the Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis in previous operations, what was risk level?	No
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What was the risk level for Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis?:	Child Safeguarding analysis is underway with the support from IFRC MENA RO colleagues
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Current National Society Actions

Start date of National Society actions

19-05-2025

Health	Public health volunteers have actively engaged in hygiene promotion and awareness raising to mitigate risks of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea and hepatitis A. By integrating health messages into WASH activities, SARC has strengthened community capacity to adopt preventive practices, thereby reducing the risk of outbreaks amid collapsing sanitation systems and limited access to safe water.
Water, Sanitation And Hygiene	SARC has prioritized emergency WASH interventions in the most affected governorates, including Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, and Homs. Emergency water trucking was launched in areas where public water networks collapsed, complemented by technical plans to rehabilitate non-functional boreholes and install solar-powered pumping systems. Hygiene promotion and water conservation awareness campaigns were rolled out by trained volunteers, reaching communities with messages on safe water handling and conservation practices. To anticipate growing needs, SARC initiated the pre-positioning of essential WASH supplies, including hygiene kits and water containers, at the branch level. This pre-emptive action, coordinated with Movement partners, aims to ensure a rapid and efficient scale-up of distributions to households in greatest need.
Assessment	Since the onset of the drought, SARC has conducted rapid field assessments in coordination with local water authorities and affected communities to identify priority needs and assess the functionality of water infrastructure. Technical teams and engineers carried out detailed evaluations of boreholes and pumping systems, while protection monitoring and community feedback mechanisms helped capture the specific



concerns of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. These assessments informed both immediate relief and medium-term recovery planning.

IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	The IFRC has a permanent presence in Syria through its Country Delegation in Damascus, supported by the MENA Regional Office. The IFRC has been actively supporting the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) since the onset of the crisis. IFRC has maintained close coordination with SARC to provide technical guidance on WASH assessments, response planning, and DREF development. The IFRC Country Office participated in joint field visits and technical meetings with SARC's WASH and Emergency teams to monitor the evolving situation in affected areas. IFRC facilitated regular coordination calls with Movement partners and contributed to the consolidation of field findings into a structured response plan. In parallel, IFRC supported the initial analysis of the emergency context and helped document the situation overview and affected population data to inform the DREF application. Coordination with relevant clusters and technical working groups, particularly on WASH and Health, has been ongoing to harmonize efforts and avoid duplication.
Participating National Societies	RCRC actors continue their support to SARC on regular bases, allowing the team to be the first responder, ready to scale up as per needs and support such a response. Many PNSs shows their flexibility to support, during this response and in the later phases in addition to the already ongoing support.

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

Present in Syria since 1967, the ICRC is a neutral, impartial, and independent organization with an exclusively humanitarian mission. The ICRC works closely with and supports SARC to meet the food, water, and health needs of people and communities affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence and to help them start rebuilding their lives. They also work together to raise awareness about the risks of mines and other explosive remnants. The ICRC works to restore family links between persons who have been separated by conflict and migration and promotes respect for international humanitarian law. Finally, ICRC provides technical advice and support to local authorities and forensic practitioners in managing human remains with respect and dignity. During emergencies, the ICRC supports SARC, such as DM, Wash, or EMS teams, provides emergency food and medical supplies, and participates in the movement task forces to coordinate response. Some of the regular planned and emergency interventions, in particular WatHab and EcoSec, also address the scarcity of water and drought and related needs.

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	No
National authorities	In response to the escalating drought in Syria, several government entities, UN agencies, and NGOs have mobilized efforts to address urgent water, sanitation, and food security needs. The Ministry of Energy/Water Authority has been involved in monitoring groundwater levels, managing existing pumping stations, and coordinating with humanitarian actors on emergency water delivery in severely affected areas.
UN or other actors	UN is developing response plan for drought-like conditions. This response plan is an addendum to the extension of the 2025 Humanitarian Response Priorities.

Are there major coordination mechanism in place?

There are several coordination mechanisms established in Syria. UNOCHA & Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), in which SARC, IFRC, and ICRC have observer status. Sectoral coordination bodies—Shelter/NFI, Food Security & Agriculture, Early recovery and Livelihoods, Health, Nutrition, WASH, Logistics, Protection, led by designated UN agencies, managed through the IASC cluster approach. Assistance is provided by UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and local actors operating.



