



The Cost of Conflict

How we measure the global failure in Syria

An Intelligence Report

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The Charity Report

Your independent news source in the charity sector

The Cost of Conflict: How we measure this global failure

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The Cost of Conflict: How we measure this global failure in Syria

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Cover Image: These civilians in the Sinjar mountains are escaping after days under siege. Tens of thousands of people crossed into Syria in August, heading for the relative safety of northern Iraq. ©MSF

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Introduction

In 2009, prior to the Arab Spring, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) had two staff people in Syria. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had 13 staff there. At the time, Syria was seen as relatively stable.

By 2018, MSF had 1,081 staff, ICRC had 619 and UNICEF had many hundreds more staff in Syria. The country was in ruins. MSF, ICRC had already collectively spent about \$1.3 billion in Syria. UNICEF has spent \$6.0 billion in the Middle East and North Africa trying to mop up after seven years of a brutal civil war, providing basic health, immunizations and education programs to children.

Why is it important that we—as a charity sector in North America—understand the evolution of a global event on the other side of the world?

Why should we collect data to analyze the basic tick tock of charities' involvement in a war that cost those charities billions of dollars, and where half a million people have died so far, and another 16 million people were and are displaced?

Why should we seek a more precise reportage of the ways in which charities—in this case a group of international NGOs—had to become embedded in a conflict zone in order to mitigate the damage and try to clean up after the carnage?

The decisions of the leaders of nations have huge consequences on the lives of millions of men, women and children they will never meet or, in many cases, know that much about. Soldiers go to war and humanitarian organizations pick up what and who is left over.

The needs directly in front of NGOs is largely what drives them. Even in the case of international NGOs, who do significant operational work with other NGOs on the ground, most charities prioritize their time seeing to their own considerable needs. What *their* constituency, staff, donors and volunteers need are, naturally, the most pressing. When you're tuned in the next emergency, the time and opportunity to look back is rare.

The charity sector thus misses the near-history dynamic and we all miss the unvarnished testimony on the impact of war and famine, unedited for fundraising messages or news angles.

This report brings together public information to reveal the way in which charities, in this case international NGOs, year by catastrophic year, responded to mayhem as it unfolded around

them and what it has ultimately cost them to date. In reading the history of war, the perspective of the storyteller is paramount to understanding what is being written.

While the Syrian civil war still rages, and using information published in their own annual reports, this intelligence report uses data from three humanitarian organizations who have been operating in Syria since the war began in 2011 and before. It uses their words to describe their involvement and perspective. We find an unembellished truth in it. Context is provided by contemporaneous news coverage and reference material listed in the end notes.

None of these organizations knew at the outset they would be involved in this conflict zone for almost a decade. But we can now review the trajectory of their involvement, the existing plateau, what it's cost them so far and consider how the size of the ongoing catastrophic events in Syria influences their ability to achieve progress elsewhere.

Perhaps knowledge of that evolution, their unique perspective and, the public and private cost can help us all make better decisions going forward, whether you are in a war zone or not.

GAIL PICCO

Editor in Chief
The Charity Report
APRIL 25, 2020

Preface

“Everything changed with the First World War. The Middle East was reorganized, redefined, and the seeds were planted for a century of bloodshed,” wrote Richard Engel, NBC’s Chief Foreign Correspondent, in his 2016 book And Then All Hell Broke Loose: Two Decades in the Middle East.

A brief historical summary since World War I provides background that will help us understand the modern day dynamic as it still brutally unfolds in Syria day after day—

In 1919 France acquired a “mandate” to govern Syria. In 1946 French colonial rule of Syria ended. The Ba’th party, an Arab nationalist party, was formed and held its first congress the following year in Damascus¹. In 1948 Israel proclaimed its independence and is attacked by surrounding Arab states including Syria. To the surprise of Syrians, their country was defeated by Israel.

In 1967 Syria, along with Egypt and Jordan, was defeated by Israel again in the Six-Day War. Israel seized Golan from Syria. In 1970, Hafez al-Assad, current president Bashar al-Ashad’s father, seized power in a coup. Syria continued to attack Israel in Golan and the Sinai Peninsula until a ceasefire was signed in 1973. In 1976 Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war on the side of the minority Christian right wing militias that began three decades of interference in Lebanese politics.

In 1979 the U.S. declared Syria a state sponsor of terrorism because of its support of Palestinian militant groups. In 1982, in order to put down Islamist forces who’d taken control of the city of Hamah, Hafiz Al-Assad destroyed half the city and killed 10,000 people. In 2000 Hafiz al-Assad [died](#) of a heart attack.² His son Bashar al-Assad was elected president by referendum. People were hopeful that he’d undertake reform. In 2008, Syria and Lebanon formally agreed to establish diplomatic relations for the first time since 1976.³

The following chronology is presented in the way it unfolded on the ground for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNICEF.

2009: 'The Syrian Arab Republic remains relatively stable.'⁴

The year 2009 is the year after the global economic crisis. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has two staff in Syria, a country with a functioning economy, a professional class and creative class, schools and health care. MSF is in Syria to provide medical care and mental health support to the 215,000 Iraqi refugees fleeing the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Refugees from Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan are also seeking refuge in Syria's relative calm.⁵

At the same time, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has 13 staff on the ground in Syria. In cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, they focus on the needs of refugees in Syria, as well as Syrians trapped in the still-occupied Golan. Prophetically, during the second half of 2009, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the ICRC assess the availability of water in drought-ridden rural areas in the north-east of the country, confirming that agricultural communities increasingly lack access to water sources and face difficulties in sustaining their livelihoods."⁶

Meanwhile, relations between Syria and other countries are developing. The king of Saudi Arabia and the Lebanese prime minister visit Damascus in 2009. President Bashar al-Assad pays a state visit to France.

2010: Syria is a 'key player in efforts to stabilize the region'

Political leaders from France, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Turkey and the U.S. visit Damascus in 2010. The ICRC says it's an illustration of the importance they attach to getting Syrian support for reducing tensions in the region.

In July, approximately 152,000 Iraqi refugees are registered in Syria according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. MSF, with its five staff people operating in the country, focuses on delivering care to the refugee population, whose official numbers seem vastly undercounted.⁷

ICRC and its 14 staff continue to act as an intermediary between Syrian family members who have been "cut off from one another for decades by the demarcation line between the occupied Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic."⁸ They are also working with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to help address the drought emergency in the north-eastern part of the country.

2011: 'Unrest that began in March spread rapidly to many other urban areas, leaving thousands of people dead and injured by year-end'

The Arab Spring is celebrated all over the world as an example of young people using the power of social media to organize. Street protests, described as a pro-democracy spark, catch fire and spread to Libya and Egypt. Eventually, the protests topple regimes that had seemed relatively stable, in Tunisia and Egypt.

Not long after, anti-government protests break out first in the southern province of Dar'a. They are influenced by the Arab Spring uprisings, as well as the worst drought in modern Syrian history.

As the year goes on, demonstrations and violent unrest spreads rapidly through many other urban areas.⁹ Initial calls for economic and social change quickly translate into demands for fundamental political reform, including the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad.

The al-Assad regime cracks down hard. Dozens of protesters are reportedly killed when Syrian forces open fire. Heavy military weaponry is used against protesters in the cities of Baniyas and Homs in April.¹⁰ There are reports of children being tortured and killed.¹¹ Al-Assad fires his Cabinet.

The world responds.

In May, the European Union (EU) imposes an arms embargo, travel restrictions and freezes the assets of some Syrian officials, though not al-Assad. The U.S. issues similar sanctions but includes al-Assad.

In July, American and French ambassadors go to Syria to express their support of the protesters. Al-Assad says that this exposes American involvement in the intensifying civil unrest in Syria. His supporters attack the French and American embassies. A group of defectors from the Syrian military, many of whom are said to have been threatened with execution if they refused to shoot on Syrian protesters, form the Free Syrian Army (FSA), an opposition militia.

By August U.S. President. Barack Obama, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President. Nicholas Sarkozy, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and British Prime Minister David Cameron issue statements calling for Assad to step down as president.¹²

The calls ... follow a report from UN investigators, which says that “security forces, including snipers, have used deadly force against civilians in attempts to quell months of anti-government protests. News agencies said the investigators discovered that 26 men were blindfolded and shot dead while in government custody. In other cases, security forces allegedly killed wounded civilians by putting them alive in refrigerators in hospital morgues.”¹³

By September organized rebel militias are regularly engaging in combat with Syria government forces.

