



SYRIA SOLUTIONS ANALYSIS:

AN ASSESSMENT OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS CONDITIONS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

MARCH 2022



Humanitarian
Needs Assessment
Programme



Voices for
Displaced Syrians



Durable Solutions Platform (DSP) is not an implementing agency but a joint initiative of six non-governmental organization (NGO) members: Action Against Hunger (ACF), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Oxfam, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Save the Children. DSP currently works across five countries and seeks to support a collective agenda on durable solutions for displacement-affected communities in the Middle East through joint research and cross-learning opportunities, evidence-based policy engagement and capacity strengthening on durable solutions concepts, approaches, and programming amongst members and partners.



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DSP	Durable Solutions Platform
GoS	Government of Syria
HLP	Housing, Land, and Property
HTS	Hayat Tahrir ash-Sham
HNAP	Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons
NES	Northeast Syria
NWS	Northwest Syria
OES	Operation Euphrates Shield
OOB	Operation Olive Branch
OPS	Operation Peace Spring
SANES	Self Administration of Northeast Syria
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SIG	Syrian Interim Government
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
SSG	Syrian Salvation Government
SNA	Syrian National Army
SYP	Syrian Pounds
TSO	Turkish-Supported Opposition
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WoS	Whole of Syria

KEY DEFINITIONS

Durable Solutions	A durable solution is achieved when a displaced person or returnee no longer has any specific assistance and protection needs related to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. There are currently three recognized forms of durable solutions: sustainable return to a person's place of origin; sustainable local integration in the area where a person has taken refuge; or sustainable settlement in another part of the country ¹ (or for refugees, resettlement to a safe third country).
Displacement Affected Communities	Displaced persons, including refugees and IDPs, and the local communities affected by their presence in areas of displacement and in areas of return and (re)integration. ²
Internally Displaced Person (IDP)	This report considers internally displaced persons (IDPs) as persons who have been displaced from their homes for an extended period, and who have moved away from their immediate community and its surroundings. This definition has been chosen for technical feasibility and is a somewhat simplified version of the UN Guiding Principles' definition. There are multiple definitions of IDP used in Syria, and some of the sources used in this analysis conceptualize IDPs more expansively, including shorter-term displacements to other neighborhoods in a city, or the outskirts of a community.
Integration	Integration is the process through which a refugee or IDP achieves the levels of physical, psycho-social, material, and legal safety necessary to no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement. ³
Reintegration	Reintegration is the process through which a refugee or IDP returnee (to their physical home, home community, or surrounding area) achieves the levels of physical, psycho-social, material, and legal safety necessary to no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement. ⁴
Return	Return is the physical process of refugees or IDPs going home. There are differing conceptions of what constitutes 'home' in a durable solutions context; for the purpose of this report, 'home' is defined as a person's physical dwelling, home community, or the immediate surrounding area. It is important to note that simply returning home does not constitute a durable solution, which is only achieved when a returnee meets the reintegration conditions detailed above.

1 IASC, [IASC framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons](#). April 2010.

2 UNHCR, [Policy on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement](#). September 2019.

3 IASC, [IASC framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons](#). April 2010.

4 IASC, [IASC framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons](#). April 2010.

Repatriation

Voluntary repatriation takes place when a refugee makes a free and informed decision to return to their country of origin in safety and dignity.⁵ It is important to note that a repatriated refugee has not necessarily achieved a durable solution to their displacement. In addition, some refugees return to displacement, becoming IDPs.

Returnee

Depending on the context, this term can refer to an IDP who has returned to their home community or its immediate vicinity, or a former refugee who has returned to their home community in Syria or its surrounding area. If not otherwise specified, “returnee” in this paper refers to both IDP and refugee returnees.

Due to the wide variety of sources used in this top-line analysis, it was not possible to draw a meaningful analytical distinction between refugee and IDP returnees, although this is specified when possible. Similarly, while some analyses set a minimum length of time that a person must have been displaced prior to returning in order to be considered a ‘returnee’, given the wide variety of sources no specific time limit was set for this report.

Social Cohesion

Socially cohesive societies are systems that reflect civility and protect the rights of all. These societies foster relationships along ethnicity, religion, class, neighborhood, and region. They are characterized by trust and interdependence, and inclusivity in economic, social, and civil political participation. Ultimately, social cohesion creates resilience to escalating conflict, and can be an important factor in overcoming political fragility and countering violence and extremism.⁶

Social Protection

Social protection covers the range of policies and programs needed to reduce the lifelong consequences of poverty and exclusion.⁷ These include programs such as cash transfers and social security nets.

5 UNHCR, [Voluntary repatriation.](#)

6 UNDP, [Strengthening social cohesion: conceptual framing and programming implications.](#) 2020

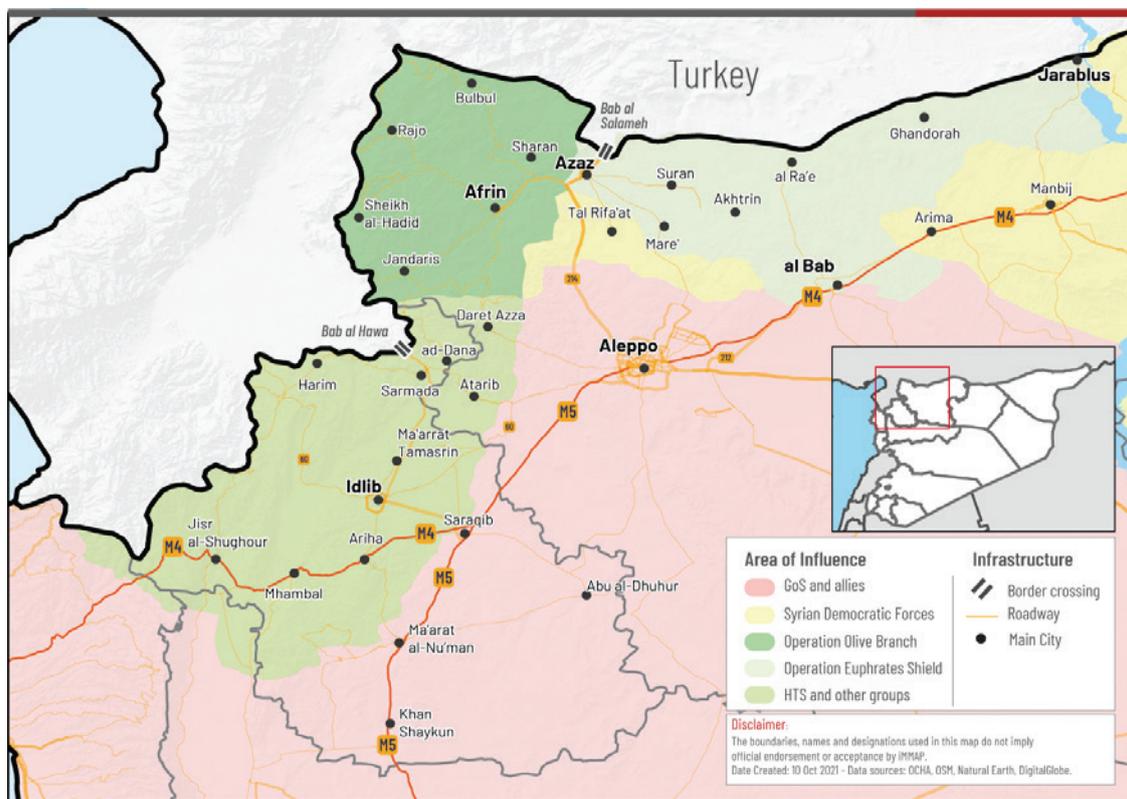
7 UNICEF, [Social protection.](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Syria is the largest forced displacement crisis worldwide, with 13.5 million Syrians displaced over the past decade of conflict. At the end of 2020, **6.7 million Syrians were internally displaced while 6.8 million were living abroad as refugees.**⁸ UNHCR estimates only **279,684 Syrian refugees voluntarily returned** to Syria between 2016 and April 2021.⁹ According to the United Nations, currently 14.6 million Syrians inside the country are in need of humanitarian assistance.¹⁰

Northwest Syria (NWS), which today encompasses a geographic area spanning most of Idlib Governorate, small segments of Hama and Latakia Governorates, and much of northern Aleppo Governorate, has been a continuous **center of hostilities** since the outset of the Syrian conflict in 2011. Syrian opposition groups first took control of the area in 2012, and control over the region has been contested ever since. Today, NWS remains the last major stronghold for opposition groups, dominated by Hayat Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) in Idlib and surrounding areas.

Figure 1: Areas of political and military influence in Northwest Syria



Mass displacements to, from, and within NWS have occurred at multiple points throughout the conflict.¹¹ From 2012 to 2016, fighting for control of Aleppo city and its environs resulted in multiple rounds of displacement both in the region and to neighboring Turkey.¹² In 2014, the declaration of the ISIS “caliphate” and subsequent international anti-ISIS operations impacted parts of NWS as well as neighboring Northeast Syria (NES).¹³ Further, the Turkish and Turkish-backed offensive Operation Euphrates Shield (OES), which took place from 2016 to 2017, followed by Operation Olive Branch (OOB) in 2018, brought significant portions of NWS under Turkish or Turkish-backed opposition control, which in some cases prompted further displacement.¹⁴

8 UNCHR. Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2020. June 2021.

9 UNHCR. Registered Syrian Refugees in Host Countries: Durable Solutions. April 2021.

10 OCHA. Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic. February 2022.

11 United States Institute of Peace, M. Yacoubian. Syria Timeline: Since the Uprising Against Assad. January 2021.

12 Reuters. Timeline: The battle for Aleppo. December 2016.

13 Reuters. Timeline: Syria conflict from pro-democracy protests to a flashpoint of great power rivalry. February 2020.

14 Reuters. Timeline: Turkey's military operations in Iraq and Syria. October 2019.

In 2018, facing ongoing conflict in and around Idlib Governorate, the Government of Russia initiated several rounds of negotiations aimed at forming a de-escalation agreement. These negotiations ultimately failed, resulting in resumed Russian and Government of Syria (GoS) aerial offensives against opposition targets, followed by a large-scale GoS-led offensive in April 2019. This offensive alone displaced more than 940,000 persons¹⁵ before a ceasefire was reached on March 5, 2020.¹⁶ The most significant hostilities since the ceasefire began in June 2021, contributing to renewed displacement dynamics and ongoing active conflict. This in turn prompted new displacement.¹⁷ In total, as of late 2021, an **estimated 2.8 million IDPs reside in NWS** – the largest number of displaced persons in the country.¹⁸

This report is the third in a series seeking to illuminate conditions for IDPs, and displacement-affected communities as a whole, in order to build a durable solutions evidence base inside Syria, and to support actors seeking to expand durable solutions opportunities in the country.¹⁹ It is intended as a reference document that can serve as a basis for future durable solutions thinking, including research, advocacy, or the incorporation of durable solutions elements into existing programming where relevant.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS CONDITIONS AND PROSPECTS

Displaced persons have the right to pursue durable solutions to their displacement. Typically, durable solutions for IDPs encompass sustainable *return* and reintegration into one's home community, sustainable *local integration* into one's community of residence, or voluntary *relocation* and subsequent integration into a new community. **The current political and conflict context in NWS severely restricts, and in many cases completely cuts off, IDP opportunities to pursue one of these durable solutions pathways.** As demonstrated throughout the report, residents of the region who hail from elsewhere in Syria – particularly government-held areas – have few to no opportunities to return home. A report on IDP intentions in NWS mentioned that 78% of IDPs wanted to remain in their current location and only a mere 3% stated they wanted to return to their place of origin.²⁰ Furthermore, given the dire humanitarian conditions in NWS, the opportunities for sustainable local integration for the large number IDPs are very slim.

Local integration prospects in NWS are also highly restricted due to ongoing conflict, economic collapse, destruction of local infrastructure, the fracturing of community networks, and other factors outlined in this report. Conflict-related violence in particular continues to be a major driver of ongoing displacements, as well as contributing to the further **deterioration of physical, psycho-social, material, and legal safety conditions across the region.** The core finding of this report is that **conditions have worsened across virtually all these categories of safety**, and that all residents of NWS face significant challenges to achieving essential protection and access to basic services. In the absence of an inclusive and peaceful political solution for this region and with an escalating humanitarian crisis, these challenges are unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future.

Currently, humanitarian assistance provided cross-border is a critical lifeline that helps to keep conditions in NWS from sliding even further into crisis. This assistance, which is provided by Syrian NGOs, civil society organizations and international agencies, helps to partially meet the basic needs of vulnerable displaced and non-displaced Syrians. **In light of the challenges to effectively work on and advance prospects for future durable solutions, it is imperative that concrete steps are taken to maintain and improve the humanitarian response in NWS. This requires ensuring that displacement-related vulnerabilities do not become further entrenched and exerting pressure on all parties in the conflict to de-escalate and find a sustainable and inclusive political solution, which could go far in addressing immediate physical safety concerns.** Doing so, at a minimum, could help to ensure that overall conditions do not worsen over time.

15 International Crisis Group. Idlib Between September 2015 and May 2020: A Timeline. May 2020.

16 Ibid.

17 UNOCHA. Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report. June 2021.

18 UNOCHA. Syrian Arab Republic: Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA Situation Report, July 2021. August 2021.

19 Other two reports: Whole of Syria Solutions Analysis, Northeast Syria Solutions Analysis. Available from the Durable Solutions Platform upon request.

20 HNAP. Future Intentions of Syrian IDPs: 2021 IDP Report Series. 2021

KEY FINDINGS

This report assesses the status of durable solutions conditions in NWS, including territories in and around Idlib, Afrin and al-Bab. The areas in Idlib Governorate are controlled by the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) and supported by HTS and other opposition groups. The areas around Afrin and al-Bab are controlled by the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) with support from the Turkish-supported opposition (TSO) – these areas are also referred to as OES and OOB. Analysis is conducted across indicators relevant to physical, psycho-social, material, and legal safety as possible with existing data gaps in order to create a shared basis for understanding of current conditions for durable solutions for NWS's people.