Ministry of Energy/Water Authority has been involved in monitoring groundwater levels, managing existing pumping stations, and coordinating with humanitarian actors on emergency water delivery in severely affected areas. SARC coordinates with INGOs and UN agencies as the main partner in carrying out humanitarian activities while maintaining its mandate without compromising the basic principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Furthermore, SARC is coordinating with the relevant authorities (government) through its relevant channels in order to join efforts in the response to the drought.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

The livelihoods of small-scale livestock holders and agricultural households in drought-affected areas, already undermined by years of conflict, economic collapse, and rising input costs, are now at critical risk due to the prolonged 2025 drought. In Homs, nearly 1.5 million people are affected by widespread well failures, groundwater depletion, and advancing desertification, which have devastated pasturelands and drastically reduced crop yields. Agricultural families are losing livelihoods as irrigation becomes unaffordable or impossible due to high fuel costs and lack of water. In Aleppo, both rural and peri-urban communities are reporting reduced agricultural yields, while in Deir-ez-Zor and Raqqa, conflict-damaged irrigation systems have collapsed under drought pressures, further eroding productive capacity. Across Daraa, Quneitra, and Al-Hasakeh, declining groundwater levels and water scarcity have sharply curtailed livestock feed production, pushing smallholders towards distress sales and herd reductions that will have long-term impacts on household food security.

In this context, the timely provision of emergency fodder, combined with the introduction of low-water hydroponic fodder production systems, has become essential to maintaining herd health and preventing further loss of livelihoods. These interventions, paired with practical training in drought-resilient herd management, can help stabilize animal productivity and preserve household income. However, limited availability of fodder, hydroponic equipment, and trained facilitators, along with high transport costs to remote rural areas, is constraining coverage.

Immediate priorities include delivering targeted feed assistance to the most vulnerable herding and farming households, establishing sustainable fodder production units, and providing tailored technical support to improve animal and crop management under drought conditions. Targeting must prioritize women-headed households, elderly herders, people with disabilities, and displaced agricultural workers, ensuring that assistance is both equitable and accessible.



Health

The health sector in drought-affected areas, already overstretched by years of conflict, underfunding, and degraded infrastructure, is facing heightened risks due to the severe 2025 drought and the widespread collapse of safe water systems. In Damascus, where the Ein al-Fijeh spring has dropped to historic lows, and in Rural Damascus, where the Barada River has nearly disappeared, millions are forced to rely on tanker water or unsafe sources—dramatically increasing the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks such as cholera, hepatitis A, and acute diarrhea illnesses. In Sweida, reduced water consumption in some villages has fallen below minimum survival thresholds, further compromising hygiene and public health. In Homs, the failure of wells and irrigation systems has left communities dependent on informal or contaminated water sources, while in Daraa, Quneitra, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, and Raqqa, damaged or non-functional water and sanitation infrastructure has weakened the ability to contain potential outbreaks.

In this context, scaling up risk communication, hygiene promotion, and water-safety messaging is a critical public health intervention to prevent disease transmission. These efforts must be complemented by strengthening community-based disease surveillance and outbreak readiness, enabling early detection and rapid referral of suspected cases to functioning health facilities. However, the shortage of trained public health volunteers, limited availability of testing kits and treatment supplies, and insufficient coordination between WASH and health actors are slowing the response.

Immediate priorities include intensifying targeted public health messaging on safe water use and personal hygiene, expanding community-based surveillance systems, and ensuring timely referral pathways to functioning health facilities. Communication should be adapted for accessibility and cultural appropriateness, ensuring it reaches all groups—women, men, children, older persons, and people with disabilities—through trusted local channels.





Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

The WASH sector in drought-affected areas, already weakened by years of water scarcity, fuel shortages, and degraded infrastructure, is now under extreme strain due to the unprecedented 2025 drought. In Damascus, the Ein al-Fijeh spring—which supplies about 70% of the city's water—has dropped to just 2 m³/s, the lowest level in over six decades, compared to 10–20 m³/s in previous years. This has left approximately 5 million residents facing severe rationing, with piped supply available for less than two hours per day and an increasing reliance on unregulated and costly tanker deliveries, particularly among low-income and displaced families. In Rural Damascus, the near-total disappearance of the Barada River and collapse of irrigation systems have left 1.2 million people critically underserved, while over-abstraction has pushed groundwater reserves beyond sustainable levels. Sweida's 650,000 residents, reliant on groundwater and local dams, face emergency-level shortages, with consumption in some villages dropping below survival thresholds. In Homs, nearly 1.5 million people are affected by widespread well failures, groundwater depletion, and non-functional water networks, forcing reliance on unsafe sources.

In this context, the rapid rehabilitation and solarisation of critical boreholes and pumping stations, combined with chlorination and water-quality monitoring, has become a lifesaving priority. These interventions are essential to restore minimum service levels, reduce reliance on unsafe sources, and prevent outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera and hepatitis A. However, limited availability of technical equipment, treatment chemicals, and skilled personnel, coupled with funding constraints, is restricting the scale and speed of the response.