MSF withdraws from Syria, citing the widespread unrest in the country and the lack of safe passage, which is not guaranteed by the regime or any parties involved in the conflict. They continue to provide help from neighbouring countries. But by the end of the year, 48 staff are working on the Syrian crisis, while posting expenditures of \$2.6 million in Syria for the first time.¹⁴

Jakob Kellenberger, president of the ICRC, travels to Damascus twice in 2011 to meet with President Assad.¹⁵

“Ensuring that the sick and the wounded have access to medical care will be among the particularly urgent humanitarian challenges to be addressed with the Syrian authorities,” ICRC said in a statement. “The ICRC president's visit will also offer an opportunity to discuss the impending start of ICRC visits to persons detained by the Ministry of the Interior. The ICRC visits detainees in order to assess the conditions in which they are being held and the treatment they receive.”¹⁶

With fear of a civil war growing, the Arab League votes to impose sanctions. Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia form an anti-Assad bloc, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay reports that more than 5,000 civilians have been killed since the protests began.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Syria's traditional allies Iran and Russia continue their support. Russia, along with China, veto a UN Security Council Resolution condemning the crackdown.¹⁸

The ICRC reports that “with the ICRC’s support, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent plays an increasingly important role as the violence intensifies, especially in providing relief to affected families and treatment to the wounded and sick wherever security allowed.”¹⁹

Over the course of this year, ICRC has 25 staff in Syria, and spends \$7.5 million on the country’s crisis.

2012: Syrians flood into neighbouring countries for safety

The situation in Syria is worsening with an increasing number of casualties reported.

MSF says that, despite not receiving government authorisation to deliver medical assistance, it will decide to work in the country and in opposition-held areas. Two hospitals are set up in Idlib province and a third opens in Aleppo.

“Medical attention for the direct victims of violence is not the only problem.” reports MSF, “prevailing insecurity, the targeted destruction of health facilities and the collapse of the health system mean that many people cannot access the routine or emergency healthcare they need.”²⁰ As the year goes on, the humanitarian situation in the country deteriorates.”

The scope and intensity of the fighting reaches unprecedented levels in the capital city of Damascus, and in Syria’s economic capital, Aleppo. Cross-border incidents prompt neighbouring Turkey to call for NATO support. Incidents were also reported along the Israeli, Jordanian and Lebanese borders.”²¹

ICRC say opposing parties are employing escalating means of warfare that challenge respect for the principles of proportionality, with government forces using heavy weaponry and guerrilla tactics.

ICRC puts the situation in stark terms,

“Concerns about the humanitarian situation of civilians and those not or no longer participating in the conflict grows. Reports of rising casualties, displacement and people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries proliferate, as do allegations of mass arrests, hostage-taking, extrajudicial killings, torture, obstruction of patients’ access to medical services, and abuses against medical/humanitarian workers. Insecurity makes humanitarian action difficult.”

Meanwhile, UNICEF focuses its efforts on assisting refugees fleeing bombardment. In an effort to suppress a measles epidemic among the refugee population, they supply measles vaccines to more than 1.4 million children, and education to 79,000 more.²² Through partners in Syria and nearby countries they provide medicine, tents, blankets and winter provisions to more than 263,000 people.

The current president of ICRC Peter Maurer holds talks with President Bashar al-Assad, and the Syrian ministers of foreign affairs, the interior, health and national reconciliation.

Maurer also visits areas affected by the fighting in rural Damascus. "I am shocked by the immense destruction of infrastructure and homes in several areas I visited in Mu'dhamiya, Qaboun and Harasta. And I am deeply moved by the stories of distraught children who lost their parents in the fighting," he says.

"The rules of international humanitarian law must be adhered to by all parties to the conflict to avoid civilian loss of life," he says. "It is the responsibility of the parties to protect civilians in their conduct of hostilities." ²³

In an attempt to have the combatants adhere to international humanitarian law (IHL), this is the fourth time an ICRC president has made a personal visit to Syria.

The number of ICRC staff grows to 67. They spend more than \$46.7 on the humanitarian assistance. By the end of 2012, the refugee population is estimated to number one million.

2013: 'The threat of a lost generation'

The armed conflict in Syria continues unabated. More than 100,000 people have reportedly been killed and millions displaced. There are widespread fears that the conflict will spread throughout the region. The international community has so far failed to reach any consensus on a response.

In addition to providing basic aid to millions of refugees, UNICEF is concerned with the amount of violence against children and the threat of a lost generation. Amid the conflict zone and refugee camps, they are also trying to immunize that same lost generation against polio.²⁴

ICRC reports that international humanitarian law violations and other abuses are rife. There are reports of direct and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, including hospital staff and patients, as well as hostage-taking, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, child recruitment, disregard for human remains, and restrictions on access to basic services and on the passage of humanitarian relief.²⁵

"Industrial paralysis, loss of jobs and inaccessibility of agricultural fields are severely disrupting livelihoods, making millions of people completely dependent on aid."²⁶

MSF reports "the conflict in Syria has decimated what was previously a well-functioning healthcare system. With regions of the country inaccessible to humanitarian organisations, the huge medical needs that are indirect consequences of the conflict remain largely unreported and unseen.

In 2013, MSF has 621 staff in and around Syria.²⁷ The ICRC spends \$97.1 million in Syria in 2013.²⁸ UNICEF spends \$428.9 million in the Middle East and North Africa in 2013.²⁹

2014: 'The largest current displacement and protection crisis worldwide'

After four years of conflict, children and families in Syria are shaken to the core, says UNICEF. The Syrian conflict has created the largest current displacement and protection crisis worldwide.³⁰

"Armed conflict between opposing Syrian government forces and a multitude of armed groups, some of whom were also fighting among themselves, continues," reports ICRC.³¹

By mid-2014, an estimated 10.8 million people require aid. Six and a half million people, nearly half of them children, are displaced. Many have moved repeatedly within the country. UNHCR estimates that 2.8 million people had registered, or were awaiting registration, as refugees.³²

Sustained fighting and lack of dialogue among the parties to the conflict stymies efforts to find a political solution. A coalition led by the U.S. launches air strikes periodically against an armed group operating across Iraqi and Syrian territories. In July, the UN Security Council adopts a resolution on cross-border aid delivery without the Syrian government's consent.

The security of ICRC field teams and networking efforts face serious security challenges from the large number of active armed groups, who show them limited recognition and acceptance.

In January ISIS abducts 13 MSF staff members. The eight Syrians among them are released after a few hours. The remaining five international staff members are captive for up to five months. The lack of guarantee from IS leadership that MSF patients and staff will not be taken or harmed, leads to the withdrawal of MSF's international teams and the closure of health facilities in ISIS-held areas.

Despite the increasing access restrictions, MSF continues to provide clandestine support to medical facilities and networks of support. They work with Syrian doctors in both government- and opposition-controlled areas.

2015: The biggest displacement crisis since the Second World War³³

By 2015, up to 4.3 million people have fled Syria and an estimated 6.6 million are internally displaced. Government troops, opposition forces and insurgent groups battle for power and territorial control.³⁴

Since March 2011, an estimated 260,000 people have been killed, and over 1.5 million injured.

MSF reduces the number of staff in Syria from 728 to 494, saying “the complex war has been characterised by extreme violence: civilian areas have been routinely bombed – often in ‘double-tap’ attacks in which the initial strike is followed by a second on rescue teams or on the healthcare facility receiving the wounded.”

The Syrian government continues to deny repeated requests by MSF to access government-controlled areas. Nearly two thirds of Syrian hospitals have been destroyed or severely damaged as a result of armed conflict. UNICEF continues to provide immunization, polio vaccines and health services to 4.18 million children and mothers.³⁵

“Serious and repeated breaches of international humanitarian law are exacerbating a situation that was already dire,” says ICRC.