PHYSICAL SAFETY

At a minimum, active conflict and other forms of physical safety concerns must be greatly reduced or eliminated for any progress towards durable solutions to take place. Key findings related to physical safety in NWS include:

- June 2020 saw the **most significant conflict escalations in NWS since the March 2020 ceasefire**. As of October 2021, ongoing conflict in NWS includes shelling in the southern Idlib areas of Jabal az-Zawiyyeh, regular clashes along the front lines of the eastern Idlib countryside, security incidents in Afrin, al-Bab, and Azaz as well as clashes along front lines with SDF-controlled Tell Rifa'at area. These have resulted in civilian deaths and injuries, as well as ongoing displacement from these areas.
- The current political and security landscape in NWS, with multiple opposition actors in control of large portions of land, is insecure in the long term. **Further, conflict escalations and the potential for future mass displacement events in NWS remain a significant concern** in the absence of a negotiated solution to the political future of the region.
- **Freedom of movement** concerns vary across areas of control in NWS. Other factors influencing freedom of movement for an individual or household include civil documentation and individualized safety concerns related to factors such as gender, age, and disability. Movement within opposition-controlled areas of the region is generally allowed, with sporadic limitations. However, crossline movement to areas under GoS or Self Administration of Northeast Syria (SANES) control is heavily constrained, with COVID-19 restrictions further limiting crossline movements.
- There is a pervasive **fear of violence** among displaced and non-displaced NWS residents alike. These fears are grounded in the realities of ongoing violence in the region, including recent military offensives and shelling, in addition to unexploded ordnances (UXOs), remaining ISIS cells, kidnapping, and other forms of non-conflict related crime, which remain pressing physical safety concerns in NWS.
- **Gender has a significant impact** on freedom of movement, risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced puberty and increased suicide rate among women and girls and other protection risks. Further, women in NWS are less likely to engage in livelihoods and face increased challenges engaging in justice mechanisms. Men further face risks to freedom of movement related to perceived threats.
- **Disability** impacts individuals' physical, psycho-social, and material safety. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) often face social stigma and limitations on their access to essential needs and services. Disability is highly prevalent in NWS, with HTS/opposition-controlled areas having the highest rates of people living with disabilities of any region of Syria.
- Unlike other areas of Syria, **forced conscription is not a major reported concern** in NWS, although it may influence decisions not to return to other areas of Syria.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SAFETY

Psycho-social safety encompasses a wide range of factors including access to mental health and psycho-social services, community cohesion, and other elements that ensure displaced persons feel safe and capable of pursuing the durable solution of their choosing. Although a lack of data and overall stigma related to topics such as mental health and social cohesion make it difficult to gain a holistic picture of this criterion, available information suggests that:

- There is **no comprehensive understanding of available services** for mental health and other forms of support for psycho-social wellbeing. Some services, largely provided by humanitarian actors, exist for basic social and mental health treatment and support, but are limited in scope and may **be inaccessible to some populations** due to transportation issues, social stigma, and additional factors. Further challenges to service availability are influenced by coordination gaps between relevant actors.
- Although little is known about social networks in NWS, limited mapping initiatives suggest that **social fabrics have been significantly impacted by widespread displacement**, as well as economic challenges and other experiences of war. In some cases, cultural and political differences present a hurdle for longer-term community cohesion.
- **Prospective returnees rely on family, friends, and other informal networks** to receive information on conditions in their prospective area of return, with little reliance on formal sources.

MATERIAL SAFETY

For the material safety elements of durable solutions to be achieved, displaced persons must achieve an “adequate standard of living” that is commensurate with non-displaced community members. This includes access to basic housing, health care, nutrition, water, and other necessary materials for survival, **without limitations or discrimination** based on displacement history. Importantly, across Syria – including NWS – it is often common to see displaced and non-displaced community members experiencing similar material conditions, but these conditions fall far below internationally-recognized thresholds for dignified living. In such cases, durable solutions cannot be considered to be achievable. Other key material safety findings include:

- Programming and research related to material needs in NWS are **well-documented and evidenced**, particularly given the continued concerns that the UN’s permission to operate cross border through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing will not be renewed. This recurring uncertainty for UN cross-border operations has posed a considerable threat to elements of material safety across NWS, and a severe reduction in aid would further remove pathways to eventual durable solutions from people’s reach.
- NWS has an acute **lack of adequate health services**, although access and provision differ greatly across areas of control and sub-districts. A **lack of trained healthcare professionals**, particularly specialists, severely impacts provision of healthcare in the region, and special or severe cases often rely on medical visas to Turkey for treatment. COVID-19 overwhelmed the region in autumn 2021, with low vaccination rates and an already strained healthcare system contributing to a surge in cases that were not significantly lessened by a temporary lockdown.
- **Shelter is a major concern and a priority need across NWS**, where the majority of IDP settlements are informal and are threatened by seasonal flooding and overcrowding, among other concerns. Issues related to adequate housing affect other sectors, particularly for those living in various IDP sites.
- Electricity access and provision varies by area of control, with heavy reliance on supply from Turkish companies in SIG controlled areas with **extremely limited access** reported.
- **Access to safe drinking water is a major challenge** in NWS, which largely relies on water trucking, with communities vulnerable to disruptions in trucking services. Water prices are increasingly unaffordable across communities, and there have been increased reports of waterborne illnesses in the area.
- Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) programming in NWS has been **limited by perceptions of risk** by humanitarian actors and donors and by **available financial services** in the area, despite preferences for cash reported by communities in the region and across Syria.

- Extensive displacement, shifting military and political control, active armed conflict, and factors such as COVID-19 and ongoing fuel shortages have contributed to an **economic crisis** in NWS, which in turn has contributed to a poverty level above 90% among both working and unemployed individuals.²¹
- Due to protracted displacement and economic hardship, many communities have turned to **negative coping strategies** in order to meet their basic needs. Many residents have mentioned borrowing money from family and friends, buying on credit and spending savings. Additionally, child labor has been reported by over 75% of IDP assessed communities to support families through supplemental income and to buy essential goods.²²

LEGAL SAFETY

A legal environment that ensures rights for displaced persons that are commensurate with their non-displaced counterparts is an essential component of durable solutions. This includes access to proper documentation and the ability to participate in relevant legal and governance mechanisms, among other components. Key legal safety findings include:

- The presence of multiple opposition and international actors across the region, coupled with the **absence of political dialogue, reconciliation, and agreements, NWS's status quo leaves the region highly vulnerable** to renewed conflict and mass displacement. Continued lack of political progress and absence of assurances, capacity, and will to ensure conditions that support durable solutions will persist in limiting durable solutions prospects for the vast majority of those displaced to and from NWS.
- **Lack of civil documentation** is a widespread concern in NWS, where a significant portion of the population has lost documents over years of repeated and protracted displacement. Women and children are especially likely to be missing documents, and female headed households, especially divorced and widowed women, face significant challenges in claiming basic rights without adequate documentation.
- **HLP Issues** related to abandoned property, informal settlements, expropriation of land and lack of rental agreements contribute to widespread perceptions of insecure tenure over housing and property. Property disputes over inheritance and ownership are common, with limited mechanisms for consistent resolution, further complicated by unclear land registry procedures.
- **Family separations take place** in NWS, as across Syria, with child separation being of particular concern due to ongoing economic challenges and resulting instances of child abandonment or departure for work opportunities. Although the full scale of this challenge and response is not apparent, large-scale organized efforts to reunite separated families are non-existent, with only small local efforts reported to be working to return abandoned children.
- Displaced persons are frequently **restricted from participation** in local governance structures, and many of the factors influencing their decisions to return are beyond their control, such as security and livelihoods.
- With multiple areas of control and no recognized governmental authorities, **access to justice is extremely limited** in all areas of NWS, with very little transparency in court systems and reported corruption and co-option by political actors in different areas.

21 HNAP, UNDP, & NWS ERL Cluster. Livelihoods Situation Analysis in North-west Syria. September 2021.

22 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria: Livelihoods](#). August 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the acute and persistent humanitarian challenges facing Northwest Syria, at this point in time, supporting eventual pathways to durable solutions to displacement means maintaining and expanding the scope and quality of the existing humanitarian response. In doing so, organizations can help to ensure that conditions do not further backslide, and help to build individual, household, and community resilience to conflict that could, over time, lay the foundations of a more targeted durable solutions responses. With this in mind, it is recommended that:

ACTORS SUPPORTING DISPLACEMENT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN NWS TAKE STEPS TO REINFORCE THE EXISTING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE.

- **Donors should:**

- Ensure the humanitarian response in NWS is funded and that protection remains central in all humanitarian response in NWS, including a specific focus on SGBV interventions.
- Provide longer-term funding that supports resilience and early recovery efforts for all populations to support emerging pathways for material safety, dignified housing and other programs that respond to immediate drivers of ongoing displacement within NWS.
- Together with the humanitarian community, ensure that programming responds both to emergency needs whilst laying the groundwork for more resilient households, communities, and service provision.

- **Humanitarian organizations should:**

- Ensure that programs are designed, implemented, and assessed in a way that provide equitable access to all populations and meaningfully address additional displacement-related vulnerabilities. Indicators from the Syria Solutions Analysis may be utilized to monitor this endeavor.

- **Governing authorities:**

- Ensure the humanitarian community is provided with adequate access to the communities in their areas of control to allow for information and data collection, as well as the necessary procurements for a proper response.

- **Neighboring countries:**

- Neighboring countries like Turkey should keep borders open and provide protection and access to asylum for civilians fleeing conflict and future military offensives. At the moment, Turkey's formal borders remain closed, threatening core protection and safety for IDPs. This should be coupled with an increase in the provision of protection visas provided by third countries.

ACTORS SUPPORT LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR EVIDENCE-BASED DURABLE SOLUTIONS INTERVENTIONS.

- **Donors should:**

- Expand support to include funding for humanitarian initiatives that also contribute to progress towards durable solutions. These may include, but are not limited to; youth empowerment, legal aid, community cohesion, and resilience initiatives.

- **Humanitarian organizations should:**

- Continue to support programs that, in addition to mitigating the vulnerabilities of displaced persons, also contribute to reducing such vulnerabilities. This includes building the capacity of local humanitarian organizations to deliver programming that meets identified needs.

ACTORS CONTINUE TO ANALYZE AND ADVOCATE FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE POPULATIONS DISPLACED TO, FROM AND WITHIN NWS, AND SUPPORT INITIATIVES TO LINK DISPLACED SYRIANS TO THESE SOLUTIONS.

- **International and regional actors should:**

- Continue to call for a de-escalation of active violence and a peaceful political solution to the Syrian crisis. These are essential conditions for any meaningful progress towards durable solutions for people in NWS.
- Refrain from promoting the return of Syrian refugees to Syria, including NWS.
- International actors including governments and the UN should work to enact monitoring mechanisms so return movements, conditions in areas of origin and returns can be tracked, and to ensure reliable information is provided to IDPs wishing to return or relocate to areas of origin and or other areas.

- **Humanitarian organizations should:**

- Continue to collectively advocate for a de-escalation in violence, and for a peaceful political solution to the crisis to reduce the most acute physical security risks that communities in NWS face.
- Pursue programming in NWS that, in addition to meeting humanitarian needs, supports resilience and early recovery efforts, and provides displaced Syrians with information to assist in decision-making related to future durable solutions.
- Ensure that programming in other areas of Syria does not undermine the rights of IDPs displaced to NWS, including their property rights, but actively seeks to build protection of these rights for the future, including in Government of Syria controlled areas of the country.

- **International governments and policy makers should:**

- Establish and expand pathways to opportunities in third countries, including educational and labor migration, which could be accessed by some eligible NWS residents.
- Ensure access to all basic services as a priority in Syria and emphasize that this needs to happen by any means and through all modalities including by the renewal of the crossborder resolution and improvement of crossline access.



INTRODUCTION

This report examines conditions for durable solutions in NWS between October 2020 and October 2021. Information was analyzed according to the **Syria Analytical Framework**, which lays out 31 Syria-specific indicators of progress towards durable solutions. Within NWS, the report focuses largely on conditions in the HTS-opposition area of influence that are administered by the Salvation Government (SSG) (primarily in Idlib and neighboring areas), as well as in northern Aleppo in the Turkish-supported opposition (TSO) areas of influence that are administered, to various degrees, by the Syrian Interim Government (SIG). Within areas under TSO control, the report focuses largely on locations impacted by Operation Euphrates Shield (OES), while considerations of areas subject to Operation Olive Branch (OOB) such as Afrin covered as data availability permits.

Following a description of the **Syria Analytical Framework**, this report will illustrate the **methodology and limitations** of the research. It will provide an **overview of displacement** and the **current political and conflict landscape** in NWS. After a brief overview of discussion of available information regarding **durable solutions preferences among displaced people within NWS**, the majority of the report is dedicated to a qualitative examination of the indicators within the framework through a **solutions analysis**, which encompasses four categories of durable solutions criteria: **physical safety, psycho-social safety, material safety, and legal safety**.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The key research questions guiding this solutions analysis are:

1. To what extent do the physical, psychosocial, material, and legal conditions in NWS contribute to an environment that allows displaced Syrians to secure durable solutions to their displacement?
2. What are the primary barriers to durable solutions in the target areas (at both the programmatic and policy levels)?
3. What steps/considerations should displacement stakeholders (including donor, INGO, Syrian NGOs, UN agencies, and analysis units) take to support progress towards durable solutions in the target areas of analysis?

To address these questions, the report follows the Durable Solutions Platform's 2021 **Syria Analytical Framework** (Annex 2) which draws its design from the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs, the ReDSS Solutions Framework, JIPS Durable Solutions Indicator Library, the INGO Durable Solutions Indicator Framework, and UNHCR's Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria. The research, analysis, and writing for this report is structured based on the Syria Analytical Framework's four solution criteria groups (physical, material, psycho-social, and legal safety) and reports against the 32 specific indicators included in the framework.