Immediate priorities include restoring and upgrading priority water infrastructure, ensuring a consistent supply of safe drinking water in underserved areas—including those dependent on trucking in Daraa, Quneitra, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, and Raqqqa—and intensifying hygiene promotion and water-conservation awareness. Messaging should be adapted to reach all community groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and displaced households, through multiple, accessible communication channels.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

The protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) needs in drought-affected areas are being compounded by the collapse of safe water systems and the resulting strain on households. Across Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Homs, and other affected governorates, women and children are bearing the brunt of unpaid care work, walking long distances to collect water from unregulated tanker points or unsafe sources. In Damascus, severe rationing of less than two hours of piped supply per day has forced low-income and displaced families into dependency on costly water deliveries, exposing them to economic exploitation and potential safety risks. In Rural Damascus and Sweida, the lack of nearby safe water points increases the risk of harassment or violence during collection, particularly for women and girls, while older persons and people with disabilities face physical barriers that prevent them from accessing sufficient quantities of water. In some villages, reduced water consumption below survival thresholds is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, leading to deteriorating hygiene, poor health outcomes, and heightened protection concerns.

In this context, integrating PGI considerations into all drought-response activities is essential to ensure equitable access and to mitigate protection risks. This includes proactively identifying barriers to participation, adapting facilities and services to diverse needs, and incorporating protection risk analysis into the planning of water points, distribution areas, and community facilities. However, the shortage of PGI-trained staff, absence of comprehensive sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data, and limited resources for inclusive infrastructure are restricting the ability to address these needs effectively.

Immediate priorities include ensuring all WASH and livelihoods infrastructure is designed for safe and inclusive access, training volunteers and staff on PGI and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and embedding protection-sensitive targeting and monitoring mechanisms. Targeting criteria and schedules must be transparent and widely communicated, and feedback channels must be available to all community members—including those in remote or underserved areas.



Community Engagement And Accountability

The community engagement and accountability (CEA) needs in drought-affected areas are critical to ensuring that the multi-sector response is relevant, transparent, and trusted by affected populations. Across Damascus, Rural Damascus, Sweida, Homs, and other impacted governorates, many communities report inconsistent access to clear, timely, and actionable information on water distribution schedules, eligibility criteria for assistance, and available support services. In Damascus, where piped water is rationed to less than two hours per day and reliance on unregulated tanker deliveries is widespread, misinformation about delivery times and costs has caused confusion, tension, and in some cases, exclusion of vulnerable households. In rural areas such as Sweida and Homs, where water consumption has fallen below survival thresholds, many residents—particularly women, older persons, and people with disabilities—lack



accessible channels to raise concerns or seek clarification, especially in remote or underserved settlements.

In this context, strengthening two-way communication between communities and responders is a priority. This includes proactively sharing information in local dialects and accessible formats, using multiple trusted channels (e.g., branch volunteers, community leaders, SMS alerts, local radio), and ensuring that messaging reaches marginalized groups often left out of mainstream communication. Equally important is the establishment or reinforcement of confidential, responsive feedback and complaints mechanisms, with clear processes to analyze and act on the information gathered.

Immediate priorities include scaling up proactive, accessible information-sharing campaigns, operationalizing a confidential feedback system across all operational areas, and ensuring that feedback directly informs program adjustments. Integrating CEA across WASH, livelihoods, and protection activities will help strengthen trust, improve service uptake, and ensure that assistance reflects the real priorities and concerns of affected communities.

Any identified gaps/limitations in the assessment

Despite SARC's rapid field assessments and coordination with local water authorities, significant unmet needs remain across multiple sectors, particularly in WASH and livelihoods. In several governorates, water infrastructure rehabilitation and solarization plans exceed the current DREF's budget and timeframe, leaving some high-priority boreholes, pumping stations, and rural networks unaddressed. Livelihood support for small livestock holders is limited to targeted areas, while similar needs in other drought-affected districts remain uncovered.

Resource shortages—including constrained funding, limited availability of critical spare parts and treatment chemicals, insufficient water trucking capacity, and a shortage of trained technical personnel—are impeding the full restoration of safe water services. Prolonged power cuts and fuel shortages further disrupt pumping and distribution, while inflation increases procurement costs and reduces purchasing power for both communities and implementing partners.

Operational challenges include delays in importing specialized equipment due to sanctions and administrative approvals, restricted humanitarian access in some areas, and deteriorated roads that complicate the transport of materials. Coordination with utilities is ongoing, but long-term operation and maintenance commitments are not yet fully secured, raising risks of infrastructure falling back into disrepair.