“The conflict, and the economic sanctions imposed by other countries, seriously affect Syria’s economy and public infrastructure and services. More and more people are driven into destitution by the widespread destruction, lack of jobs and progressive scarcity or costliness of food, water, health services and fuel.”³⁶

As it had been doing since the beginning of the war, according to its standard procedures, the ICRC visits people held at nine central prisons and a juvenile rehabilitation centre run by the government.³⁷

In 2015, MSF, UNICEF and ICRC are cumulatively spending close to \$1 billion to provide humanitarian aid in Syrian and to Syrian refugees.³⁸

2016: 'Grave violations against children'

It's 2016 and year five of the Syrian conflict. UNICEF says grave violations against children are the highest on record.

Hundreds are being killed by bombs and shelling. Observers note that some deaths might have been averted if the country's medical facilities and practitioners were not utterly depleted and subjected to attacks, necessitating the scaled up delivery of essential supplies to the most vulnerable populations. They press for access to the hundreds of thousands of Syrians living under siege.³⁹

The protracted violence and international sanctions continue to cripple Syria's economy, infrastructure and services.

By the end of 2016, an estimated 400,000 people have been killed.

ICRC reports improvement in their proximity to beneficiaries, owing partly to enhanced contact with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. They are able to conduct more field trips and cross-line activities, including needs assessment and aid delivery in besieged and/or hard-to-reach areas.⁴⁰

And despite widespread destruction, living conditions have improved for some. In cities and towns with functional infrastructure, millions of internally displaced people (IDPs) and residents have potable water and electricity after the ICRC supplies local service providers with generators, spare parts and water-treatment chemicals.⁴¹

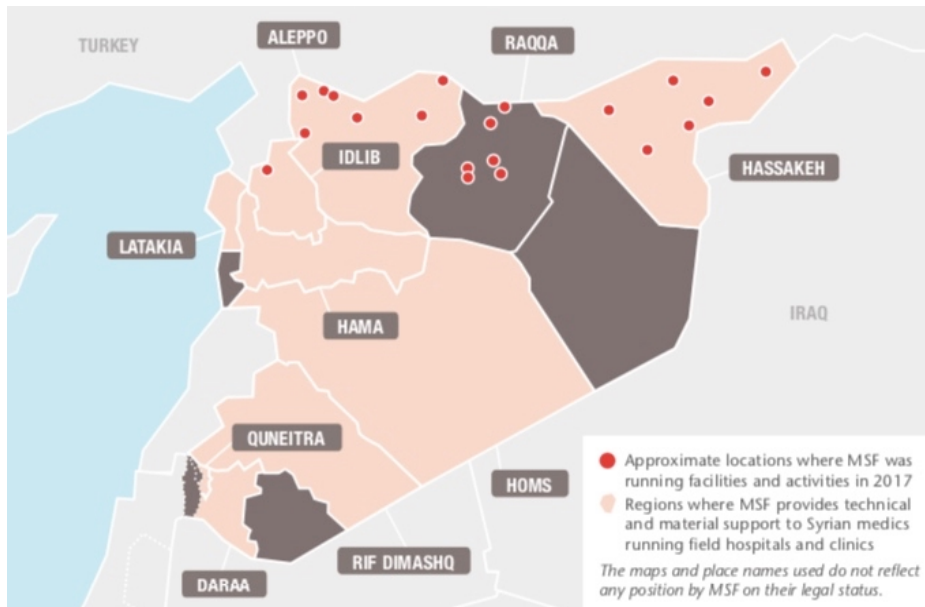
Despite those marginal gains, MSF reports that medical facilities, staff and patients are victims of indiscriminate and targeted attacks.

In 2016, 32 medical facilities receiving support from MSF were bombed or shelled on 71 separate occasions. In one attack on February 15, an MSF-supported hospital in Idlib is hit by four missiles. Twenty-five people are killed and 11 wounded, including hospital staff, patients, caretakers and visitors.

At least 55 people, including patients and medical staff, are killed when airstrikes hit the MSF-supported Al Quds hospital and the surrounding neighbourhood in Aleppo city on April 27.⁴²

MSF continues to work with a staffing level of about 450.⁴³

2017: 'Entering new depths of violence'



Civilians and civilian infrastructure continue to come under direct fire. Eleven medical facilities supported by MSF are hit by bombs or shells on 12 occasions, both targeted and indiscriminate attacks.

MSF continues to provide medical and humanitarian assistance in Syria, but its activities are severely limited by insecurity and constraints on access. The Islamic State group has not given them any assurance of safety, and the Syrian government has not given them permission to work.⁴⁴

MSF runs or directly supports six hospitals and seven health centres, deploying six mobile clinic teams and six vaccination teams in opposition-held regions across northern Syria. Facilities receiving distance support from MSF conduct more than 2.6 million outpatient consultations and 158,000 major and minor surgical procedures, assists in over 38,000 births and admit more than 152,000 patients for hospital care.⁴⁵

UNICEF focuses on getting clean drinking water to a war-ravaged population. They provide 5.9 million people with access to safe water. War-damaged infrastructure forces them to truck water to 3.2 million people.⁴⁶

According to ICRC, the Syrian government's military operations, combined with local agreements with factions in certain areas, enable the Syrian government to regain control over some parts of the country held by armed groups. In May, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and Turkey agree to establish four 'de-escalation zones' in key locations; and in July, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, together with Jordan, arrange a ceasefire in southern Syria. These efforts contribute to the abatement of violence in some provinces, although fighting persists – and even intensifies – in several areas. Internationally backed peace talks still do not result in a political solution to the crisis.⁴⁷

2018: 'Humanitarian needs continue to be acute'

ICRC reports that since the fighting began in 2011, hundreds of thousands of civilians have died, tens of thousands of people are missing or detained, and millions are displaced in Syria or abroad. Parties to the conflict have breached international humanitarian law and other norms applicable to the conduct of hostilities. Syria's economy and public services have been crippled by violence and international sanctions.⁴⁸

In 2018, humanitarian needs continue to be acute in areas besieged by government forces or armed groups. Certain areas are still inaccessible, because of security or logistical obstacles.⁴⁹

Yet amid the carnage, 13.6 million people are assisted by repairs or improvements to communal water, electrical infrastructure, water and sewage utilities, and receive spare parts, and water purification materials.⁵⁰

MSF continues to operate in Syria, but its activities are severely limited by insecurity and access constraints.



Thousands of people, having been displaced by the fighting around Damascus, Homs and Daraa, settle in the northern areas of Idlib and Aleppo in 2018. MSF teams deliver maternal health care, general primary health care, and mobile treatment for non-communicable diseases. They distribute relief items, improve water and sanitation systems, organize mass vaccination campaigns for displaced persons camps, and support vaccination programmes in health facilities.

After seven years of unrelenting, unprecedented civil war, during which international humanitarian law has been nearly unrecognized, close to half a million people have been killed. One and a half million people have been injured, and six million people displaced. MSF and ICRC together have spent \$1.3 billion in Syria. UNICEF has spent \$6.0 billion in the Middle East and North Africa in their efforts to treat the wounded, assist people driven from their homes, and restore an infrastructure capable of delivering clean water and basic sewage treatment.

At the end of 2018 the country of Syria is in ruins largely at the hands of its own government.

Since 2011, close to 100 staff and patients in MSF-supported hospitals have been killed in addition to 74 Syrian Arab Red Crescent and Palestine Red Crescent Society personnel. The abduction of three ICRC staff members in 2013 remains unresolved.