Overview of framework criteria and sub-criteria:

Category	Sub-Category
Physical Safety	Physical Safety
	Social Support Networks
Psycho-social Safety	Discrimination
	Access to information
	Health
Material Safety	Housing and Essential Services
	Education
	Food Security
	Social Protection
	Income and Employment
	Access to personal and other documentation
Legal Safety	Effective and accessible mechanisms to restore HLP
	Family Reunification
	Participation in public affairs
	Access to effective remedies and justice

Example of a sub indicator:

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Indicators: Inside Syria	Indicators: Hosting Countries	Suggested Survey Questions	Suggested Proxy Indicators and Complementary Measurements
Material Safety	Housing and Essential Services	12. Proportion of target population living in adequate housing (sufficient living space, durable housing structure).	12. Proportion of target population living in adequate housing (sufficient living space, durable housing structure).	12. See indicators in right-hand column; all can be assessed in survey form.	12. For target population: types of settlements, types of shelters, types of occupancy (owner, lease, etc.), numbers of families living in a shelter; proportion of destroyed or damaged dwellings in community, compiled by context monitors.
		13. Proportion of target population living in housing with sufficient access to electricity and heating fuel in the past 12 months.	13. Proportion of target population living in housing with sufficient access to electricity and heating fuel in the past 12 months.	13. Over the past 12 months, has your household had regular and adequate access to [electricity/heating fuel]?	13. Electrical coverage in target community; cost of electricity and fuel; qualitative barriers to meeting needs.
		14. Proportion of target population with access to safe, affordable water in sufficient quantities.	14. Proportion of target population with access to safe, affordable water in sufficient quantities.	14. Over the past 12 months, has your household had regular and adequate access to safe drinking water?	14. Prevalence of water pumping, water trucks; cost of water pumping or trucks; qualitative barriers to meeting needs.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This report is the product of a joint, ongoing research effort by fourteen organizations aimed at assessing durable solutions conditions inside Syria. It was completed in close collaboration with the Durable Solutions Platform (DSP) and the iMMAP MENA Research and Analysis Unit, with technical support and/or data contributions from participating organizations. Drawn from this foundation, two organizations committed to supporting the research by contributing data, identifying key informants, and supporting in the technical review process. DSP worked closely with partners to coordinate contributions, while iMMAP conducted desk review, key informant interviews, analysis of private data sources, and compiling the written report.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This report draws from three main information sources for research and analysis:

- **Desk Review:** Secondary resources included public and limited distribution data and reports shared by contributing partners and gathered by DSP as well as additional open-source resources identified by iMMAP. These resources include surveys, studies, research papers, factsheets, maps, datasets, flash updates, and situation reports, etc. completed by UN agencies, international NGOs, Syrian NGOs, academic institutions, news agencies, think tanks, and human rights monitors.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** iMMAP conducted 23 KIIs with 26 experts between September and October 2021 with experts across a range of sectors including working group coordinators, program officers, expert consultants, executive directors, sector specialists and information management officers. KIIs played a significant role in filling information gaps and confirming trends identified in the desk review. KIIs also served as the primary mode of new information generation and support and validating findings from the research processes.
- **Private data contributed by participating organizations:** A number of contributing organizations also shared private data and reports. To protect the privacy of contributing agencies, these sources are anonymized throughout this report.

LIMITATIONS

The primary challenge to understanding the potential for durable solutions in NWS is the absence of focused discussion on barriers to integration of displaced people, although there are numerous attempts to survey displaced individuals on their return preferences, particularly in the short term. Surveys of barriers and of receptiveness to integration amongst both displaced and host communities would better inform durable solutions that align with displaced peoples' aspirations.

This report is primarily based on qualitative data grounded in key informant interviews and desk review of existing research, reports, articles, and analysis. While significant research on and understanding of key conditions exists across sectors and areas of NWS among written reports and key informants, information on sensitive topics is notably minimal or absent including topics such as SGBV, discrimination, LGBTQ+ persons, people living with disabilities, and more. Across sectors, given access constraints, statistically representative survey data is rare and quantitative data on many of the guiding indicators for the Syria Solution Analysis Framework cannot be provided based on existing and available information. Lack of disaggregated data, notably by type of IDP residence (such as formal IDP camps, informal sites, or residential areas), hinders quantitative conclusions.

In addition, some communities in NWS are difficult for researchers or humanitarian actors to access due to COVID-19, cross-border access issues, remote modalities, and ongoing hostilities. This, combined with ongoing population movements, further limited the scope of resources used in this analysis. Information and access are inconsistent across areas of control in NWS, with particular constraints in Afrin, limiting consistent regional coverage. Differences in the categorization of governorates or groupings of areas of control proved challenging to disaggregating data consistently across the report.²³ In order to clarify these inconsistencies, this report clarifies which areas are specified in reports cited, and notes where OPS territory (in Northeast Syria) or areas beyond target regions may be included in data cited.

An overview of data gaps is provided in Annex 1, as well as indicator-specific data gaps at the end of each section.

23 For example, in some studies data from Turkish-supported opposition areas are combined – including the OPS area of Northeast Syria along with areas in NWS and differentiate between SSG/SIG areas in and surrounding Idlib, referring to two regions “northern Syria” and NWS. Other reports simply refer to SSG and SIG held areas as one combined region, collectively known as NWS.

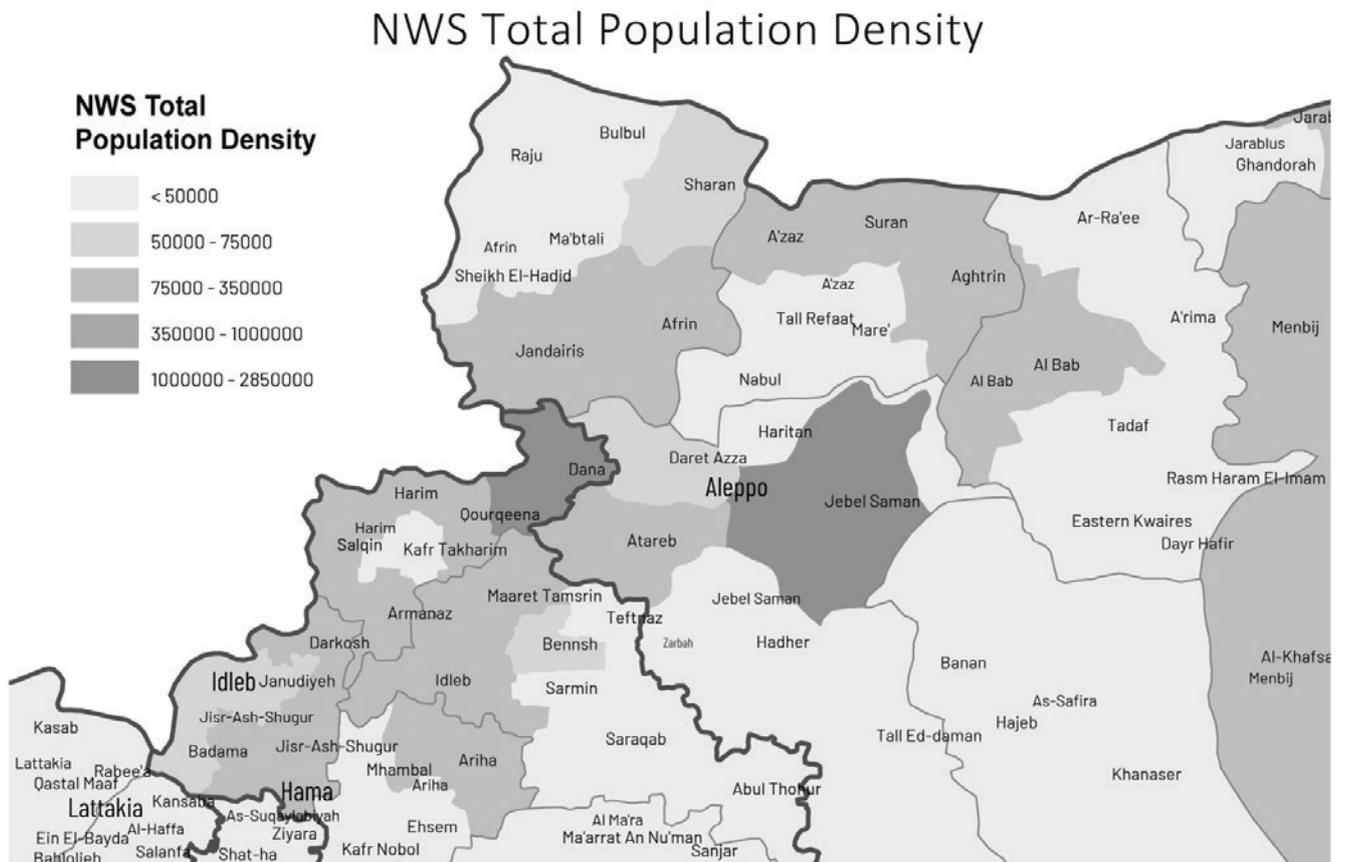
OVERVIEW OF DISPLACEMENT DYNAMICS IN NWS

Figure 1: Timeline of key events impacting displacement in Northwest Syria



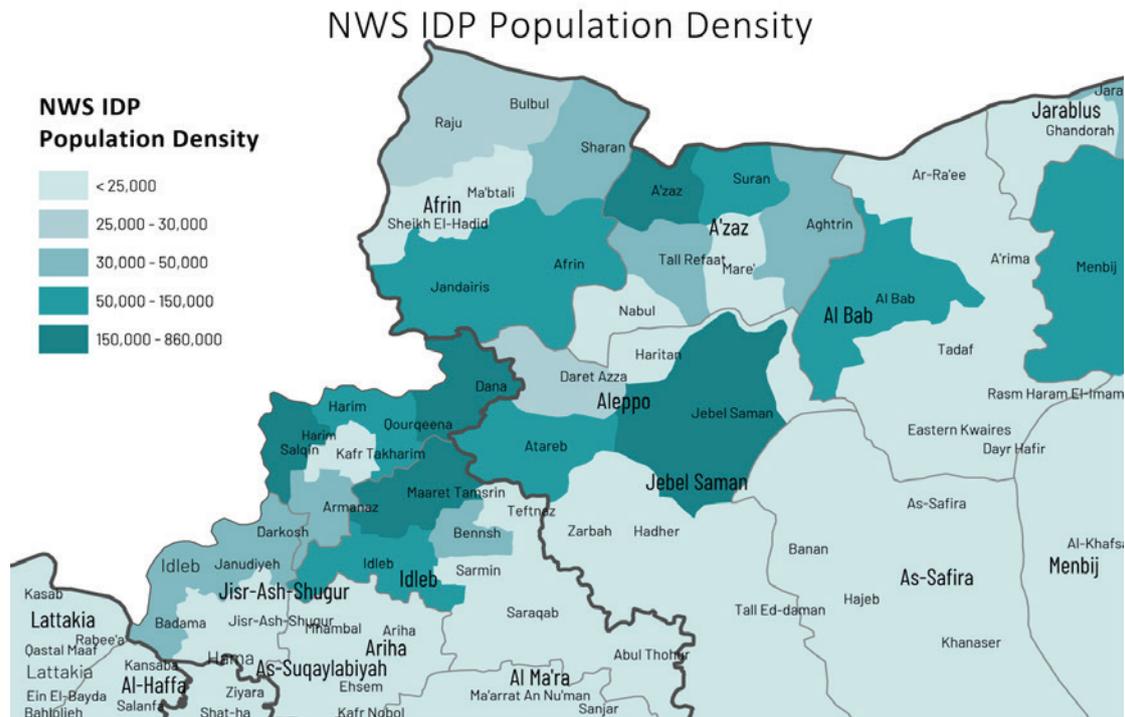
Sources: The Aleppo Project. [Aleppo Conflict Timeline](#). Accessed October 2021.; International Crisis Group. [Idlib Between September 2015 and May 2020: A Timeline](#). May 2020.; Reuters. [Timeline: Syria conflict from pro-democracy protests to a flashpoint of great power rivalry](#). February 2020.; Reuters. [Timeline: The battle for Aleppo](#). December 2016.; Reuters. [Timeline: Turkey's military operations in Iraq and Syria](#). October 2019.; United States Institute of Peace, M. Yacoubian. [Syria Timeline: Since the Uprising Against Assad](#). January 2021.

Figure 2: Population Density in Northwest Syria



Source: H NAP. *Mobility and Needs Monitoring Dataset*. September 2021.

DISPLACEMENT IN NWS



Source: H NAP. Mobility and Needs Monitoring Dataset. September 2021.

Of the 4.4 million individuals living in NWS, an estimated 2.8 million are IDPs.²⁴ Of these, 1.7 million reside in various IDP sites,²⁵ and 275,000 live near frontline regions and face significant risk of further displacement.²⁶ Of some 1,400 IDP sites in NWS, 1,240 are unplanned settlements,²⁷ and an estimated 80% of displaced people in various IDP sites in NWS are women and children.²⁸

Conflict has historically been the main driver of displacement dynamics in the region. Most recently, 2019 and 2020 saw an escalation in GoS airstrikes against targets in Idlib and surrounding areas,²⁹ displacing nearly one million people – the largest single displacement event in the history of the Syrian conflict.³⁰ This culminated in a ceasefire agreement negotiated by Russia and Turkey on March 5, 2020.³¹ The rapid onslaught of conflict prompted immediate forced displacements of residents and onward movements of IDPs, many of whom displaced internally within NWS. As such, the majority of IDP settlements and camps in NWS are informal and unplanned.³²

Although the 2020 ceasefire ostensibly halted armed conflict in the NWS region,³³ June 2021 marked the largest escalation of the conflict since the ceasefire.³⁴ GoS-opposition shelling has been reported in the countryside of Afrin and Darat Izza,³⁵ and air and ground attacks by GoS and its allies reportedly increased in Idlib, alongside “infiltration” attempts.³⁶

24 UNOCHA. [Northwest Syria Factsheet](#). October 2021.
 25 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA Situation Report, July 2021](#). August 2021.
 26 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#). March 2021.
 27 ISIMM. IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix.
 28 UNOCHA. [Northwest Syria Factsheet](#). October 2021.
 29 International Crisis Group. [Idlib Between September 2015 and May 2020: A Timeline](#). May 2020.
 30 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria: Situation Report No. 10](#). March 2020.
 31 The Guardian. [Russia and Turkey Agree Ceasefire in Syria's Idlib Province](#). March 2020.
 32 KII with Expert 2.
 33 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria, Situation Report](#). March 2020.
 34 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report](#). June 2021.
 35 Al-Monitor. [Massive Displacement Wave Amid Fears of Renewed Battles in Idlib](#). September 2021.
 36 Syria Direct. [Sowing Fear, Burning Crops: The Latest Regime Offensive Terrorizes Farmers in Northwest Syria](#). June 2021.