Coordination gaps persist in areas where multiple actors are providing parallel water trucking or hygiene activities without harmonized targeting, resulting in coverage overlaps in some locations and under-served communities in others. While SARC participates in WASH cluster coordination, limited real-time information sharing between partners hinders rapid gap-filling.

The needs of vulnerable groups—including displaced households in informal settlements, low-income families reliant on tanker water, female-headed households, older persons, and people with disabilities—are only partially captured in existing assessments. The lack of consistent sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data (SADD) constrains the ability to tailor assistance, especially for those facing protection risks at water collection points or in accessing livelihood support.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

Through this DREF, SARC aims to launch a multi-sectoral emergency operation to address both the immediate and medium-term impacts of the drought. This response prioritizes restoring access to water, protecting livelihoods, promoting health and hygiene, and enhancing community preparedness and resilience.

Operation strategy rationale

The 2025 drought in Syria has triggered one of the most severe water crises in the country's recent history, with rainfall levels dropping to only 25 per cent of seasonal norms. This has drastically reduced surface and groundwater availability, leaving millions of people without reliable access to safe water. The Ein al-Fijeh spring in Damascus, which supplies nearly 70 per cent of the city's water, has fallen to its lowest levels in six decades, affecting 5 million residents with extreme rationing. In Rural Damascus, Sweida, Homs, and other governorates, entire communities face the collapse of irrigation and water supply systems, forcing households to rely on unsafe or unregulated sources. These conditions are compounding existing vulnerabilities created by over a decade of conflict, economic collapse, and weak public services.

Most urgent needs include:



- Immediate restoration of safe and reliable water supply for drought-affected communities.
- Prevention of public health risks, including outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, and hepatitis A.
- Protection of rural livelihoods heavily dependent on livestock and agriculture, which are collapsing under the pressure of scarce water and soaring fodder costs.
- Safeguarding vulnerable groups, including displaced families, women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities, who are at heightened risk of exclusion and exploitation.

Strategic priorities were defined through joint assessments and coordination with local authorities, Movement partners, and cluster actors. The operation will therefore focus on:

- WASH: Rehabilitation of boreholes, chlorination, and hygiene promotion to restore access to safe water and reduce health risks.
- Livelihoods: Provision of animal feed and fodder seeds to 300 vulnerable herder households to prevent asset loss, distress sales, and further deterioration of food security.
- Disaster Risk Reduction (DM/DRR): Strengthening community preparedness through drought risk assessments, early warning dissemination, and training on sustainable water management.
- Community Support and Protection (CSP): Integrating protection monitoring, awareness, and safe referral pathways into all interventions, ensuring equitable access and safeguarding vulnerable groups.
- Cross-cutting approaches (CEA and PGI): Ensuring communities are informed, consulted, and able to provide feedback throughout the response, with inclusion and protection principles embedded in all activities.

Rationale for chosen strategy and methods:

The operation adopts a dual approach: (i) immediate life-saving interventions to restore water access and protect livelihoods, and (ii) medium-term risk reduction and resilience-building measures to prepare communities for recurring droughts. This approach is designed to directly address the most urgent needs while contributing to longer-term adaptation and community resilience.

Key influencing factors include the fragile socio-economic context, damaged infrastructure, and limited institutional capacity, which make water trucking and short-term relief alone insufficient. Therefore, priority has been placed on rehabilitating existing infrastructure and promoting sustainable solutions such as solar-powered systems and community-based risk management. In addition, recognizing the heightened risks for women, children, and displaced families, PGI and CEA are mainstreamed across all sectors, ensuring accountability, equity, and safeguarding.

Through this integrated, community-driven, and multi-sector strategy, the operation seeks to reduce immediate suffering, protect vulnerable livelihoods, and build resilience against the worsening impacts of climate-induced drought in Syria.

While this DREF operation is designed as a 12-month emergency response, the drought's impacts will continue well beyond the immediate intervention period. To ensure sustainability, the operation emphasizes investments in durable solutions such as the rehabilitation and solarization of boreholes and pumping stations, which will provide lasting improvements in water supply beyond the lifespan of the DREF. Community-level awareness campaigns on water conservation and hygiene, along with the introduction of low-water fodder systems, are intended to build adaptive practices that remain in use after the operation ends. Protection monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and PGI/CEA integration will leave behind strengthened branch-level capacities for inclusive and accountable service delivery. The transition will be managed through continued coordination with local water authorities, agricultural actors, and Movement partners, ensuring that longer-term needs are addressed through complementary programmes, future Emergency Appeals, or bilateral projects. In this way, the DREF serves both to meet urgent humanitarian needs and to establish a foundation for sustained resilience and adaptation in the face of recurrent drought.