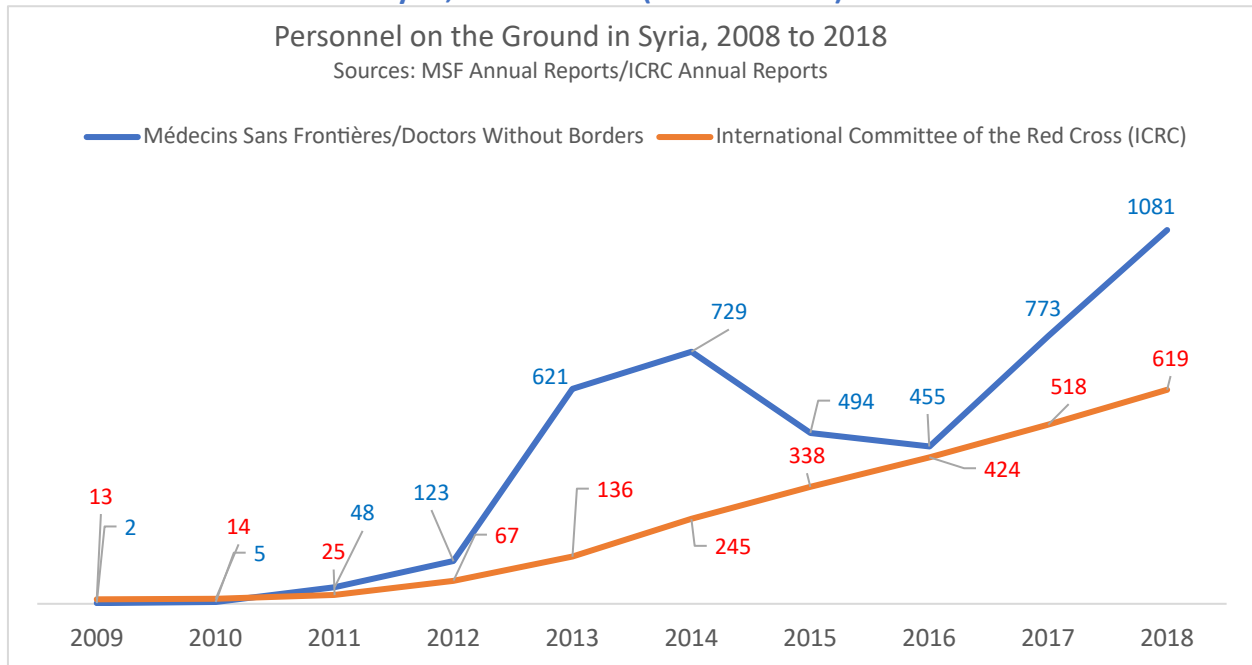
Taking stock

War does not necessarily take a predictable path. There are battles among enemy combatants, often pulled apart by their perceived differences, by the powers that be who may not be considering the common good or whose view of a 'greater good' includes eradicating those who disagree. In the west, the Arab Spring was seen by many as a source of inspiration, a youthful nation embracing the new technology of social media in order to fight for democracy, a sixties type counterculture rising up against oppression.⁵¹

But the Arab Spring soon turned into an Arab Winter.⁵² In Syria, protesters were jailed and killed, entire ancient cities lie in ruin and, as UNICEF feared, a generation of children lost.

But the seasons do not change overnight. And the way in which international NGOs had to increase spending, staff and priorities tell the story of how the crisis unfolded in that country for them as they sought to respond to the needs on the ground, not knowing how the war would develop, how long they would be there and what they would experience. A simple chart reflecting staff levels in the regions tells a story, the dip in MSF staffing reflecting the way their hospitals came under fire in 2015 and 2016 and necessitated their withdrawal from parts of the country.

Personnel on the Ground in Syria, 2008 to 2018 (MSF and ICRC)



International Committee of the Red Cross

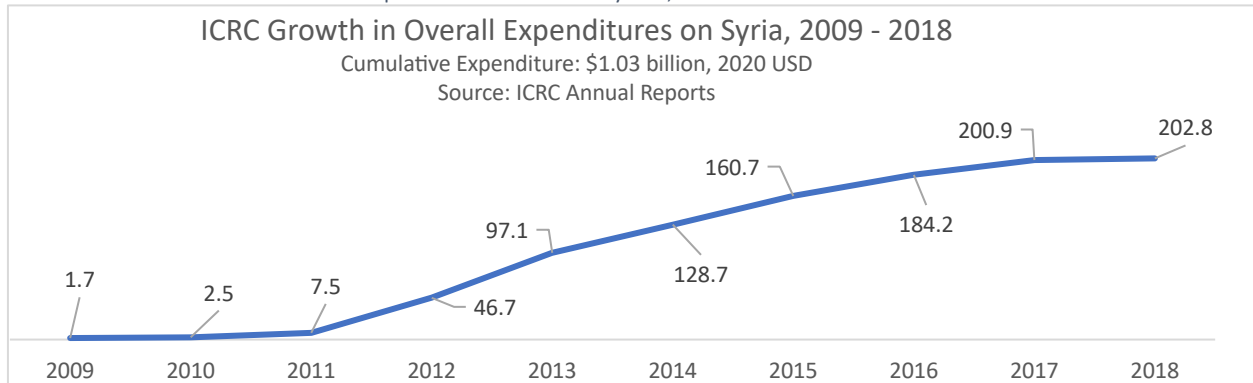
The International Committee of the Red Cross was created in 1863, and its current mandate stems from the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which “protect people who do not take part in the fighting (civilians, medics, aid workers) and those who can no longer fight (wounded, sick and shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war).”⁵³

Headquartered in Geneva, the ICRC operates in 80 countries all over the world, helping people affected by conflict and armed violence and, importantly, promoting the international humanitarian laws that protect victims of war. They are an independent and neutral organization and will serve all sides in a conflict. They employ about 16,000 people and are

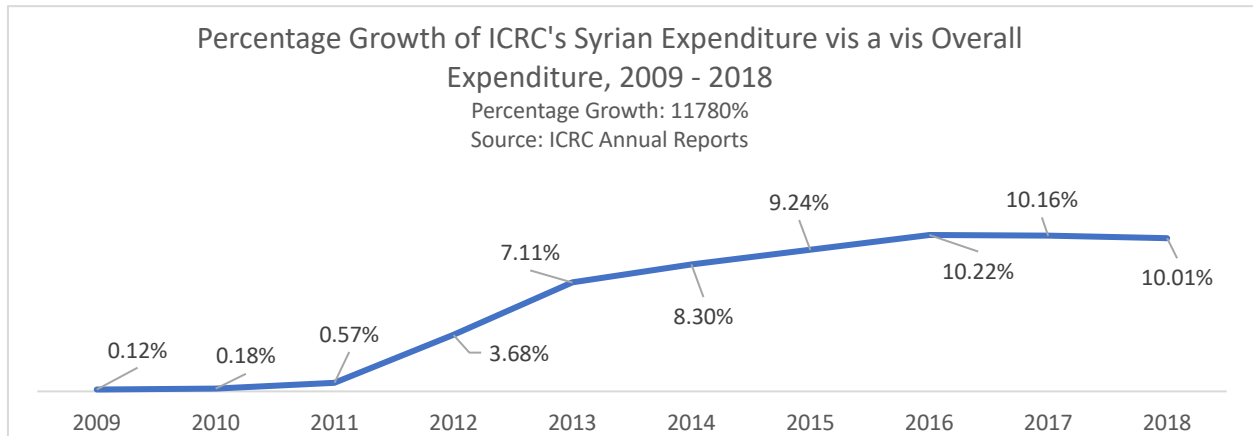
funded mainly by voluntary donations from governments and from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.⁵⁴

In the following charts, you can see how minimally ICRC was involved in Syria prior to the Arab Spring, how its involvement increases exponentially and how, as of 2018, it has plateaued at a very high level. You will also see what percentage of its total expenditure has been taken up by the Syrian conflict as it rises from .12% of total expenditures in 2011 to 10.01% of total expenditures in 2018.