These escalations have resulted in an exodus from the targeted area, especially of people moving north from southern Idlib³⁷ fearing a potential GoS offensive to gain control of the strategically located region.³⁸ Other major events influencing displacement in, from, and to NWS have included:

- **Battle for Aleppo (and early hostilities)** – Fighting between GoS, opposition groups, ISIS, and various allies of these actors extended from 2012 to 2016 and impacted multiple areas of Idlib and Aleppo Governorates in NWS.³⁹ Hostilities between armed opposition groups, the GoS, and ISIS impacted territories across NWS and NES, including the takeovers of areas of Aleppo and Idlib early in the Syrian conflict to the declaration of the ISIS caliphate in 2014.⁴⁰
- **Operation Euphrates Shield (OES)** – From 2016 to 2017, Turkish and Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) troops drove Kurdish forces and ISIS from northern Aleppo, taking control of the territory.⁴¹
- **Operation Olive Branch (OOB)** – In 2018, FSA and Turkish forces captured areas seized by the People's Defense Units (YPG), taking control of the Afrin region in northern Aleppo.⁴²
- **Idlib Operations** – UNOCHA estimated that 960,000 individuals were newly displaced from December 2019 through March 2020⁴³ – the single largest displacement of people since the conflict began.⁴⁴ Various offensives in opposition-held Idlib have occurred between GoS, Turkish, and Russian forces, with multiple attempts at de-escalation and flare-ups finally resulting in a ceasefire in March 2020.⁴⁵
- **Current Escalations** – June 2021 marked the start of the largest conflict escalation in Idlib since the March 2020 ceasefire,⁴⁶ with hostilities ongoing until fall 2021.⁴⁷ 11,566 people fled their homes in Jabal az-Zawiya between the 10th and 22nd of June alone.⁴⁸ Displacement remains ongoing, with 4,000 people displaced across Idlib and 3,500 across Afrin in August of 2021.⁴⁹
- **Displacements beyond NWS** – Escalations in conflict and other push factors in other areas of Syria further influence movements into NWS. As an example of this, in 2018 thousands of IDPs arrived in Idlib and the Euphrates Shield areas following hostilities in recently reconciled areas of Rural Damascus, notably Eastern Ghouta.⁵⁰
- **Other** – Additional factors, such as economic challenges and access to services, may further influence movements from and within NWS.

CURRENT POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Control lines have remained largely stable since 2021, with regular clashes along opposition-GoS and TSO-SDF front lines. Despite escalations, control lines in NWS have remained largely stable throughout 2021 along Operation Euphrates Shield (OES), Operation Olive Branch (OOB), and opposition controlled Idlib boundaries. Ultimately, however, the current status quo in Northwest Syria with fractured areas of control is unlikely to remain sustainable in the long-term and, in the absence of a negotiated political solution, remains vulnerable to significant conflict escalation with the potential for mass displacement. Current military control of NWS is split between the following actors:

37 Al-Monitor. [Massive Displacement Wave Amid Fears of Renewed Battles in Idlib](#). September 2021.

38 Al Jazeera. [Civilians Bear the Brunt of Escalating Violence in Syria's Idlib](#). August 2021.

39 Reuters. [Timeline: The Battle for Aleppo](#). December 2016.; The Aleppo Project. [Aleppo Conflict Timeline](#). Accessed October 2021.

40 The Aleppo Project. [Aleppo Conflict Timeline](#). Accessed October 2021.; Reuters. [Timeline: Syria Conflict from Pro-democracy Protests to a Flashpoint of Great Power Rivalry](#). February 2020.

41 Reuters. [Timeline: Turkey's Military Operations in Iraq and Syria](#). October 2019.

42 Ibid.

43 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria: Situation Report No. 10](#). March 2020.

44 UN News. [As North-West Syria Violence Reaches 'Horrorifying' New Level, UN Relief Chief says Ceasefire is Only Option](#). 17 February 2020.

45 International Crisis Group. [Idlib Between September 2015 and May 2020: A Timeline](#). May 2020.

46 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report No. 30](#). September 2021.

47 Al-Monitor. [Massive Displacement Wave Amid Fears of Renewed Battles in Idlib](#). September 2021.

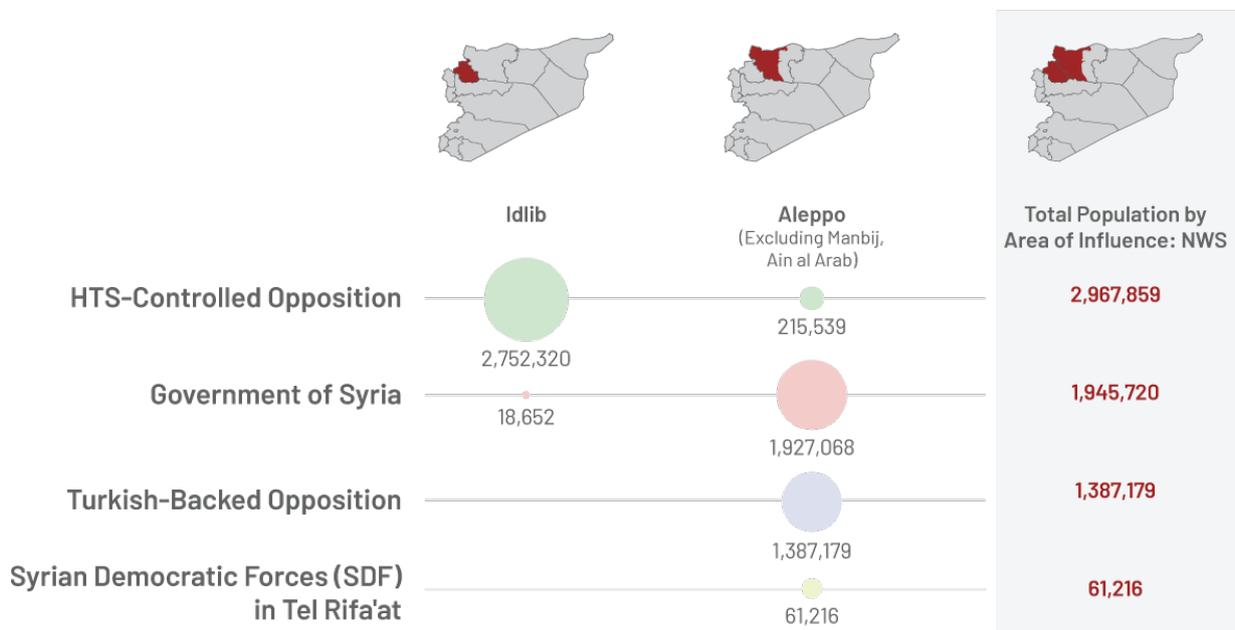
48 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report](#). June 2021.

49 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report No. 30](#). September 2021.

50 UNOCHA. [Situation in North-western Syria - Situation Report No.4](#). May 2018. In addition to civilians, arrivals during this time also included members of armed opposition groups and their families.

- **Hayat Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS)** – A large portion of Idlib Governorate, in addition to smaller neighboring areas of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia Governorates fall largely under the military control of HTS and affiliated governing body, the Syria Salvation Government (SSG).
- **Other opposition groups** – In addition to HTS, various armed groups are present in greater Idlib and NWS. HTS remains the largest and most geographically present group throughout Idlib, while many armed actors that were previously affiliated with other opposition groups have been absorbed into forces in OOB and OES areas.
- **Turkish-backed opposition-controlled, Operation Euphrates Shield (OES)** – Since 2017, Turkish-backed opposition groups have controlled territory in northern Aleppo stretching from Azaz to Jarablus, as well as along the M4 near al-Bab. This area, which has governance and security dynamics distinct from neighboring OOB territory, with more active governance and higher provision of services, and is referred to throughout this report as OES territory.
- **Turkish-backed opposition-controlled, Operation Olive Branch (OOB)** – Turkish-backed opposition groups have controlled the area of northern Aleppo surrounding Afrin since the conclusion of OOB operations in 2018. The area has governance and security dynamics distinct from neighboring OES territory, with more active military activity and presence, and is referred to throughout this report as OOB territory.
- **Government of Syria (GoS)** – The GoS and its Syrian Arab Army (SAA) control significant portions of NWS, encompassing Aleppo city and portions of Aleppo Governorate, Idlib Governorate, as well as the majority of Latakia and Hama Governorates. Given the unique dynamics in these areas, as well as significant access constraints for international actors, these territories are not addressed in this report.
- **Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES)** – A small segment of NWS, which is not covered in this report due to data constraints, is controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and affiliated AANES. This area includes and is largely referred to as the Tal Rifa’at area.

Figure 4: Population breakdown per area of influence



Source: H NAP. Mobility and Needs Monitoring Dataset. September 2021.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROSPECTS IN NWS

Durable solutions preferences and intentions

The majority of IDPs residing in NWS do not intend to return home, or re-displace, for the foreseeable future. **60% of IDPs in SSG controlled areas intended to remain in their current location.**⁵¹ This was true for 46% of those North Syria (an area including OES and OOB territory in NWS as well as OPS territory in NES), with 29% and 48% undecided in each area respectively and low percentages seeking either to return or move to another location.⁵²

For most IDPs in NWS, **prospects for both local integration and onward migration are slim**, and as such displacement has become increasingly protracted. Across northern Syria,⁵³ the majority of IDP households (56%) have been displaced for five years or more, and 80% have been displaced more than once.⁵⁴ According to a 2020 study, 34% of IDP households surveyed in SIG controlled and 38% in SSG controlled Idlib **had attempted to return to their area of origin at least once since their first displacement** with an average of two attempts.⁵⁵ While reasons for the failure are not reported, property owners were more likely to have gone back to the area and returned to the place of displacement, indicating that they may have made the trip to check on property and **found conditions not conducive to return**. Despite the lack of clear alternatives in the short- to mid- term, prospects for integration are not well understood as desires among IDPs in NWS to integrate, as well as amenability of host populations to their integration, is difficult to gauge, and **major knowledge gaps remain** on the subject.

These low return intentions **reflect significant challenges to IDP returns from NWS**. For IDPs originally from GoS controlled areas (the majority of IDPs in NWS),⁵⁶ security concerns pose a significant challenge and make many **unwilling** to return. Simply residing in an opposition-controlled area can put individuals at risk of being perceived by GoS actors as being in political opposition to the state, and therefore subject to **harassment, detainment, and reprisal**. Even for those who are willing, return from opposition-controlled areas to GoS-controlled areas includes the need to travel crossline and, in many cases, prove the absence of any real or perceived opposition to be able to obtain security clearances necessary for return – **an impossibility for many**.⁵⁷ For IDPs who have fled internally – from their community of origin in NWS to a different community in NWS – return may be more accessible. However, local conditions may still pose significant barriers, including ongoing or anticipated conflict, poor economic conditions, and lack of availability of adequate housing and basic services in areas of origin.

Refugee preferences and intentions

Although it is believed to be the long-term aspiration of the vast majority of Syrian refugees to **eventually return home**⁵⁸ from their places of displacement,⁵⁹ **only 2.4% of Syrian refugees surveyed in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt intended to return to Syria** over the next 12 months.⁶⁰ There is **no comprehensive data** on the return intentions of displaced Syrians living in Turkey,⁶¹ the only country bordering NWS. However, UNHCR estimates that there have been 15,703 voluntary returns from Turkey to Syria in 2021 as of 31 August.⁶² Turkey has also reportedly deported thousands of Syrians in recent years.⁶³ Deportations are ongoing, with the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing reporting 777 deportations of Syrians through the border in October 2021.⁶⁴

51 HNAP. IDP Report Series 2020: Past, Present, and Future Intentions. December 2020.

52 Ibid.

53 North Syria in the cited study also included OPS territory in NES.

54 HNAP. IDP Report Series 2020: Past, Present, and Future Intentions. December 2020.

55 HNAP. IDP Report Series 2020: Past, Present, and Future Intentions. December 2020.

56 HNAP. IDP Report Series 2020: Past, Present, and Future Intentions. December 2020.

57 RCM. Northwest, Central, and Southern Syria Return and Reintegration Profiles. 2020.

58 70% of those not intending to return to Syria or move to a third country in the next 12 months indicated they aspired to eventually return to Syria. UNHCR. [Sixth Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions & Intentions on Return to Syria](#). March 2021.

59 UNHCR. [UNHCR Statement on the Return of Displaced Syrians](#). July 2021.

60 UNHCR. [Sixth Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions & Intentions on Return to Syria](#). March 2021.

61 iMMAP. Thematic Report 3: Return Pathways from Turkey to Syria. April 2021.

62 While detailed data on location of return is not available, Aleppo and Idlib are, by a notable margin, the top two governorates of origin across all reported voluntary returnees in 2021. UNHCR. Durable Solutions Dashboard. August 2021.

63 SJAC. [The State of Justice: Syria 2021](#). March 2021.

64 Bab Al-Hawa Border Crossing Statistics Department. [Monthly Infographic](#). August, September, October 2021.

Given these intentions, preferences, and prospects, this durable solutions analysis focuses on information most relevant to prospects for returns of IDPs originally from NWS who are displaced within NWS, and mid-term integration prospects for IDPs from other areas where return is impossible or dangerous.

Conflict and Prospects for Durable Solutions

Securing durable solutions on a large scale is typically predicated on joint planning and programming among NGO, UN, and government actors, among other relevant stakeholders. This often includes bringing stakeholders together to conduct area-based analyses and strategies for facilitating return, relocation, or local integration that is voluntary, dignified, and sustainable. As such, durable solutions opportunities generally begin to manifest during in the humanitarian-development *nexus* space.