Targeting Strategy

Who will be targeted through this operation?

Of the population in need of humanitarian assistance due to the water crises and drought conditions, SARC is targeting to support 100,000 people. This operation will prioritize drought-affected populations in governorates where the collapse of safe water systems, loss of livelihoods, and heightened public health risks are most severe. These locations have been identified based on a combination of factors:

- Severity of water scarcity (e.g., Damascus rationed to <2 hours/day; Rural Damascus with Barada River collapse; Sweida villages below



survival water thresholds; Homs widespread well failures).

- High concentration of vulnerable groups with limited coping capacity.
- Documented reliance on unsafe or unregulated water sources.
- Significant livelihoods loss among small-scale herders and agricultural households.

The primary target groups are:

1- Households reliant on unsafe water sources or facing extreme water rationing, prioritizing those without the financial capacity to purchase tanker water.

2- Small-scale livestock holders and agricultural households whose livelihoods are at immediate risk due to lack of fodder, failed pasture, or collapse of irrigation systems.

3- Vulnerable groups including:

- Displaced populations living in informal settlements or hosting communities with poor WASH infrastructure.
- Women-headed households, due to their disproportionate caregiving burden and reduced economic options.
- Older persons and people with disabilities, who face physical and logistical barriers in accessing safe water or livelihood assistance.
- Children, who are at higher risk of school absenteeism due to water collection responsibilities or illness from unsafe water.

Targeting will be guided by community-led identification and verification processes, in collaboration with local authorities, community leaders, and SARC branch volunteers. This approach will ensure transparent criteria and prioritization of households with the greatest unmet needs. PGI and CEA principles will be applied across all sectors to ensure equitable access, minimize exclusion, and provide clear information on selection criteria. Community feedback mechanisms will be active from the outset to allow for rapid adjustment of targeting based on real-time inputs.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The selection of targeted households and communities is based on a combination of severity of drought impact, vulnerability status, and access to alternative coping mechanisms. Criteria will be applied in a transparent and participatory manner, with community input and verification to ensure fairness and minimize exclusion.

1. Severity of drought impact

- Households in areas experiencing extreme water rationing or total network collapse
- Communities where water infrastructure has been rendered non-functional and urgent repairs are not possible without external support.
- Areas with documented reliance on unsafe, unregulated, or distant water sources, increasing public health risks.

2. Livelihood vulnerability

- Small-scale livestock holders who have lost or are at immediate risk of losing productive assets due to failed pasture, fodder shortages.

3. Socio-economic vulnerability

- Households unable to afford market alternatives such as tanker water or purchased fodder.
- Families with limited income or experiencing economic shocks due to drought-related loss of livelihoods.

4. Vulnerable groups

Priority will be given to:

- Women-headed households, who often carry the greatest caregiving burden and have fewer economic opportunities.
- Older persons and people with disabilities, who face mobility challenges in accessing water and services.
- Children, particularly those missing school to collect water or affected by waterborne illnesses.
- Displaced populations in informal settlements or hosting communities with inadequate WASH infrastructure and limited livelihood opportunities.

Rationale

The logic behind targeting these groups is driven by the intersection of exposure to drought impacts and limited capacity to cope without external assistance. This dual-lens approach ensures that assistance reaches those who are both the most affected and the least able to recover without support. PGI principles will ensure inclusive targeting, while CEA mechanisms will be in place to inform communities of selection criteria, receive feedback, and adjust as necessary.



Total Targeted Population

Women	24,390	Rural	30%
Girls (under 18)	26,830	Urban	70%
Men	22,764	People with disabilities (estimated)	-
Boys (under 18)	26,016		
Total targeted population	100,000		

Risk and Security Considerations (including "management")

Does your National Society have anti-fraud and corruption policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have child protection/child safeguarding policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have whistleblower protection policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have anti-sexual harassment policy?	Yes

Please analyse and indicate potential risks for this operation, its root causes and mitigation actions.