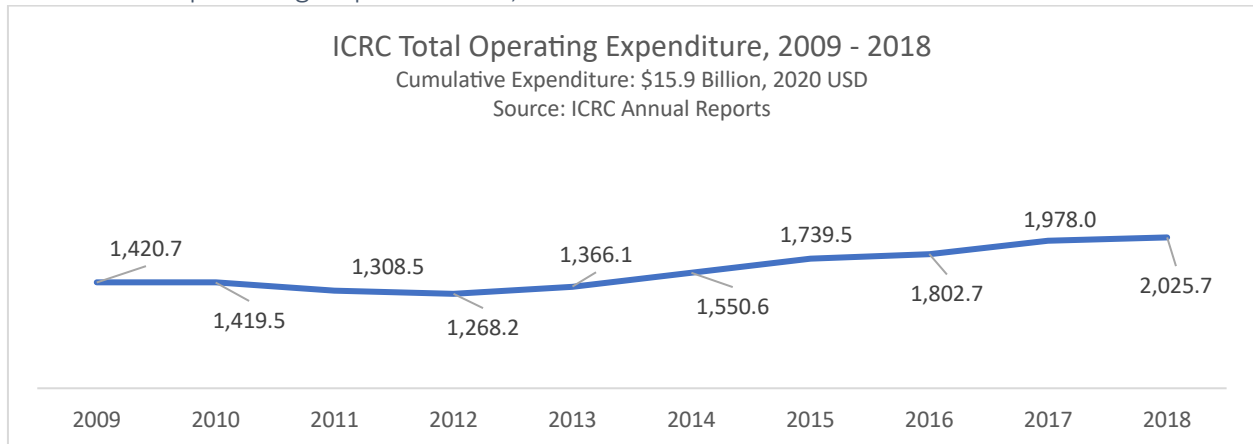
ICRC Growth in Overall Expenditures on Syria, 2009 - 2018



Percentage Growth of ICRC's Syrian Expenditure vis a vis Overall Expenditure, 2009 - 2018



ICRC Total Operating Expenditures, 2009 - 2018



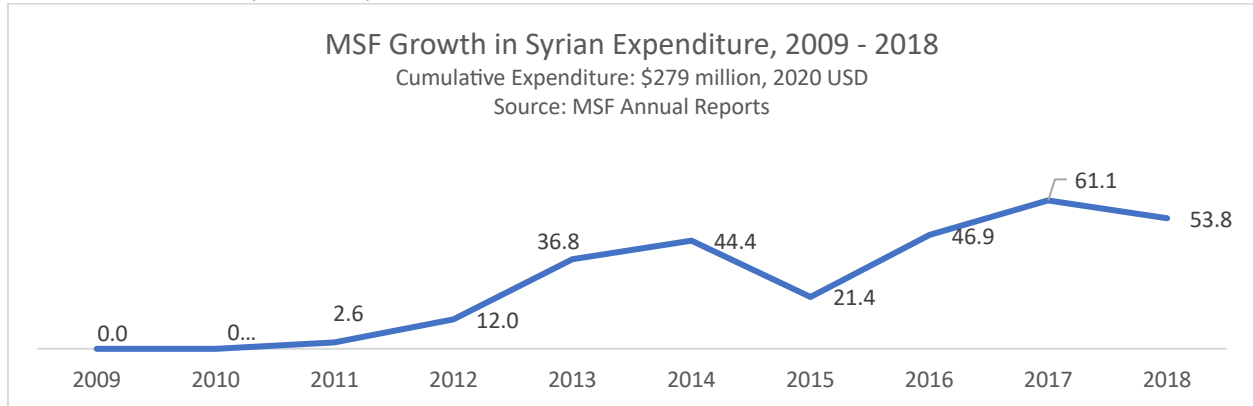
Médecins Sans Frontières

Médecins Sans Frontières or Doctors Without Borders was founded in 1971 in Paris by a group of journalists and doctors. In its charter, Médecins Sans Frontières says it observes neutrality and impartiality in the name of universal medical ethics and the right to humanitarian assistance and, uniquely, claims full and unhindered freedom in the exercise of its functions. It asks for permission from regimes but does not always wait for permission.⁵⁵

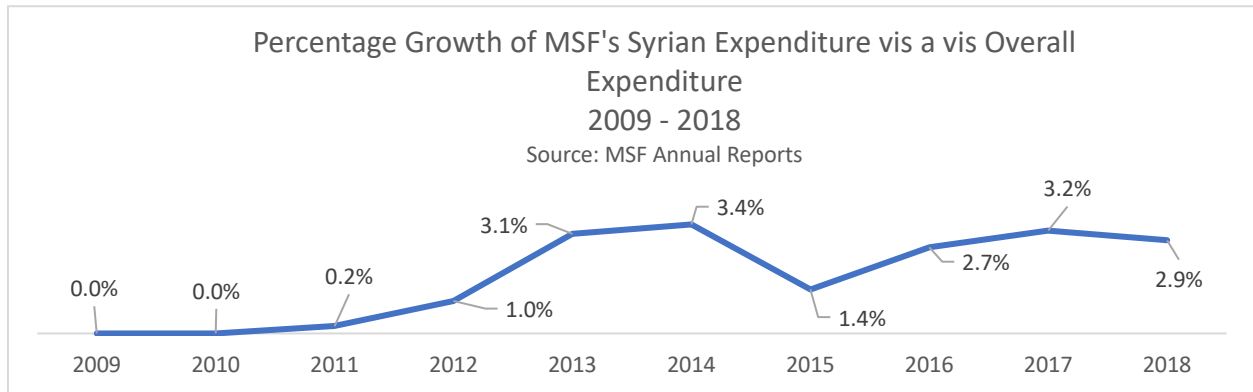
It claims “freedom of choice in its operations, and the duration and means in carrying them out” as a fundamental principle.⁵⁶ We have seen this principle at work in their Syrian presence.

Prior to the Arab Spring, MSF had less than five people working in Syria, mostly seeing to the needs of Iraqi refugees coming into the country. Starting in 2011, we see a steep curve showing the exponential growth of their involvement in Syria. Because of attacks on MSF-supported hospitals, MSF reduces its investment in the area, but by 2017 readjusts its involvement towards an ever increasing upward curve. MSF receives the vast majority of its funding from private sector fundraising.

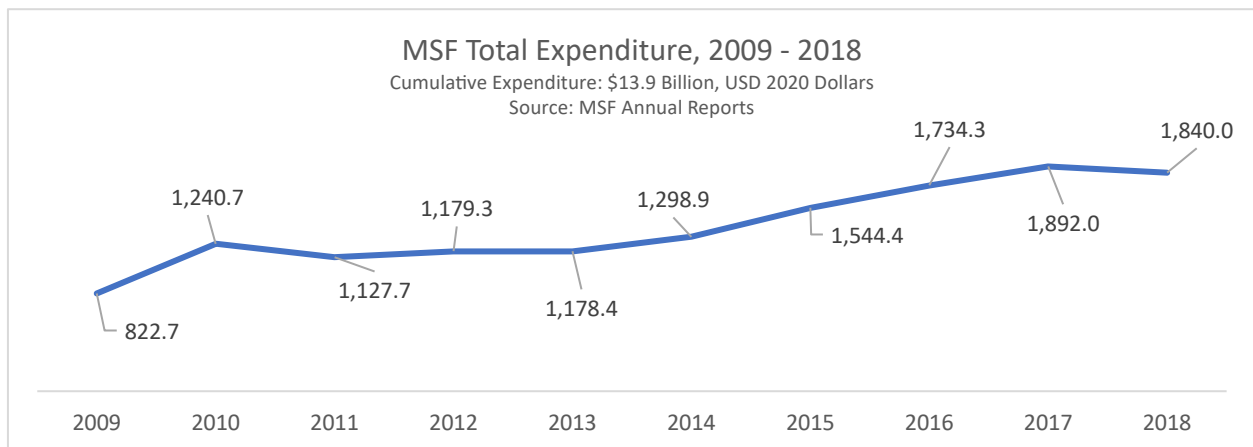
MSF Growth in Syrian Expenditure, 2009 - 2018



Percentage Growth of MSF's Syrian Expenditure vis a vis Overall Expenditure, 2009 - 2018



MSF Growth in Total Expenditures, 2009 - 2018



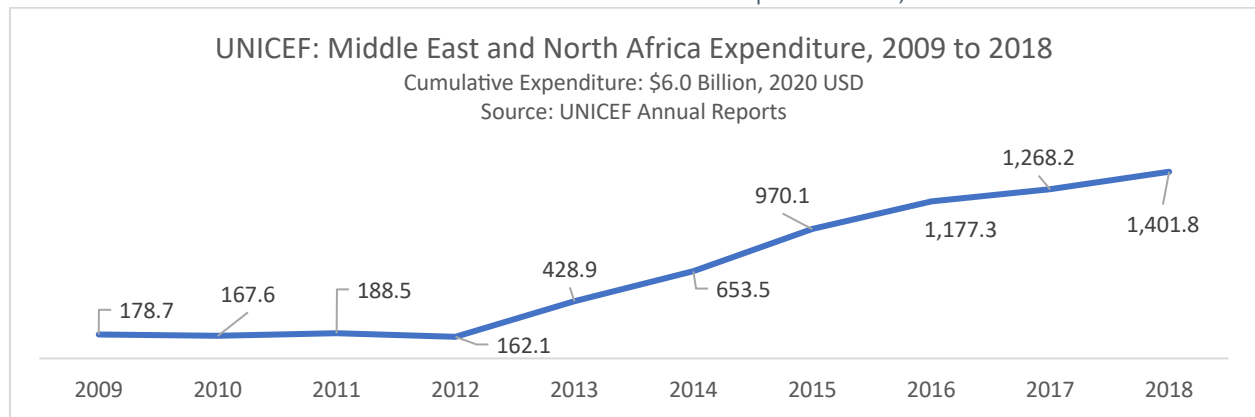
UNICEF

UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund, is an agency of the United Nations created in 1946 to provide immediate relief to children and mothers affected by the second world war.