NWS continues to experience ongoing conflict, with the high potential for future escalations in hostilities and subsequent large-scale displacement of civilians. As demonstrated throughout this report, ongoing hostilities have contributed to acute humanitarian emergency conditions across much of the region, with displaced persons afforded few options to move abroad or to other parts of Syria. In such conditions, it is very difficult for effective durable solutions work to be undertaken.

Despite the lack of durable solutions prospects in NWS today, it is possible that changes to political and conflict dynamics in the future may open future opportunities, particularly within Syria. However, as this report demonstrates, the current context continues to perpetuate or increase displacement, continuing to frustrate current possibilities for durable solutions work at the larger scale.



SOLUTIONS ANALYSIS

The remainder of this report is organized according to the categories, sub-categories, and indicators articulated in the Syria Analytical Framework (see Annex 2 for details). Due to the top-line level of analysis focused on areas of NWS under SSG or SIG, as well as an overall lack of representative data, it is not possible to generate specific measures against the indicators. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, the indicators function as guidelines for analysis rather than quantifiable benchmarks. Key knowledge gaps are highlighted at the end of each section and expanded upon in more detail in Annex 1.

PHYSICAL SAFETY

Category	Indicator Topic
Physical Safety	Freedom of Movement
	Physical Violence
	SGBV
	Feeling safe in the community
	Concern about future forced displacement
	Force conscription or recruitment into armed groups

Physical safety is often a prerequisite to the improvement of other conditions relevant to durable solutions. An environment that is physically safe for displacement-affected communities means that all residents are free from unusual degrees of physical violence, are free to move as needed within and between communities, and perceive their communities to be safe, among other factors. Moreover, it is essential that displaced persons’ experiences of physical safety are commensurate with those of their non-displaced neighbors.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of Syrian population experiencing imposed or self-imposed restrictions to their freedom of movement.

Freedom of movement within NWS is somewhat less restricted than in other parts of the country. At the same time, movement restrictions **pose challenges to population groups across NWS**, making it difficult and sometimes impossible for IDPs to return home (both within NWS and crossline), inspect their properties or home communities, pursue livelihoods and education, access needed services, and fulfill other tasks that would build resilience and/or potentially open pathways to future solutions. Barriers to freedom of movement **may be imposed by families or communities, or due to physical safety concerns.**

The **IASC Framework** considers freedom of movement an aspect of IDPs’ long-term safety and security. “IDPs should face no discriminatory or arbitrary restrictions on their freedom of movement.”

The **UNHCR Protection Threshold** stipulates “acceptance by the government/ entity in control of the return area of returnee’s free choice of destination and place of residence and right to freedom of movement.”

Freedom of movement across lines of control

The ability for people in NWS to travel to GoS areas is highly limited. While crossline crossings do operate in select areas of the opposition-GoS borders in NWS, most people are unwilling to make this journey fearing being targeted for having opposition affiliations and subject to protection risks travelling through GoS checkpoints and throughout GoS-areas of control.⁶⁵ Further, persons who hope to return to their areas of origin in GoS areas must often obtain security clearances in advance, clearing them of any opposition affiliations – an impossibility for many.⁶⁶ Since the onset of COVID-19 the crossings have also been subjected to prolonged closures, also limiting movement.⁶⁷

Freedom of Movement within NWS

Compared to other areas of Syria, freedom of movement within NWS is relatively less restricted. In a 2020 survey of displaced and non-displaced NWS residents, **20% of respondents reported restrictions on their freedom of movement**, compared to 58% at the Whole of Syria (WoS) level.⁶⁸ For persons reporting barriers to freedom of movement, the most commonly reported factors were limitations imposed by a spouse, family member, or community.⁶⁹ These **social constraints primarily impacted women and girls**, and to a lesser extent, boys under the age of 18, while they were rarely reported by men.⁷⁰

Northern Aleppo has a **large number of checkpoints** which are reported to impact freedom of movement,⁷¹ with roads “choked” by SNA and Military Police checkpoints.⁷² The prevalence of checkpoints makes it difficult for people lacking civil documents (such as IDPs) to travel freely in the region.⁷³ The M5 highway is only accessible from Bab al-Salama to Azaz, and **other routes are restricted** due to poor maintenance conditions and are limited to two lanes.⁷⁴ Within Idlib, individuals are reportedly able to move without significant formal restrictions,⁷⁵ although safety concerns may prompt self-imposed restrictions. There are no reports of restrictions imposed on leaving IDP camps or settlements. Despite closures of crossline crossings due to COVID-19 restrictions, **internal crossing points between different areas of NWS largely remained open**, with only sporadic closures.⁷⁶ Overall, COVID-19 related safety measures posed **greater barriers to movement in northern Aleppo than in Idlib**, although they were not significantly reported in either area,⁷⁷ with the exception of a temporary lockdown by the SIG in October 2021.⁷⁸

Travel through the Turkish Border

International border crossings with Turkey have been prone to COVID-19 related closures, with the Bab al-Hawa crossing partially reopened in July of 2020 to allow the crossing of humanitarian workers and emergency medical cases.⁷⁹ Crossing restrictions were lifted in March of 2021, however formal crossings of Syrians without Turkish citizenship or residency remains limited.⁸⁰ In Jarablus, the border crossing was temporarily closed even for Turkish citizens, and the Government of Turkey has **asked health organizations to reduce the number of health workers crossing borders** and instituted other measures such as PCR and vaccine requirements to enter Syria.⁸¹

65 KII with expert 10.

66 RCM NWS and Northern Syria Return and Reintegration Profiles. 2021

67 KII with expert 10.

68 Syria Protection Cluster. [Movement Restrictions- MSNA 2020](#). Accessed September 2021.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 European University Institute - Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: Sinane Hatahet. The Recovery of the Local Economy in Northern Aleppo: Reality and Challenges. March 2021.

73 Syria Protection Cluster. [Movement Restrictions- MSNA 2020](#). Accessed September 2021.

74 European University Institute - Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: Sinane Hatahet. The Recovery of the Local Economy in Northern Aleppo: Reality and Challenges. March 2021.

75 KII with Expert 16.

76 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: COVID-19 Response Update No.11](#). October 2020.

77 Syria Protection Cluster. [Movement Restrictions- MSNA 2020](#). Accessed September 2021.

78 الحكومة السورية المؤقتة، [الحكومة السورية المؤقتة تتخذ إجراءات جديدة للحد من إنتشار فيروس كورونا في المناطق المحررة](#). أكتوبر 2021.

79 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: COVID-19 Humanitarian Update No. 15](#). July 2020.

80 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Cross-border Humanitarian Reach and Activities from Turkey](#). March 2021.

81 KII with Expert 21.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Extent of detainment at checkpoints across NWS
- Frequency of detainment due to lack of civil documentation
- Impact of current escalations on freedom of movement

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND FEELING SAFE**Guiding Indicators:**

- Proportion of Syrians who report that they, or a relative or friend, have been subjected to physical violence in the previous 12 months.
- Proportion of Syrians feeling safe in their places of residence.

Physical **safety and security incidents are a concern across NWS**, with ongoing active conflict and the risk of further escalation unexploded ordnances (UXOs), IEDs, ISIS cells, and numerous other threats complicating the pursuit of durable solutions in the region. Summer 2021 saw the **largest escalation of violence** in the region since the March 2020 ceasefire agreement, with conflict primarily affecting residents of southern Idlib.⁸²

Safety Concerns in Areas Under SIG Control

The security situation in OES and OOB regions remains unstable, with **ISIS cells active in OES areas** in particular⁸³ and reported GoS shelling in the countryside of Afrin as recently as early fall 2021.⁸⁴ IEDs and assassination attempts by ISIS cells endanger both civilians and government officials, with incidents such as an attempted assassination on a judge in May and attacks against police in April and May (all in al-Bab).⁸⁵ A larger percentage of communities in northern Aleppo reported the **presence of land mines and other UXOs** than in Idlib, with a higher percentage of deaths and injuries reported from these as well.⁸⁶ A booby-trapped drone was reportedly shot down in Azaz in May 2021 during an attempted assassination, a sign of potential developments in use of technology in the conflict.⁸⁷ An unattributed attack on the al-Shifaa hospital in Afrin in June 2021 killed numerous civilians, resulting in the suspension of operations at the facility.⁸⁸

The **IASC Framework** specifies that physical safety is considered an aspect of IDPs' long-term security. "While absolute safety and security may often not be achievable, IDPs must not be the subject of attacks, harassment, intimidation, persecution, or any other form of punitive action upon return to their home communities or settlement elsewhere in the country." Further, it notes that the "protection of IDPs who have achieved a durable solution must not be less effective than the protection provided to populations or areas of the country not affected by displacement.

Syrian National Army (SNA) police forces are reported to possess **insufficient capacity** to ensure safety, with frequent salary delays and reports of factionalism exacerbating current challenges.⁸⁹ Factionalism is particularly apparent in Afrin, where different factions reportedly **limit the operation of civil police units**.⁹⁰ Non-conflict related crimes are reported to occur between individuals and

82 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report- June 2021](#). July 2021.

83 Syria Direct. ['Smuggled Death': How Booby-trapped Cars and Assassins Infiltrate the Syrian National Army Areas of North Aleppo](#). June 2021.

84 Al-Monitor. [Massive displacement wave amid fears of renewed battles in Idlib](#). September 2021.

85 Syria Direct. ['Smuggled death': How booby-trapped cars and assassins infiltrate the Syrian National Army areas of north Aleppo](#). June 2021.; Al-Monitor. [Islamic State cells terrorize civilians in northwest Syria](#). June 2021.

86 Al-Monitor. [Islamic State cells terrorize civilians in northwest Syria](#). June 2021.

87 Ibid.

88 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report- June 2021](#). July 2021. For more information on this attack, please refer to "Health".

89 Syria Direct. ['Smuggled death': How booby-trapped cars and assassins infiltrate the Syrian National Army areas of north Aleppo](#). June 2021.

90 Syria Direct. [Three years after 'Olive Branch': A militarized Afrin and continued violations against its residents](#). February 2021.

groups, with personal and family disputes resulting in armed clashes and other incidents.⁹¹ Reports of kidnapping of civilians, numerous protests and demonstrations, shootings, and other incidents were reported in northern Aleppo from summer 2020 through summer 2021.⁹² **Some kidnappings by gangs or even military factions** are motivated by ransoms.⁹³

Safety Concerns in Areas under SSG Control

Active conflict is an increasing concern in Idlib Governorate, particularly in the south. The summer of 2021 saw the largest escalation of active violence since the March 2020 ceasefire agreement,⁹⁴ with UNOCHA estimating at least 66 civilians killed in airstrikes in June and July alone.⁹⁵ GoS offensives have displaced many of the region's residents and generated increased humanitarian needs.⁹⁶ Air and ground attacks were reportedly stepped up in early fall 2021, with shelling reaching as far north in Idlib as Darat Izza.⁹⁷

Airstrikes have disrupted harvesting in the area, with fires breaking out as a result of bombings that are speculated to be using incendiary weapons – suggesting that these are set deliberately in an attempt to stymie local livelihoods.⁹⁸ Kidnappings are also a larger concern for boys under 18 in Idlib compared to Aleppo and WoS,⁹⁹ and UXOs threaten safety in communities across the region.¹⁰⁰

UNHCR Protection Thresholds outline that the “actors in control of the return area provide genuine guarantees that returnees will not face harassment, discrimination, arbitrary detention, physical threat or prosecution on account of originating from an area previously or currently under de facto control of another party to the conflict; for having left Syria illegally; for having lodged an asylum claim abroad, or on account of any (individual or family) diversity characteristic.” Further, they require the “removal of/markings of areas contaminated by landmines and other unexploded ordnance on main routes of return and in return areas is ensured. Mine awareness programs are established in affected areas.”

UXO in NWS

UXO contamination is widespread across NWS. A study by the HALO trust found UXO to be present in 41% of assessed communities in the region as of late 2020. In 73% of these communities, UXO block agricultural land, posing a barrier to food production and livelihoods in the region. Hundreds of UXO accidents have resulted in deaths and injuries, with men and boys representing 88% of victims.¹⁰¹

Perceptions of Safety

Across NWS, feelings of insecurity are influenced by **numerous safety concerns**, with active conflict, poor public safety mechanisms, and UXO contributing to overall lack of safety. Fears of detention by authorities local to NWS, as well as armed conflict, pose a challenge to communities in NWS.¹⁰² An inability to lock homes securely was reported in 32% of surveyed communities in July 2021,¹⁰³ with IDPs living in tents particularly vulnerable to theft, harassment, and assault.¹⁰⁴

91 Private Source 5.

92 Ibid.

93 Al-Monitor. [Why is opposition arresting Kurds in northeast Syria?](#) March 2021.

94 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report- June 2021.](#) July 2021.

95 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA, Situation Report- June 2021.](#) July 2021.; UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA Situation Report, July 2021.](#) August 2021.

96 Syria Direct. [Sowing fear, burning crops: The latest regime offensive terrorizes farmers in northwest Syria.](#) June 2021.; Al-Jazeera. [Civilians bear the brunt of escalating violence in Syria's Idlib.](#) August 2021.

97 Al-Monitor. [Massive displacement wave amid fears of renewed battles in Idlib.](#) September 2021.

98 Syria Direct. [Sowing fear, burning crops: The latest regime offensive terrorizes farmers in northwest Syria.](#) June 2021.

99 Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey). [Protection Monitoring Task Force Dashboard.](#) Accessed October 2021.

100 The HALO Trust. [A Hidden Emergency: Why Explosive Ordnance Contamination Must be Addressed in Northwest Syria.](#) December 2020.

101 The HALO Trust. [A Hidden Emergency: Why Explosive Ordnance Contamination Must be Addressed in Northwest Syria.](#) December 2020.