Risk	Mitigation action
Public health risks from unsafe water: Without effective water treatment and hygiene promotion, there is a high risk of outbreaks of cholera, hepatitis A, and diarrhea disease, undermining the WASH response's impact.	Integrate hygiene promotion and safe water messaging with all WASH interventions. Ensure chlorination of trucked and rehabilitated water points. Coordinate with health actors for outbreak preparedness and rapid response.
Access and security constraints: Restricted humanitarian access in certain areas due to insecurity, administrative barriers, or shifting frontlines could delay or prevent the delivery of assistance, affecting coverage and timelines.	Work through SARC's established branch network with strong community acceptance, coordinate closely with ICRC and local authorities for access negotiation and security updates, and adjust target locations if access becomes impossible.
Supply chain delays and shortages: Limited in-country availability of critical WASH equipment, treatment chemicals, and animal fodder could delay implementation and reduce coverage.	Diversify suppliers at local, regional, and international levels, pre-position stocks where feasible, use framework agreements, and prioritize early procurement of long-lead items.
Deteriorating drought conditions: Escalating water scarcity could expand needs beyond planned capacity, creating resource strain and unmet expectations among communities.	Maintain flexible operational planning, conduct regular rapid assessments, coordinate with WASH and Livelihoods clusters for complementary support, and prepare contingency stocks for scale-up if needed.
Community dissatisfaction or mistrust: Perceived inequities in targeting or delays in service delivery could damage SARC/IFRC's reputation and reduce cooperation from affected communities.	Implement CEA activities from the outset, including clear communication of selection criteria and schedules. Establish functional feedback and complaints mechanisms, and adjust targeting based on verified feedback.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation:



The targeted governorates present a range of security and safety concerns that could impact personnel, volunteers, and communities during the operation. Localized conflict dynamics persist in parts of Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, and Raqqqa, where sporadic clashes or armed group activity could restrict access or create sudden evacuation needs. In several areas, administrative movement restrictions and layered clearance requirements may cause operational delays. Additionally, drought-related grievances and competition over scarce water resources could trigger community tensions or demonstrations in high-stress areas.

Safety risks are also significant. Field teams and communities are exposed to unsafe water sources, heightening the risk of waterborne illnesses. Extreme summer temperatures pose risks of dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke, particularly during extended water trucking and distribution activities. Long-distance transport of water and fodder along poor-quality or insecure roads increases the likelihood of traffic accidents, while large gatherings at water points or distribution sites could result in overcrowding, pushing, or conflict if not carefully managed.

Mitigation measures will include close coordination with SARC’s Security Department and the ICRC for continuous security assessments, route planning, and real-time updates. All staff and volunteers will be briefed on IFRC and SARC security protocols, including personal safety, movement restrictions, and incident reporting procedures. The operation will leverage SARC’s established community acceptance and volunteer networks to maintain safe access and diffuse potential tensions. Distributions will be scheduled to avoid peak heat hours, with shaded rest areas provided for staff, volunteers, and community members. Staff and volunteers will be equipped with appropriate PPE, hydration, and first aid support. Crowd-control measures, including clear queuing systems and adequate staffing, will be implemented at all distribution points to ensure orderly and safe service delivery.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?	No
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Planned Intervention



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

Budget: CHF 256,834
Targeted Persons: 1,500

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of Small-scale livestock breeders supported to protect their livelihoods.	300
Number of trainings conducted on Hydroponic systems	15
Number of attendees of awareness sessions	500

Priority Actions

Overall Objective:
 To protect the livelihoods of drought-affected small-scale livestock breeders by providing immediate support to sustain animal health, prevent further asset loss, and promote resilience against prolonged water scarcity.

- Key Activities:
- Distribution of emergency livestock feed
 - Distribution of low-cost hydroponic systems to produce green fodder
 - Training in system setup, fodder cultivation, and animal care in drought conditions.
 - Ongoing technical support and monitoring.
 - Livelihoods awareness sessions on animal care during drought





Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

Budget: CHF 469,742

Targeted Persons: 90,000

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of boreholes rehabilitated	8
Number of people reached with hygiene promotion and water conservation messages	90,000

Priority Actions

Overall Objective:

Restore and maintain safe, sufficient, and reliable water access for drought-affected populations in targeted governorates, while reducing public health risks through improved infrastructure, safe water supply, and hygiene promotion.

The rehabilitation and equipping of 4 boreholes in Damascus (Node 4) and 4 boreholes in Homs will provide a critical boost to safe water supply in two of the most severely drought-affected governorates. Based on expected yields and daily pumping schedules, the Damascus boreholes are projected to restore safe water access for approximately 500,000–700,000 people, while the Homs boreholes will reach an estimated 350,000–460,000 people. Combined, these interventions are expected to directly benefit around 850,000 to 1.1 million people, significantly reducing reliance on unsafe or unregulated water sources and lowering the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks.