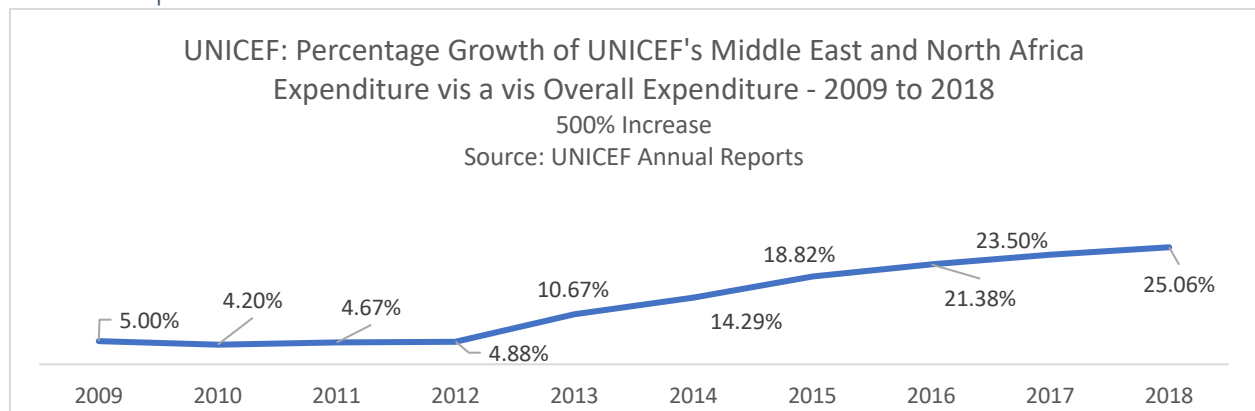
Headquartered in New York City, it works in “192 countries and territories to save children’s lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence.”⁵⁷ UNICEF feels that part of their strength comes from being able to engage with the governments of the nations in which they work.⁵⁸ They are funded through voluntary donations from government (about 70% of revenue) and private sector fundraising.

The operations of UNICEF are broken up into six regional areas. The Arab Republic of Syria falls under the Middle East and North Africa portfolio. In tracking UNICEF’s investment into the Middle East and North Africa portfolio, we see a pattern similar to MSF and ICRC. Exponential growth after the Arab Spring and continues as the organization plateaus at a very high level.

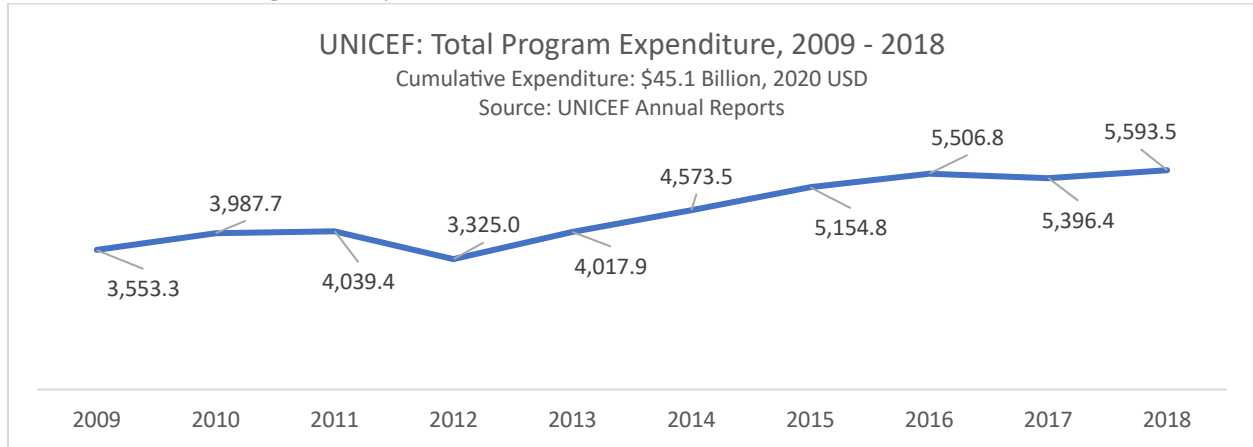
UNICEF: Growth in Middle East and North Africa Expenditure, 2009 to 2018



Percentage Growth of UNICEF's Middle East and North Africa Expenditure vis a vis Overall Expenditure - 2009 to 2018



UNICEF: Total Program Expenditure, 2009 – 2018



The Peace Dividend

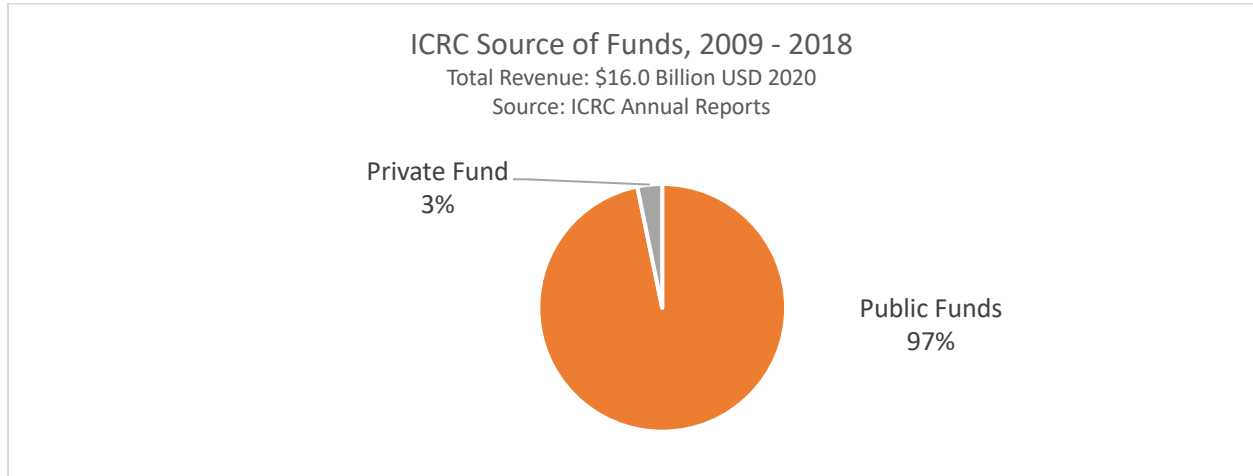
The idea of a 'peace dividend'⁵⁹ was something popularized after the end of the Cold War. With reduced spending on the military, the idea was that countries would be able to invest in social programs and cut taxes. In the world of iNGOs, a period of peace allows humanitarian organizations to increase literacy rates, lower maternal mortality rates, reduce inequality and strengthen the social fabric.

By looking at the increasing portion of their budget the three iNGOS featured in this study had to invest in Syria (UNICEF from 5% to 25%; MSF from 0% to 3%; ICRC from .12% to 10.5%) with no substantive increase in revenue, you can see that the urgency of war not only takes away from the people directed by the conflict, but reduces the amount of progress that can be made two continents away.