102 KII with Expert 16.

103 REACH. [HSOS- Northwest Syria Factsheet July 2021.](#) August 2021.

104 USAID. [Syria- Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #6.](#) April 2021.

Feelings of safety were **higher in 2020 in northern Aleppo** than they were in Idlib, with 43% reporting no major safety concerns versus 31%. In Idlib, concerns are primarily related to conflict, displacement, violence in the home, freedom of movement concerns, and UXOs. In Aleppo, these issues were prevalent to a lesser extent (except for movement concerns), in addition **to greater percentages reporting discrimination and tensions** between host and returnee communities in particular.¹⁰⁵

Feelings of safety in northern Syria, including OES, OOB, and OPS areas, were higher than in SSG controlled areas in 2020, with 87% of IDPs reporting feeling safe (versus 67% in HTS/ opposition-controlled areas). However, IDPs in both areas generally had **higher rates of feeling safe than in other regions of Syria**.¹⁰⁶

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Extent and forms of non-conflict related crime in Idlib and Afrin
- Full extent of ISIS and armed-group presence in areas of NWS
- Occurrence and frequency of kidnapping in NWS
- Feelings of safety by community type

Disability and Associated Challenges

Disability is an important cross-cutting lens of analysis in NWS, with disability rates higher SSG controlled areas of Syria than in any other part of the country. 35% of persons in Idlib and its surrounding areas report a disability, compared to 26% in areas controlled by SIG.¹⁰⁷ Men are more likely than women to identify as Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), a trend that is consistent across the country. In northern Syria, the most prevalent forms of disability are hearing-related disabilities, followed by physical impairment or vision impairment. In SSG controlled areas, vision impairments are the most common, followed by hearing difficulties.¹⁰⁸

For some NWS residents, disability can compound other vulnerabilities, for example by limiting access to services, creating barriers to daily activities, and often influencing social isolation of people with disabilities (PWD). Humanitarian responses to the needs of NWS's persons with disabilities is reportedly insufficient.¹⁰⁹

For school-aged children in Idlib and surrounding SSG controlled areas, disability negatively correlates with enrollment in education. In SSG controlled areas, only 52% of children with disabilities ages 6-17 were enrolled in school, relative to 74% of children without disabilities. Across the region, disability further corresponds to income insufficiency, with families with one or more members with disabilities being less likely to be income sufficient (this is far more pronounced in SIG areas).¹¹⁰

The realities of IDP life can exacerbate protection concerns for disabled persons. For example, due to a lack of European toilets, 56% of IDP PWD surveyed in NWS were unable to use bathroom facilities. Further, many reported difficulties accessing food and basic services, practicing self-care, and even with being able to communicate with and participate in their communities. Other factors such as gender and age intersect with disability to influence access issues and vulnerabilities, with female IDP PWDs at higher risk for sexual abuse.¹¹¹

105 Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey). [Dashboard: MSNA KI Data 2020- Protection NWS](#). Accessed October 2021.

106 HNAP. IDP Report Series 2020: Past, Present, and Future Intentions. December 2020.

107 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series: Disability Prevalence and Impact. July 2021.

108 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series: Disability Prevalence and Impact. July 2021.

109 KII with Expert 20.

110 HNAP. Disability in Syria. January 2021.

111 Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey)- Inclusion Technical Working Group. [Self-reported barriers to activities of daily living of persons with disabilities living in IDP sites in northwest Syria](#). November 2020.

PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV)

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population who report that they, or a relative or friend, have been subjected to sexual or gender-based violence in the previous 12 months.

Durable solutions prospects may vary within a displaced population group on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, and other cross-cutting factors. SGBV is one factor that may influence overall conditions of physical and psycho-social safety, particularly for women and girls. SGBV, **although vastly underreported**, is prevalent across NWS, with women and girls generally experiencing greater vulnerability to SGBV than their male counterparts. Mechanisms for survivors to seek justice are virtually nonexistent, although humanitarian actors have established **limited clinical and social programming** to support survivors of violence.

SGBV Trends

As highlighted in the 2021 HNO, “women and girls are particularly vulnerable to GBV because of gender inequality and discrimination in Syria,”¹¹² with particular subgroups such as adolescent girls, separated women, disabled women, and others at particularly high risk.¹¹³ Intimate partner violence (IPV) and other **forms of domestic abuse are prevalent**, with COVID-19 and economic deterioration linked to increased occurrences of SGBV.¹¹⁴ In addition to physical violence, women are subject to psychological, emotional, and economic violence, as well as increasing online harassment.¹¹⁵ Some **forms of SGBV are largely normalized**, with household violence considered to be a private matter.¹¹⁶ IDPs are often at increased risk of forms of SGBV, with overcrowding in camps, shared facilities, and discrimination against displaced people cited as contributing factors.¹¹⁷

IASC Framework: SGBV is considered an aspect of IDPs’ long-term safety and security. Displacement and its social consequences render women, boys, and girls more vulnerable to exploitation, intra-family violence or sexual violence, which must be addressed for durable solutions.

UNHCR Protection Threshold: Measures are in place so that the specific needs of women, girls, men, and boys are met, that SGBV is prevented and responded to, that access to assistance is safe and dignified and that protection, care, and assistance is provided throughout all phases of the return and reintegration process. Refugees and returnees with specific needs (including, but not limited to older persons and persons with disabilities) receive protection and support, through age and gender-sensitive approaches.

The phenomenon of early marriage predates the conflict in Syria, but is **occurring at younger ages and with more frequency** since the onset of the conflict and its corresponding economic challenges.¹¹⁸ Reports of forced puberty contributed to early marriage, which is sometimes seen as a **coping mechanism** to escape poor family situations.¹¹⁹ Further, increased age gaps are being reported between young brides and their husbands, and girls are **increasingly being married outside of their communities**, adding risks of potential isolation from families and putting them at risk for secondary violence.¹²⁰ Early marriage is reported at **higher rates among IDPs** than residents in NWS, possibly due to the economic hardships incurred by many Syrians during displacement.¹²¹

112 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#). March 2021.

113 KII with Expert 22.

114 KII with Expert 22.; UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.; UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Development in Northwest Syria, Situation Report No. 21](#). October 2020.

115 KII with Expert 20.; KII with Expert 22.

116 KII with Expert 22.

117 UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.

118 KII with Expert 20.; KII with Expert 22.

119 UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.

120 KII with Expert 22.

121 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria- Protection](#). August 2021.

As a result of COVID-19, women in NWS report a **decrease in movement** and are subject to **increased levels of domestic SGBV**, with greater difficulty accessing protection services noted in al-Bab area in particular.¹²² Intimate partner violence was commonly cited, with high levels of assessed groups claiming to have observed early marriages of girls ages 12-17 in their communities. **Kidnapping is a prevalent concern**, particularly of women and girls,¹²³ although this was reportedly a higher concern for boys than on a WoS level.¹²⁴

Although women are disproportionately impacted by SGBV, and thus the main population group assessed in most studies on the subject,¹²⁵ there are instances of SGBV against men and boys as well. These abuses largely occur in detention centers.¹²⁶ Sexual violence is **reported against both men and women in detention centers**, however women often face the additional burden of rejection or stigma in their communities as a result, while men are generally more able to resume their lives, albeit often with lasting trauma.¹²⁷

There is little knowledge of conditions for LGBTQ+ individuals in the region, although it has been reported that opposition-held areas have attracted LGBTQ+ males in particular, seeking to escape GoS territory and travel on to Turkey or Europe (although the extent of this recently are unclear).¹²⁸ There is currently **no humanitarian capacity to protect LGBTQ+ individuals**.¹²⁹

SGBV Services in NWS

Women's centers play a major role in building trust in communities, and are often the **focal points for providing SGBV-targeted services** such as reproductive health counselling, SGBV-focused interventions, legal counselling, or other health services.¹³⁰ Mobile teams further contribute to service provision, with health services providing a gateway for SGBV survivors to seek support.¹³¹ However, distance, lack of transportation, distrust of providers, and social stigma often **render these inaccessible to many vulnerable women and girls**.¹³² There is also little possibility of survivors accessing justice mechanisms, whether formal or informal, and the vast majority (between 95% and 100%) residents in NES **do not believe authorities are working to prosecute domestic violence perpetrators**.¹³³

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Frequency of sexual harassment in NWS across areas
- Frequency of occurrence of all forms of SGBV
- Situation of LGBTQ+ individuals in NWS
- Data on SGBV in detention

FEAR OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population who report feeling concerns about future (further) displacement or forced return/relocation

122 UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.

123 UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.

124 Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey). [NWS Protection Dashboard](#). Accessed September 2021.

125 KII with Expert 20.; KII with Expert 22.

126 KII with Expert 22.

127 Ibid.

128 COAR. [LGBTI Syria: Experiences, Challenges, and Priorities for the Aid Sector](#). June 2021.

129 KII with Expert 22.

130 Ibid.

131 KII with Expert 20.

132 UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.

133 Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) / Information management Unit (IMU). [COVID-19: The Economic, Social and Educational Impact in Northern Syria](#). April 2021.

At a minimum, in order to take concrete steps towards achieving durable solutions, displaced persons must be free from threats of further displacement. However, as active conflict continues, local **fear of future offensives**, territorial change, and mass displacement remains pervasive, especially in Idlib. Along with concerns of future displacement, forced returns to NWS from abroad are a reported issue.

Current and Future Displacement

NWS continues to see new displacements and re-displacements of IDPs. In fall 2021, displacements have occurred from Jabal Zawwiya and surrounding areas, with people moving north in anticipation of a larger scale GoS offensive.¹³⁴ GoS escalations in the region have reportedly **targeted camps and populated areas**, including in more northern regions around Darat Izza and Afrin.¹³⁵ Displacement due to ongoing conflict and GoS expansions into NWS will continue to force IDPs into increasingly restricted territory. In the case of large-scale offensive, displacement pathways will remain limited given the continued inability for most to cross into Turkey.¹³⁶

Forced Returns

According to one fellow at the Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC), any increase in returns to Syria in the near future are **likely to be a result of pressure rather than voluntary choices**.¹³⁷ From January through September of 2020, Turkey had reportedly deported more than 16,000 Syrians to Idlib through the Bab al-Hawa crossing.¹³⁸ Recent statistics from the Bab al-Hawa border administration report that from August through October 2021, an average of 988 Syrians were deported monthly through the crossing.¹³⁹ Among those deported, there were reportedly some who had entered Turkey through informal channels, some who had been living in Turkey but had committed minor crimes, and some who were voluntary returnees.¹⁴⁰ However, even those who reportedly returned voluntarily have been identified, in some cases, to have been deported against their will.¹⁴¹

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Recent qualitative and quantitative information on forced returns to NWS
- Data on existence of forced returns to NWS from other parts of Syria or forced returns from NWS

CONSCRIPTION AND FORCED RECRUITMENT

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of Syrians concerned that they, or a relative or friend, are at risk of forced conscription.

Unlike other areas of Syria, forced conscription is **not a major concern** or a reported phenomenon within NWS, although fears of forced conscription **may prevent returns** to GoS territory or other regions.

134 Al-Monitor. [Massive displacement wave amid fears of renewed battles in Idlib](#). September 2021.

135 Al-Monitor. [Massive displacement wave amid fears of renewed battles in Idlib](#). September 2021.

136 UNOCHA. [Op-ed: Cross-border aid operation in north-west Syria is a lifeline for millions of people](#). July 2021.

137 Syria Direct. [‘Syria is safe, refugees should return’: The dangers of the growing narrative](#). June 2021.

138 SJAC. [The State of Justice: Syria 2021](#). March 2021.

139 Bab Al-Hawa Border Crossing Statistics Department. [Monthly infographic](#). August, September, October 2021.

140 Ibid.

141 SJAC. [Turkey continues to deport Syrians to Idlib, violating international law](#). October 2020.

Conscription in NWS

Experts assessed for this analysis reported that forced conscription is not a major concern within NWS,¹⁴² although it is perceived as a factor preventing many from returning to GoS-controlled areas.¹⁴³ In May 2021, HTS **announced the establishment of a “Military Recruitment Department,”**¹⁴⁴ with reportedly higher salaries than those of FSA fighters proving a potential draw to recruits.¹⁴⁵ This has led some to **fear for potential forced conscription by HTS,**¹⁴⁶ although there have been **no reports suggesting that this is occurring or planned,** with one expert indicating doubt that this was the group’s intention.¹⁴⁷ Although GoS conscription is technically applicable across Syria, **lack of GoS presence prevents military recruitment** (forcibly or otherwise) in NWS.

The absence of forced conscription is considered an aspect of IDPs’ long-term safety and stability within the **IASC Framework.**

The **UNHCR Protection Threshold** stipulates that “returnees fully benefit from an amnesty in Syria [...] this amnesty includes those who evaded compulsory military service or reservist service, have deserted from the armed forces, have joined a non-state armed group, and who left Syria illegally and/or lodged an asylum complaint abroad.”

Key Knowledge Gaps

- HTS intentions surrounding potential future recruitment, forced or otherwise
- Detailed recruitment strategies by opposition groups in NWS



142 KII with Expert 9.; KII with Expert 18.

143 KII with Expert 9.

144 [جسور للدراسات. افتتاح تحرير الشام لإدارة التجنيد العسكري: مؤسسة للعمل العسكري أو مقدمة لفرض التجنيد الإجباري؟](#) May 2021

145 Al-Monitor. [Hayat Tahrir al-Sham expands recruitment to all of Idlib province.](#) May 2021.

146 «الحرية. إدلب. سوريون يتخوفون من تجنيد الزامي تفرضه «تحرير الشام» May 2021

Enab Baladi. [Draft centers in northwestern Syria: Are opposition factions mandating conscription?](#) May 2021.

147 Al-Monitor. [Hayat Tahrir al-Sham expands recruitment to all of Idlib province.](#) May 2021.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SAFETY

Category	Indicator Topic
Psycho-social Safety	Social support networks
	Feeling part of the community
	Discrimination
	Access to information

Psycho-social safety is assessed in the Syria Analytical Framework due to an acknowledgement of the profound psychological and social toll that ten years of conflict has had on Syrians, particularly those who have been displaced. Assessing the degree to which members of displacement-affected communities feel safe, and perceive themselves to belong to a cohesive community, helps practitioners better understand the long-term mental health and societal implications of displacement and durable solutions work.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population claiming to have access to social support networks.
- Proportion of target population who report feeling part of their community.

Active conflict and ongoing, prolonged displacement to and within NWS has **weakened community ties and social support networks** overall, and for IDPs in particular. At present, there is little identified work being done to rebuild these networks.