Key Activities:

- Rehabilitation and equipping of 4 boreholes in Homs, including installation of submersible pumps, piping systems, power supply, fencing, and solar systems, to restore water for communities facing severe shortages.
- Rehabilitation and equipping of 4 boreholes in Damascus (Node 4), including full electrical and mechanical works (submersible pumps, underground reservoir, power/control/sensor cables, electrical and protection panels, check valves, discharge pipes, installation fittings) and conducting new pumping tests to confirm discharge rates.
- Community awareness campaigns on drought risks, water conservation practices, and hygiene promotion, targeting all assisted communities.
- Dissemination of early warning messages related to drought impacts and water scarcity to support preparedness at community level.
- Installation of sustainable infrastructure to ensure continuous water supply and reduce dependency on costly emergency water trucking.
- Technical assessments and monitoring for improved WASH preparedness and to inform long-term drought resilience planning.
- Community engagement activities operational feedback mechanisms in all targeted governorates, with monthly reporting to adjust service delivery.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

Budget: CHF 19,106

Targeted Persons: 1,200

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of CSP volunteers trained on community based sessions	10
People reached through community awareness sessions	1,200
Number of Community initiatives implemented	8



Priority Actions

Overall Objective:

Ensure that drought-affected communities, particularly the most vulnerable, are protected from additional risks, have access to safe and inclusive services, and are supported through tailored protection and inclusion measures.

Key Activities:

- Protection monitoring integrated into WASH and livelihoods interventions to identify risks and barriers faced by vulnerable groups.
- Implement 8 community-led initiatives in targeted drought-affected areas, designed and led with active participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups, to promote inclusive drought resilience, water conservation, and community protection.
- Community awareness sessions on safe water collection, gender-based protection risks, and safeguarding against exploitation during distributions.
- Training of volunteers and staff on PGI principles, safeguarding, and safe referral pathways for specialized services.
- Establishing feedback and complaints mechanisms that are safe, confidential, and accessible to all groups, including women and persons with disabilities.
- Promoting equitable access and participation of vulnerable groups in planning and delivery of interventions.
- Strengthening referral pathways with local service providers and protection actors to ensure timely support for at-risk individuals.



Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation And Recovery

Budget: CHF 44,282

Targeted Persons: 10,000

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of people reached through assessments conducted	10,000
Assessment reports produced	1

Priority Actions

Overall Objective:

Enhance the resilience of drought-affected communities by strengthening preparedness, improving drought risk management, and promoting sustainable adaptation practices.

Key Activities:

- Conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and assessments with both local authorities and community members across all 14 governorates.
- Analyze drought-related risks and propose adaptive strategies.
- Coordinate findings with other sectors to inform comprehensive future programming.
- Advocate for inclusion of drought preparedness into local and national planning frameworks.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: -

Targeted Persons: -

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of community feedback and complaints addressed in targeted activities and IDP centers.	1,000

Priority Actions

Overall Objective:

Ensure that drought-affected communities are meaningfully engaged throughout the response, have access to timely and reliable information, and are able to provide feedback that informs and improves the operation across all sectors.

Key Activities:

- Information sharing on drought impacts, assistance criteria, and service schedules through multiple channels (volunteers, branch offices, local leaders, SMS, and social media where feasible).
- Community consultation sessions during WASH and Livelihoods interventions to understand local needs, priorities, and perceptions of the response.
- Tracking and analyzing community feedback to inform adjustments in targeting, distribution, and risk communication.
- Capacity strengthening of staff and volunteers on CEA approaches, ensuring consistent integration across WASH, Livelihoods, Health, and CSP activities.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 47,925

Targeted Persons: -

Indicators

Title	Target
field monitoring visits	2

Priority Actions

- IFRC Syria Delegation will be attending and supporting the Lessons learnt workshop
- IFRC Recovery officer 10 months national staff
- field monitoring missions



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 162,004

Targeted Persons: -

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of lessons learned workshops conducted	1
Number of Media & Coms workshops attendees	20
Number of Media products related to droughts produced	5

Priority Actions

Overall Objective:

Ensure that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) has the necessary operational capacity, resources, and systems in place to effectively implement and monitor the drought response.

Key activities/Cost components:

- Operational support to branches in drought-affected areas (Rural Damascus, Damascus, Homs, Sweida, Daraa, Al-Hasakeh, etc.),



including office running costs, communications, and coordination expenses.

- Volunteer support (per diems, insurance, PPE, and transportation) to enable safe mobilization and sustain engagement throughout the operation.
- Staffing support at HQ and branch levels (temporary staff, surge deployments, or dedicated focal points for WASH, Livelihoods, CEA/PGI, and PMER).
- Logistics and transportation costs, including rental or maintenance of vehicles, fuel, and warehousing required to deliver and store water, hygiene items, and fodder.
- Information management and PMER support, including data collection, monitoring, and reporting tools to strengthen accountability and learning.
- Coordination meetings with Movement partners, government authorities, and clusters to ensure alignment and avoid duplication.
- Visibility and communication materials to acknowledge donor and partner contributions and strengthen community awareness.
- Document lessons learned through weekly after-action reviews and a post-intervention survey covering 15% of beneficiaries.