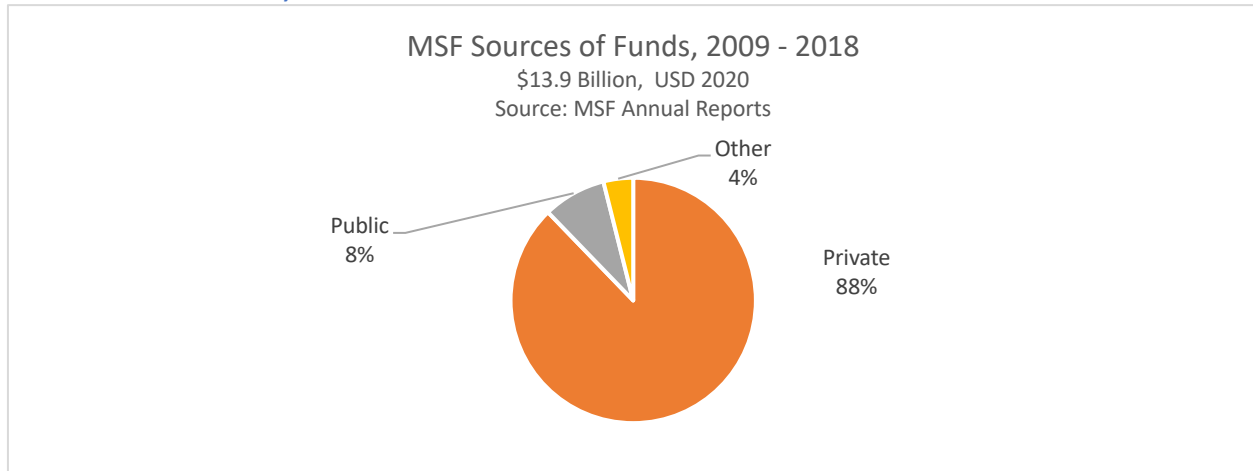
Each iNGO featured in this report has their own revenue model. The ICRC relies most heavily on the voluntary investment from donor countries with 3% raised through private sector fundraising (\$517.8 million from 2009 - 2018), whereas MSF raises 88% from private sector donations (\$12.2 billion from 2009 – 2018). UNICEF raised 28% of its revenue from private sector fundraising (\$13.5 billion from 2009 - 2018) with 61% of its revenue coming from voluntary investment of donor countries.

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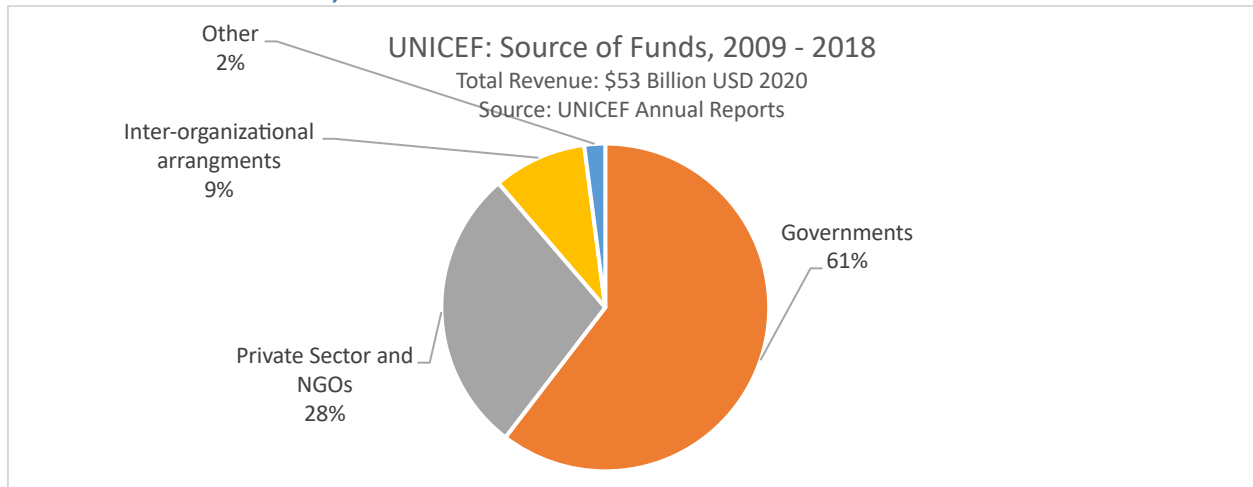
ICRC Source of Funds, 2009 – 2018



MSF Source of Funds, 2009 - 2018



UNICEF: Source of Funds, 2009 - 2018



2020: ‘Syria’s carnage nears a horrific climax’

While this report covers the years from 2009 to 2018, the violence in Syria continues and now, with the regime controlling almost the entire country, “Syria’s carnage nears a horrific climax” according to an editorial in the *Washington Post* on February 26, 2020.⁶⁰

“According to the United Nations, some 900,000 people have fled a new offensive, including air strikes by forces of the regime of Bashar al-Assad and its Russian and Iranian allies since December.

The *New York Times* suggested on February 18, 2020,⁶¹ “the attack seems to be a bid to cut supply lines from Turkey to areas held by the opposition forces or even an effort to encircle and besiege the city of Idlib ... “

The estimates of 900,000 people in flight include 500,000 children. Most of these civilians are crammed into a narrow strip of territory near the Turkish border, which is sealed. Many have no shelter from bitterly cold weather,” the newspaper reports.⁶² “Russian and Syrian planes have deliberately triggered this exodus by relentlessly bombing civilian targets in Idlib, which has been the largest remaining stronghold of anti-Assad forces.”

On February 28, 2020, MSF announced plans to scale up its response in the region, providing medical assistance and distributing humanitarian goods, such as tents and blankets.

“Our ability to step up assistance depends on a steady supply of items reaching northwest Syria,” it said in a press release,⁶³ “and MSF asks Turkish authorities to enable the passage of staff and supplies into Syria.”

“This is the worst wave of displacement we’ve seen during the Syrian conflict,” said Fabrizio Carboni, ICRC’s Geneva-based director for the Near and Middle East on February 25, 2020.

“Amid the harsh winter conditions in Idlib, we see people trapped, isolated and running out of ways to cope. It’s completely unacceptable.

“We urge the parties involved to allow civilians to move to safety, either within the areas they control or across the front lines. This safeguards their lives, dignity, health, and well-being,” Mr. Carboni said.

In February 2020, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore spent time in Gaziantep, Turkey, where she visited the humanitarian logistics hub in Bab Al Hawa on the border with Syria.

“Sending aid across Syria’s borders has been a lifeline for vulnerable families,” Fore said. “Nine years since the conflict started, five million children still need aid. We must help them at all

costs. We are deeply grateful to our local partners on the ground for their heroic work – sometimes despite the personal toll on them and their families.”

After outlining five political steps member nations of the UN Security Council on February 28⁶⁴ had to do “to stand up for the children of Syria and speak with one united voice,” Fore made one final plea.

“Millions of Syrian children are crying tonight — from hunger and cold...from wounds and pain...from fear, loss and heartbreak. They, and their families, face a brutal winter and an uncertain year ahead. We must stand with them. We must tell them that we choose peace. History will judge us harshly — and justly — if we do not.”

Appendix A: UNICEF Data Sheet Expenditures and Revenue

UNICEF YEAR USD/000's	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
Middle East and North Africa	147.0	141.0	162.0	143.0	383.0	590.2	885.4	1,089.0	1,197.1	1,351.8	6,089.5
Middle East and N. Africa Expense in 2020 Dollars	177.5	167.6	188.5	162.1	428.9	653.5	970.1	1,177.3	1,268.2	1,401.8	6,595.3
Total Program Expenditures	2,943.0	3,355.0	3,472.0	2,933.0	3,588.0	4,130.8	4,768.4	5,094.0	5,449.0	5,394.0	41,127.2
Total Program Expenditures in 2020 Dollars	3,553.3	3,987.7	4,039.4	3,325.0	4,017.9	4,573.5	5,154.8	5,506.8	5,396.4	5,593.5	45,148.3
Percentage of Program Expenditures in 2020 Dollars	5.00%	4.20%	4.67%	4.88%	10.67%	14.29%	18.82%	21.38%	23.50%	25.06%	