Disruptions to Social Networks in NWS

Large-scale displacements, particularly prior to the March 2020 ceasefire agreement and in wake of the recent offensive in southern Idlib, **have heavily disrupted community networks** in NWS.¹⁴⁸ COVID-19 further impacted community isolation, with 21% of assessed residents reporting increased isolation and 20% reporting increased family issues.¹⁴⁹ Armed groups **dominate local dynamics and influence communities**,¹⁵⁰ and the lack of basic services and other economic factors may **heighten tensions** between IDPs and host communities and prevent community integration.¹⁵¹ With IDPs in NWS originating from elsewhere in Syria, cultural and social difference may further pose barriers to community cohesion.¹⁵²

Social cohesion is not explicitly addressed in the **IASC Framework** or **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**. However, participating organizations in this research endeavor have noted that social cohesion is a critical factor that underpins both physical and psychosocial safety.

Social Support in NWS

Despite major disruptions to social networks, many families and even entire villages have moved and **temporarily settled together**, allowing for the preservation of some community networks.¹⁵³ Informal social networks are complemented by limited formal humanitarian efforts to strengthen communities and social relationships. Community centers, including women’s centers, act as focal points for

148 KII with Expert 17.

149 Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) / Information management Unit (IMU). [COVID-19: The Economic, Social and Educational Impact in Northern Syria](#). April 2021.

150 KII with Expert 10.

151 KII with Expert 16.; KII with Expert 17. For more information on social tensions and discrimination, please refer to “Discrimination”.

152 KII with Expert 10.; KII with Expert 15.

153 KII with Expert 9.

accessing services and support, but are difficult to access in many areas.¹⁵⁴ Other humanitarian programming efforts seek to work with youth or other identity groups to strengthen communities and social cohesion.¹⁵⁵ However, community centers have been targeted in the past, with local authorities arresting center leaders if they do not agree with messaging or programming.¹⁵⁶ Locally-led organizations engage youth in particular in empowerment and community development activities, with one organization's efforts including supporting projects with micro-grants, trust-building workshops, and an initiative to provide street signs to allow newcomers to better navigate the area.¹⁵⁷

Local governance actors in NWS do not have the capacity to offer significant social support or relevant services.¹⁵⁸ For example, local councils in NWS are **primarily involved in distribution of relief and basic services**, largely waste management. They do not have the capacity to offer significant social support or relevant services.¹⁵⁹

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Impact of community centers on social cohesion and social support in various communities across NWS
- Distribution of forms of community centers across NWS
- Detailed information on manifestations of tensions between different population groups



154 UNFPA. [Voices from Syria 2021](#). January 2021.

155 KII with Expert 24.

156 Ibid.

157 KII with Expert 17.

158 KII with Expert 24.

159 KII with Expert 24.

Mental Health and Psycho-Social Services

Across all areas of control in NWS, mental health service provision is insufficient to meet the needs of a population impacted by conflict, displacement, and numerous traumas. PTSD symptoms are believed to be common, particularly among IDPs, with 99% of IDPs surveyed in Idlib having experienced at least one life threatening event and displaying one or more symptoms of PTSD.¹⁶⁰ PTSD symptoms often contributes to further adverse events, with linkages to domestic violence and substance abuse.¹⁶¹

The vast majority of community members in NWS surveyed (93%) believed that suicides had risen since the start of the Syrian crisis, with a significant increase following the 2019-2020 displacements in the region.¹⁶² 87% of those surveyed had heard of suicides in their communities, with cited motivations including depression and mental health issues, domestic violence (against women), financial hardship and the loss of property, and dwindling hope.¹⁶³ 246 suicides and 1,748 attempts were recorded in the region in the last 3 months of 2020 (an 86% rise since the first 3 months of 2020)- among them numerous children and youth.¹⁶⁴ The majority of these were among IDPs rather than the host community.¹⁶⁵ Anxiety is common, as well as sleeping issues and poor emotional control.¹⁶⁶

There is only one psychiatrist per million people in the region,¹⁶⁷ and overall service provision is inadequate to meet the massive need in the region. There are reportedly 186 functional facilities providing out-patient mental health services in some form, as well as 3 facilities providing both in-patient and out-patient services.¹⁶⁸ Stigma presents a major barrier to accessing those services available, in addition to the lack of providers and facilities and inability to access transportation to relevant centers.¹⁶⁹ Over half of medical workers surveyed in late 2020 were not trained on self-harm or suicide.¹⁷⁰ However, there have been efforts to train social workers to be able to work on mid-risk cases and below as well as simple behavior disorders for children including bed-wetting, fear, and aggression.

Stigma against mental diagnosis and seeking treatment also hinders MHPSS support. Often those who seek treatment do so secretly, and in some cases only after spending significant time at a community center engaging in other programming, before feeling comfortable seeking out MHPSS support directly. This modality requires sufficient freedom of movement, and access to the location/transportation. Those without access to such services may turn to friends and family for support or forgo MHPSS support altogether.¹⁷¹

160 Syria Relief. [The Destruction you can't see](#). March 2021.

161 Ibid.

162 IRC. [New NW Syria data finds rise in suicides as needs rise - and UN Security Council to vote on cross-border aid](#). July 2021.

163 Ibid.

164 Save the Children. [North West Syria: High Number of Suicide Attempts and Deaths, with Children Accounting for One in Five Cases](#). April 2021.

165 Private Source 6.

166 KII with Expert 25.

167 IRC. [New NW Syria data finds rise in suicides as needs rise - and UN Security Council to vote on cross-border aid](#). July 2021.

168 WHO & Turkey Hub Health Cluster. [Turkey Gaziantep MHPSS Mapping April-May-June 2021 Quarter 2nd](#). Accessed October 2021.

169 KII with Expert 25.

170 Private Source 6.

171 KII with Expert 25.

FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population reporting having been discriminated against in the past 12 months.

Discrimination based on displacement history and other factors is a threat to individuals' ability to exercise basic rights and access essential services and can present barriers to local integration or other solutions over the long-term. Discrimination against various groups, including IDPs, has been identified in NWS, although stigma and sensitivity have prevented comprehensive assessment of these factors.

Forms of Discrimination

Displaced people in NWS face **systematic exclusion from participation in local councils** and thus local decision making.¹⁷² Displaced people are also largely excluded from political processes, although limited programming exists promoting their participation in local election mechanisms.¹⁷³ According to one expert, IDPs do not face discrimination accessing the justice system, although as demonstrated later in this report, this system faces a range of acute shortcomings.¹⁷⁴

A notable minority of displaced persons experience housing discrimination, with 8% of renting HHs in one survey **noting that landlords refused to rent to IDPs.**¹⁷⁵ Despite this, experts interviewed on the subject for this report generally **did not observe significant interpersonal discrimination by displacement status.**¹⁷⁶ Other forms of discrimination have been documented in the region, including possible ethnic discrimination in areas of SIG control.¹⁷⁷ Rights violations by military factions are reported in Afrin in particular,¹⁷⁸ as well as tensions between Kurdish and Arab populations in the area.¹⁷⁹ Turkish women have reportedly been particularly targeted by armed factions,¹⁸⁰ and Kurdish residents of Afrin in particular have faced reported looting and property seizure, in addition to **large-scale displacement from the area.**¹⁸¹

According to the **IASC Framework**, durable solutions for IDPs are achieved when they are able to exercise their rights without discrimination and they are not subject to discrimination on the basis of their displacement or related factors.

The **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** specify that governing authorities must provide guarantees that returnees will not face discrimination due to their area of origin, illegal emigration from Syria, asylum claims made abroad, or because of any diversity characteristics.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Quantitative data on experiences of discrimination in specific circumstances (education, health, etc.)
- Current status of anti-Kurdish discrimination
- Data on discrimination against returnees

172 KII with Expert 10.; KII with Expert 25.

173 KII with Expert 25.

174 Ibid.

175 HNAP & SNFI Cluster. [Shelter Conditions Across North-west Syria: Summer 2021](#). August 2021.

176 KII with Expert 15.; KII with Expert 17.; KII with Expert 23.; KII with Expert 25.

177 OHCHR. [Statement by Commissioner Karen Koning AbuZayd of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, to the 48th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council](#). September 2021.

178 KII with Expert 18. 2020 الحرة. كورديات عفرين... شهادات مروعة من داخل الأقسية التركية. ديسمبر.

179 KII with Expert 17.

180 2020 الحرة. كورديات عفرين... شهادات مروعة من داخل الأقسية التركية. ديسمبر. AI-Monitor. [Turkish-backed rebels leave trail of abuse and criminality in Syria's Afrin](#). July 2021.

181 ACAPS. [Syria: Humanitarian needs in Afrin](#). March 2021.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of the displaced population reporting having access to timely, reliable information relevant to their situation and decision making.

In order to make fully informed, voluntary decisions that impact durable solutions, displaced people must have access to **reliable information on relevant factors** such as conditions in areas of return or further displacement, as well as processes for accessing different migration opportunities. As of December 2020, 79% of refugee and IDP returnees reported that they had received information that influenced their return journeys.¹⁸² However, data on how IDPs in NWS access information, the quality, gaps, and how it influences durable solutions decision making is lacking.

Informing Returns Decisions

IDPs contemplating returns to or within NES largely rely on informal information networks, with the majority relying on social media such as WhatsApp or Telegram to access information.¹⁸³ In NWS, information received by returnees was reported to be accurate or somewhat accurate, with just 1% reporting that information received was inaccurate.¹⁸⁴ However, rapidly changing developments may impact the accuracy of information shared,¹⁸⁵ as is likely to affect information regarding security in NWS, given the ongoing hostilities in various parts of the region.

Many households also seek firsthand information prior to return. 54% of returnees in NWS and 73% in northern Syria (including areas under the control of Turkish-backed forces) had had a family member **visit to check conditions before return returning**,¹⁸⁶ indicating that IDP access to freedom of movement back and forth from their place of displacement to place of origin plays an important role in informed durable solutions decision making. Notably, female headed households were less likely to have had a family member check on conditions prior to return (36% compared to 55% of MHHs).¹⁸⁷ Due to security concerns and access restrictions, IDPs from GoS-controlled areas are likely to be unwilling or unable to make such trips. For those displaced from NWS to Turkey, the pause in “go-and-see” visits due to COVID-19¹⁸⁸ likely impacted potential refugee returnees’ ability to do so.

IASC Framework: Access to essential medical services, including post-sexual assault care and other reproductive healthcare, is considered an aspect of IDPs’ ability to enjoy an adequate standard of living without discrimination.

Material safety concerns, including healthcare, are not covered in detail by the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Detailed data on IDP access to information: major sources, what information is sought, accuracy of the information, topics IDPs would like more information about, how this information influences decision making by location and gender.
- Major information gaps for IDPs and returnees in NWS by gender and location
- Information on potential returnees who are undecided or have decided against returns based on information received, and the types and sources of this information

182 H NAP. Returnee Report Series 2020- Return Journeys and Conditions. February 2021.

183 KII with Expert 18. This is supported by data which surveyed returnees at the WoS level where 97% reported having received relevant information from relatives, 69% via social media. In contrast, very few had received information from formal sources, with only 8% relying on news sources, 5% on relevant authorities and 1% on NGOs or the UN. Across Syria, the types of information received by returnees revolved largely around security, with 95% reporting they had received information related to this, as well as shelter (81%), basic services (52%), assistance availability (13%), and housing, land, and property (HLP) issues (11%). This information is not further broken down by region. Source: H NAP. Returnee Report Series 2020- Return Journeys and Conditions. February 2021.

184 Ibid.

185 Joint Agency NGO Report. [Into the unknown: Listening to Syria's displaced in the search for durable solutions](#). June 2020.

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid.

188 iMMAP. Thematic Report 3: Return Pathways from Turkey to Syria. April 2021.



MATERIAL SAFETY

Category	Indicator Topic
Material Safety	Physical health
	Adequate housing
	Electricity and heating fuel
	Safe affordable water
	Primary school attendance
	Equivalency of academic/professional certificates
	Food security
	Humanitarian cash programming
	State-administered social protection programs
	Employment rate
Poverty	

Material safety conditions play a critical role in creating a local environment wherein displacement-affected community members can build dignified lives over the long term. NWS has seen some of the most severe and widespread destruction of infrastructure due to sustained conflict, and thus is one of the regions of Syria with the most work needed to raise conditions to a level that meets the basic needs of residents. As demonstrated in this section, IDPs, particularly those in informal camp settings, are likely to experience particularly poor material safety conditions and as a result turn to negative coping strategies to meet basic needs. These conditions in informal camps are at times life-threatening, making it difficult to build lives and livelihoods that are dignified and sustainable over the long-term, which are basic components of durable solutions.

ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population reporting access to essential (physical) health services in the past 12 months.

Access to health services across **NWS varies across areas of control and subdistricts**, with **limited availability** of specific services and below-benchmark levels of healthcare workers. The 2021 HNO classifies Idlib and Aleppo to be among the three governorates with the highest number of areas with “catastrophic” healthcare needs, and NWS and NES as having the highest levels of “extreme” healthcare needs.¹⁸⁹ **COVID-19 has posed a significant challenge** to the regions’ already weakened health infrastructure, and a high spike in caseloads in late summer of 2021 highlights the region’s vulnerability to the pandemic.¹⁹⁰

Health Sector in NWS

The public healthcare sector in Idlib is heavily supported by local and international NGOs coordinated by the health cluster, based in Gaziantep. Local governance authorities have developed structures to manage healthcare issues in the region, with both the SIG and the SSG establishing Ministries of Health and local health directorates in their respective areas, however these institutions have suffered from weak leadership, competition, and limited influence and resources.¹⁹¹

Accordingly, the health sector is highly vulnerable to significant disruption of services if the UN Security Council resolution allowing the UN access to deliver cross-border aid through Bab al-Hawa crossing is not renewed, with concern that cross-line support, cannot fill these gaps. NGOs are also active in providing support in northern Aleppo however, in the years since OES and OOB, Turkish authorities have invested in building and operating new hospitals and healthcare facilities in Afrin, Al-Bab, and Azaz districts that are governed by Turkish health directorates and financed by the Turkish Ministry of Health.¹⁹² In Al-Bab, NGO supported hospitals provide 1.6 hospital beds per 10,000 people compared to 9.6 provided by Turkish supported hospitals.¹⁹³

The **IASC Framework** stipulates those relevant authorities and major actors must ensure provision of all information IDPs “require to choose durable solutions and make relevant decisions without coercion.” This may include information on integration mechanisms, procedures for returning or settling, realistic assessments of conditions, and other relevant information.