Media and Communications:

In response to the escalating challenges of drought, and in line with our commitment to strengthening the role of media in raising awareness and influencing community behavior, we plan to implement a comprehensive awareness campaign that requires initial financial support to cover the following components:

- Two Capacity-Building Workshops for Media Professionals and Content Creators

These workshops aim to train media professionals from both public and private sectors, as well as influencers from various governorates, on the principles of planning effective awareness campaigns and the role of media messaging in behavioral change.

- Support for the Media and Communications Unit to Implement the Campaign

To ensure the production of high-quality media content that reflects the campaign's objectives and reaches the target audience effectively, we require essential technical equipment and tools for the Media and Communications Unit.

About Support Services

How many staff and volunteers will be involved in this operation. Briefly describe their role.

About 450 Volunteers, 50 Staff members.

EMS, DRR, WASH, Health, Livelihoods, CSP, OPs, CEA, logistics

The response is fully managed by SARC HQ and the sub operation room in the branches

Does your volunteer team reflect the gender, age, and cultural diversity of the people you're helping? What gaps exist in your volunteer team's gender, age, or cultural diversity, and how are you addressing them to ensure inclusive and appropriate support?

SARC ensures that its volunteer teams reflect the gender, age, and cultural diversity of the communities they serve. The response to the Drought is led jointly by headquarters and the affected branches, with volunteers mobilized directly from the impacted areas. This localized approach ensures that teams are culturally attuned with the people they are supporting, which helps build trust and deliver more effective assistance. Both men and women are actively engaged in the response, allowing for more inclusive outreach which is particularly important when supporting vulnerable groups such as female-headed households or individuals with specific cultural or protection needs. While the current composition of teams reflects the local demographic, SARC continues to assess and address any gaps in representation to ensure that all affected individuals feel safe, respected, and understood throughout the response.

If there is procurement, will it be done by National Society or IFRC?

The procurement will be done through SARC, nationally, and in alignment with the IFRC procurement standards. IFRC remains ready to support if and when needed.



How will this operation be monitored?

The SARC standard operating procedures for monitoring are utilized across all SARC operations and programs. This includes post-distribution monitoring, process monitoring, and community feedback mechanisms, as well as coordinated assessments conducted with implementing partners, including IFRC.

A monitoring plan will be created and put into action during this response in direct conjunction with the PMER and Quality Assurance team at IFRC MENA RO. PMER, IM, and CEA capabilities are included in the PMER and Quality Assurance unit and will work directly with SARC.

Please briefly explain the National Societies communication strategy for this operation

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) will implement a communications strategy that ensures timely, transparent, and people-centered information flows throughout the operation. Internally, coordination will be maintained through regular updates from branches to headquarters, using digital platforms and reporting channels to keep staff and volunteers aligned on activities and key messages. Externally, the Media and Communications Unit will provide wide coverage of the Drought response, documenting activities in a way that motivates local communities and associations to undertake similar initiatives. Verified field updates and multimedia content will be shared through national media, as well as SARC's social media platforms, to highlight the scale of the response and recognize the support of Movement partners, including the IFRC.

At the community level, the strategy prioritizes two-way engagement to ensure people at risk receive actionable information on Drought preparedness and available services. Public awareness campaigns will be carried out in partnership with traditional media outlets and across social media, ensuring broad reach and resonance with affected populations. Complementary IEC materials and awareness sessions at community level will reinforce these messages, while feedback mechanisms (suggestion boxes, volunteer reporting) will capture community concerns and inform adjustments in programming. The IFRC MENA Regional Office and Damascus Delegation will provide technical support, especially in amplifying SARC's efforts regionally and ensuring alignment with global Movement messaging. This approach positions communication not only as visibility, but also as a tool for accountability, trust-building, and resilience.



Budget Overview



DREF OPERATION

MDRSY017 - Syrian Arab Red Crescent
Drought 2025

Operating Budget

Planned Operations	789,964
Shelter and Basic Household Items	0
Livelihoods	256,834
Multi-purpose Cash	0
Health	0
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	469,742
Protection, Gender and Inclusion	19,106
Education	0
Migration	0
Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery	44,282
Community Engagement and Accountability	0
Environmental Sustainability	0
Enabling Approaches	209,929
Coordination and Partnerships	0
Secretariat Services	47,925
National Society Strengthening	162,004
TOTAL BUDGET	999,892

all amounts in Swiss Francs (CHF)



Contact Information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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[Click here for the reference](#)