REVENUE UNICEF YEAR USD/000's	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
Government	1,955.0	2,083.0	2,260.0	2,271.0	2,993.0	3,181.0	3,023.0	2,972.0	3,762.7	4,403.0	28,903.7
Private Sector and NGOs	916.0	1,188.0	1,089.0	1,261.0	1,437.0	1,396.0	1,457.0	1,444.0	1,815.8	1,461.0	13,464.8
Inter-organizational arrangements	296.0	356.0	307.0	350.0	334.0	498.0	432.0	346.0	859.1	638.0	4,416.1
Other	89.0	55.0	55.0	76.0	89.0	94.0	97.0	121.0	138.0	173.0	987.0
	3,256.0	3,682.0	3,711.0	3,958.0	4,853.0	5,169.0	5,009.0	4,883.0	6,575.6	6,675.0	47,771.6
Revenue Sources	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Government - (2020 dollars USD/Millions)	2,360.4	2,475.1	2,629.3	2,574.6	3,351.6	3,521.9	3,312.3	3,212.9	3,986.1	4,565.8	31,989.9
Private Sector and NGOs - 2020 USD	1,106.0	1,412.0	1,267.0	1,429.6	1,609.2	1,545.6	1,596.4	1,561.0	1,923.6	1,515.0	14,965.4
Inter-organizational arrangements - 2020 USD	367.4	423.2	357.2	396.8	374.0	551.4	473.3	374.0	910.1	661.6	4,889.0
Other - 2020 USD	107.5	65.4	64.0	86.2	99.7	104.1	106.3	130.8	149.2	179.4	1,092.4
	3,941.2	4,375.7	4,317.5	4,487.0	5,434.4	5,723.0	5,488.3	5,278.7	6,969.0	6,921.9	52,936.7

Appendix B: ICRC Data Sheet Expenditures and Revenue

ICRC YEAR USD/000's	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
Growth in Total ICRC Expenditures in Syria - Swiss Francs (CRH)	1.3	2.0	6.1	38.6	81.3	108.9	137.5	159.7	177.8	183.3	896.4
CRH to USD at March 15, 2020	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692
Growth in Total ICRC Expenditures in Syria - USD	1.4	2.1	6.5	41.2	86.7	116.2	146.6	170.4	189.7	195.5	956.4
Growth in ICRC Expenditures on Syria - USD 2020 Dollars	1.7	2.5	7.5	46.7	97.1	128.7	160.7	184.2	200.9	202.8	1,032.9
Growth in Total ICRC Program Expenditures - CRH	1,102.9	1,119.4	1,054.2	1,048.5	1,143.4	1,312.7	1,488.0	1,563.0	1,750.0	1,831.0	13,413.1
CRH to USD at March 15, 2020	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.1
Growth in Total ICRC Program Expenditures - USD	1,176.7	1,194.3	1,124.7	1,118.7	1,219.9	1,400.5	1,587.6	1,667.6	1,867.1	1,953.5	14,310.7
Growth in Total ICRC Program Expenditures in USD 2020 Dollars	1,420.7	1,419.5	1,308.5	1,268.2	1,366.1	1,550.6	1,739.5	1,802.7	1,978.0	2,025.7	15,879.6
Growth in Percentage of ICRC Program Expenditures in 2020 Dollars	0.12%	0.18%	0.57%	3.68%	7.11%	8.30%	9.24%	10.22%	10.16%	10.01%	6.02%

ICRC REVENUE YEAR USD/000's	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
ICRC Growth in Total Revenue - Swiss Francs (CRH)	1099.4	1,053.8	1,152.9	1,008.9	1,218.9	1,340.9	1,497.2	1,655.2	1,821.0	1,815.9	13,664.1
ICRC Growth in Private Revenue - Swiss Francs (CRH)	52.4	22.4	26.5	29.7	51.3	47.3	66.4	51.1	48.4	45.2	440.7
ICRC Growth in Public Revenue - Swiss Francs (CRH)	1,047.0	1,031.4	1,126.4	979.2	1,167.6	1,293.6	1,430.8	1,604.1	1,772.6	1,770.7	13,223.4
CRH to USD at March 15, 2020	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692	1.06692
ICRC Growth in Total Revenue - (USD)	1,173.0	1,124.3	1,230.1	1,076.4	1,300.5	1,430.6	1,597.4	1,766.0	1,942.9	1,937.4	14,578.5
ICRC Growth in Private Revenue - (USD)	55.9	23.9	28.3	31.7	54.7	50.5	70.8	54.5	51.6	48.2	470.2
ICRC Growth in Public Revenue - (USD)	1,117.1	1,100.4	1,201.8	1,044.7	1,245.7	1,380.2	1,526.5	1,711.4	1,891.2	1,889.2	14,108.3
ICRC Growth in Total Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	1,405.5	1,328.5	1,407.3	1,208.2	1,445.5	1,565.9	1,727.7	1,886.1	2,043.1	1,991.3	16,009.2
ICRC Growth in Private Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	67.0	28.2	32.4	35.6	60.8	55.3	76.6	58.2	54.3	49.5	517.8
ICRC Growth in Public Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	1,338.6	1,300.3	1,374.9	1,172.6	1,384.7	1,510.6	1,651.1	1,827.9	1,988.9	1,941.8	15,491.3

Appendix C: MSF Data Sheet Expenditures and Revenue

MSF YEAR USD/000's	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
Growth in Expenditure in Syria in Euros	0.0	0.0	2.0	9.6	29.5	36.5	17.8	39.4	52.2	47.0	234.0
Euro to USD Exchange Rate - March 15, 2020	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	11.1
Growth in Expenditure in Syria in USD	0.0	0.0	2.2	10.7	32.8	40.6	19.8	43.9	58.1	52.3	260.4
Growth in Expenditure in Syria in 2020 Dollars	0.0	0.0	2.6	12.0	36.8	44.4	21.4	46.9	61.1	53.8	279.0
Growth in Total Program Expenditures - Euros	616.8	943.3	885.5	943.9	952.5	1,066.10	1,282.80	1,458.80	1,616.40	1,608.30	11,374.4
Euro to USD Exchange Rate - March 15, 2020	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	11.1
Growth in Total Expenditures	686.6	1,050.0	985.7	1,050.7	1,060.2	1,186.7	1,427.9	1,623.8	1,799.2	1790.199	12,660.8
Growth in Total Expenditures in 2020 Dollars	822.72	1,240.74	1,127.69	1,179.34	1,178.38	1,298.90	1,544.35	1,734.25	1,892.00	1,840.04	13,858.4
Percentage of Expenditure on Syria	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	1.0%	3.1%	3.4%	1.4%	2.7%	3.2%	2.9%	0.2

MSF REVENUE YEAR USD/000's	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
MSF Growth in Total Revenue - Euros	665.4	943.3	885.5	937.7	1,008.50	1,280.30	1,443.80	1,516.30	1,531.80	1,281.80	11,494.4
MSF Growth in Private Revenue - Euros	572.4	858.9	791.6	838.9	899.7	1,141.70	1,332.10	1,438.30	1,471.10	726.1	10,070.8
MSF Growth in Public Revenue - Euros	77.9	69.3	75.2	82.7	93	114.7	94.6	54	29.9	266.1	957.4
MSF Growth in Other Revenue - Euros	15.1	15.1	18.7	16.1	15.9	24	17.1	24	30.8	289.6	466.4
Euro to USD at March 15, 2020	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
MSF Growth in Total Revenue - (USD)	731.9	1,037.6	974.1	1,031.5	1,109.4	1,408.3	1,588.2	1,667.9	1,685.0	1,410.0	12,643.8
MSF Growth in Private Revenue - (USD)	629.6	944.8	870.8	922.8	989.7	1,255.9	1,465.3	1,582.1	1,618.2	798.7	11,077.9
MSF Growth in Public Revenue - (USD)	85.7	76.2	82.7	91.0	102.3	126.2	104.1	59.4	32.9	292.7	1,053.1
MSF Growth in Other Revenue - (USD)	16.6	16.6	20.6	17.7	17.5	26.4	18.8	26.4	33.9	318.6	513.0
MSF Growth in Total Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	877.0	1,226.1	1,114.4	1,157.8	1,233.1	1,541.5	1,717.7	1,781.4	1,771.9	1,449.3	13,870.1
MSF Growth in Private Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	754.4	1,116.4	996.2	1,035.8	1,100.0	1,374.7	1,584.8	1,689.7	1,701.7	820.9	12,174.7
MSF Growth in Public Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	102.7	90.0	94.6	102.1	113.7	138.1	112.6	63.4	34.6	300.9	1,152.8
MSF Growth in Other Revenue - (USD 2020 Dollars)	19.9	19.6	23.6	19.9	19.5	28.9	20.3	28.2	35.7	327.5	543.0

Endnotes

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