The **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** specify that individuals’ decisions to return are fully informed and entirely voluntary, without coercion.

Health Infrastructure in NWS

Across NWS, there were a total of 449 fully or partially functioning health facilities in the first quarter of 2021. 84% of these facilities are located in residential communities while 16% are located in IDP camps.¹⁹⁴ Seventy percent of health facilities rely on private generators, and 83% have fully functioning electricity to operate (utilizing generators and other sources). While services and availability **vary somewhat by district, healthcare infrastructure and resources are significantly lacking across NWS**. All districts of NWS fall **significantly below the benchmarks** of 22 health workers, 10 community health workers, and 10 hospital beds per 10,000 population.

189 UNOCHA. Humanitarian Needs Overview. 2021.

190 Save the Children. [Surge in COVID-19 in North West Syria Overcoming Health System](#). September 2021.

191 Oxford Press. Health System Fragmentation and the Syrian Conflict. September 2021.

192 Oxford Press. Health System Fragmentation and the Syrian Conflict. September 2021.

193 WHO & Turkey Health Cluster for NWS. [Health Resources Availability Monitoring System \(HeRAMS\): First Quarter 2021](#). July 2021. It is unclear if the IDP camp figure includes informal settlements, however, approximately 1.7 million IDPs in NWS are estimated to be living in various IDP sites, or 26% of the total population of NWS.

194 WHO & Turkey Health Cluster for NWS. [Health Resources Availability Monitoring System \(HeRAMS\): First Quarter 2021](#). July 2021. It is unclear if the IDP camp figure includes informal settlements, however, approximately 1.7 million IDPs in NWS are estimated to be living in various IDP sites, or 26% of the total population of NWS.

Due to conflict-related damage to health facilities and periods of significant population influx, most of these facilities were constructed after 2011, and only **25% of functional health facilities existed prior to the conflict**. Of all attacks on health care staff and facilities in Syria in 2020, around 50% occurred in NWS.¹⁹⁵ While such attacks have declined significantly, incidents still occur. For example, in June 2021, Al-Shifaa Pediatrics and Maternity Hospital in Afrin was struck by missiles, killing 13 and injuring dozens.¹⁹⁶ More recently, an attack on Al-Atarib hospital suspended services for several days.¹⁹⁷ As of July 2021, 45% of functional surveyed health facilities in the region had some degree of damage.

Health Personnel and Health Service Availability in NWS

Across Syria, a **lack of healthcare professionals** significantly hinders health service provision, with up to 50% of Syrian health professionals estimated to have fled the country.¹⁹⁸ Harim district in northern Idlib – the largest IDP hosting district in NWS – has only 8.3 healthcare providers, 1.5 community health workers, and 5.4 hospital beds per 10,000 people. Idlib district has the highest number of health workers per capita (15.4 per 10,000 people)¹⁹⁹ and community healthcare workings (3.2 per 10,000), still far below the benchmark.²⁰⁰ There is no clear correlation between size of the IDP community in a district and availability of these core benchmarks, rather the differences are more likely to be tied to conflict patterns and accessibility for aid and programming. Across NWS, there is also an **acute lack of specialized providers**, posing a major challenge to availability and quality of care, especially for services not deemed essential or lifesaving including ear nose and throat, dental, ophthalmology, and mental health services.²⁰¹

Early marriage, poor living conditions, poverty, and other stress factors contribute **to increased high risk pregnancies and maternal deaths**.²⁰² A spike in COVID-19 cases in late summer of 2021 has further limited access to sexual and reproductive health services.²⁰³

Health Service Access in NWS

According to HNAP, as of spring 2021, 70% of households assessed in Idlib had access to health services over the three months prior.²⁰⁴ In northern Syria, which includes the various regions under Turkish-backed control, this was 75%.²⁰⁵ There are **no notable access discrepancies between IDPs and residents**, as mobile services and an active referral system are present in IDP camps and informal sites.²⁰⁶ However, people with disabilities (PWD) and elderly populations reportedly **face greater challenges to accessing healthcare**, with lack of awareness and information related to access and availability of health services noted as a particular barrier.²⁰⁷

In August 2021, 96% of those surveyed across NWS reported that community members had **access to first aid and emergency care** in their own or neighboring communities. The vast majority reported that households in their communities were generally able to access medicines, chronic disease treatments, lab services, and vaccinations in nearby communities. The most common perceived barriers include the high cost or lack of transportation, overcrowding of health facilities, lack of medicines, and inability to afford health services. 87% of those surveyed reported that a common coping strategy in their communities is to **utilize pharmacies rather than clinics**.²⁰⁸

NWS residents rely on private sector services when unable to access essential health services or when seeking “non-essential” health services, such as dental care or elective surgeries. However, while NGO-provided health services are free, **private services may be unaffordable**, particularly for the

195 USAID. [Syria- Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet # 4](#). February 2021.

196 CARE. [NWS NGO Forum Statement on the Attack on Al-Shifaa Hospital in Northwest Syria](#). June 2021.

197 KII with Expert 21.

198 WHO. WHO Emergency Appeal. March 2021.

199 WHO & Turkey Health Cluster for NWS. [HeRAMS: First Quarter 2021](#). July 2021.

200 Ibid.

201 KII with Expert 21.

202 Ibid.

203 CARE. [Healthcare System on the Brink of Collapse as New Wave of COVID Hits Northwest Syria](#). September 2021.

204 HNAP. Priority Needs and Services: Summer 2021. August 2021.

205 Ibid.

206 KII with Expert 21.

207 Ibid.

208 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria- Health](#). August 2021.

most vulnerable. Some may seek visas to travel to Turkey for emergency cases (although the process is not easy and requires meeting specific criteria).²⁰⁹ This visa program was suspended in September 2021 and replaced with a medical tourism document that leaves Syrians to pay for expensive medical procedures, which were previously free.²¹⁰

COVID-19 in NWS

As of late summer 2021, healthcare facilities in NES were **reportedly overwhelmed with a surge of COVID-19 cases**, particularly among young people.²¹¹ In Idlib, where 2 million of the 3 million population are IDPs, the rate of positive test rates in early September 2021 ranged between 42% and 58%,²¹² **with all facilities reportedly at 100% capacity by late September 2021.**²¹³ The region further lacks sufficient COVID-19 testing kits and oxygen and has a low vaccination rate as of September 2021.²¹⁴ This surge in cases led the SIG to impose a 15-day temporary lockdown in October 2021,²¹⁵ although this was lifted before it could have “any measurable effect” on the rising caseload in the region.²¹⁶

As of February 2021, only 306,509 people in NWS have been vaccinated with at least one dose.²¹⁷ Additionally, the last shipment received on December 2021 with over 800,000 doses of Johnson& Johnson donated through COVAX. With a vaccination rate and slow allocation of COVAX doses the numbers remain **insufficient to reach the target of 20% vaccinated** in the region.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Extent of utilization of private sector health care
- Attempts to provide education/ training for additional regional health workers

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population living in adequate housing (sufficient living space, durable housing structure).

Adequate shelter was the most frequently selected priority need for IDPs in mid-2021.²¹⁸ Of the 2.8 million IDPs living in NWS, an estimated 1.7 million reside in one of 1,400 IDP sites²¹⁹ across the region. Of these, only around 200 are planned while the rest are informal.²²⁰ The provision of adequate, secure housing, particularly for IDPs, poses a significant barrier to durable solutions for NWS residents and shelter is currently a **top priority need for IDPs in the region. Widespread damage and shelter inadequacies**, and increasingly **unaffordable rent** pose challenges to the achievement of adequate housing for much of the NWS population, which in turn severely curtails prospects for local integration over the long term.

209 KII with Expert 21.

210 Al-Monitor. [Turkey suspends free medical treatment for Syrians](#). September 2021.

211 Save the Children. [Surge in COVID-19 in North West Syria Overwhelming Health System](#). September 2021.

212 Al-Monitor. [Northwest Syria Running Low on COVID-19 Tests, Oxygen Amid Conflict](#). September 2021.

213 KII with Expert 21.

214 Al-Monitor. [Northwest Syria Running Low on COVID-19 Tests, Oxygen Amid Conflict](#). September 2021.

215 . October 2021 [الحكومة السورية المؤقتة، الحكومة السورية المؤقتة تتخذ إجراءات جديدة للحد من انتشار فيروس كورونا في المناطق المحررة](#)

216 The Washington Post. [This besieged Syrian province escaped the worst of covid. Then vaccine skepticism crossed the border](#). November 2021.

217 WHO. COVAX supply update on COVID-19 vaccination in Syria. February 2022.

218 REACH. HSOS- Northwest Syria Factsheet. [June 2021, July 2021](#). In the same survey 60% of IDP respondents indicated that the humanitarian assistance they had received was not relevant to all of their needs.

219 UNOCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Developments in Northwest Syria and RAATA Situation Report, July 2021](#). August 2021.

220 KII with Expert 2.

Types of Shelter in NES

Across NWS, 57% of HHs in reside in finished houses or apartments, while the remainder reside in tents (15%) makeshift shelters (12%) unfinished homes (9%), or other accommodations. IDPs are far more likely to reside in inadequate shelters than non-displaced community members. One-third of IDP households in NWS live in formal or informal tented IDP settlements, with smaller numbers living in makeshift shelters, concrete block shelters, and containers, while the remainder live in finished or unfinished homes.²²¹

IASC Framework: Access to basic shelter and housing of sufficient quality and quantity is considered an aspect of ability to enjoy an adequate *standard of living without discrimination*.

Material safety concerns, including access to adequate housing, are not covered in detail by the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**.

Residents are much more likely than IDPs to own their shelters, and in most communities, there are no IDPs who own their residence²²² leaving displaced persons **more vulnerable to insecure housing conditions**. As the vast majority of camps in the region are self-settled, many on private land, some landowners demand rent for IDPs to stay on what is often agricultural land ill-suited for housing.²²³ In residential areas, rental prices have become **increasingly unaffordable**,²²⁴ with the average rent of a two-bedroom dwelling rising from 28,325 SYP to 40,098 SYP from November 2020 to July 2021,²²⁵ likely influenced in part by the inflation of the SYP. A recent survey found that 18% of renters indicated they were currently **unable to pay rent** while 55% said they could only afford it for one to six more months.²²⁶ 73% of renters reported they had had **difficulties in finding rental housing**, with most reporting that those they found were too expensive, as well as concerns around large deposits, distance from basic services, inadequate size, discrimination, and documentation issues,²²⁷ and only 60% of renters possessed a written rental agreement. Although overall only 3% of HHs had experienced eviction in the past year, this was at 13% among returnees.²²⁸

Shelter Conditions and Vulnerabilities

Existing shelters in NWS are subject to inadequacies. Those living in houses prone to cold and damp conditions, lack of heating, lack and lack of lighting while those in tents and makeshift shelters report lack of space, leaking during rain, lack of privacy, and cold and damp conditions. Across NWS, 13% of inhabited shelters are damaged in NWS but **High repair costs** make it difficult to mend shelters. and across both residents and IDP households, 46% reported that they have been unable to afford shelter repairs.²²⁹

IDPs living in tents and makeshift shelters face additional issues. Most tent residents have experienced some kind of **shelter hazard** such wind damage, sandstorms, flooding, and fire²³⁰ compared with fewer than 10% of those in finished homes. In 2021, 101 incidents including floods, mudslides, and fires reported in NWS sites,²³¹ impacting shelters, causing displacement, and restricting access to and from IDP sites.²³² Storms in January of 2021 pushed at least 20,000 people from their shelters.²³³ Moreover, 85% of people living in tents in NWS report that their tents are over a year old, and 34% are older than two years - **long past their intended lifespan of 6-12 months, increasing vulnerability to damage and hazards.**²³⁴

221 HNAP & SNFI Cluster. [Shelter Conditions Across North-west Syria: Summer 2021](#). August 2021.

222 REACH. [HSOS- Northwest Syria Factsheet](#). July 2021. In 94% of communities, 80% of residents owned their shelter, while in 66% no IDP HHs owned their shelters.

223 Ibid.

224 KII with Expert 2.

225 REACH. [HSOS Dashboard- Shelter Indicator](#). November 2020. July 2021.

226 Ibid.

227 HNAP & SNFI Cluster. [Shelter Conditions Across North-west Syria: Summer 2021](#). August 2021.

228 Ibid.

229 HNAP & SNFI Cluster. [Shelter Conditions Across North-west Syria: Summer 2021](#). August 2021.

230 HNAP & SNFI Cluster. [Shelter Conditions Across North-west Syria: Summer 2021](#). August 2021.

231 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#). March 2021.

232 Al- Monitor. [Displaced Syrians left out in rain by HTS government's building fees](#). February 2021.

233 Save the Children. [Northwest Syria: Severe floods kill one child and force at least 20,000 from their homes as country marks nearly 10 years of conflict](#). January 2021.

234 Ibid.

Supporting the development of durable shelters requires a high level of due-diligence and context awareness. Of the approximately 1,078 IDP camps in the region, 325 were estimated to be built on land where HLP rights were unclear, further complicating their situation and potential for intervention.²³⁵ On these sites, as well as those privately owned, the humanitarian community is unable to make improvements that would prevent or mitigate flooding impacts, such as drainage systems, and residents are typically unable to erect sturdier shelters.²³⁶ In areas of Idlib under HTS control, this is further complicated by tax imposed by HTS on new buildings, with an estimated \$1-3 tax per meter of building preventing many IDPs from constructing more solid shelters even when they would otherwise be able to do so.²³⁷

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Current status of HTS taxation on new construction
- Affordability or changes in rents in informal sites

ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY AND HEATING FUEL

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population living in housing with sufficient access to electricity and heating fuel in the past 12 months.

Electricity provision in NWS has been **inconsistent** since the region's takeover by opposition groups in 2015,²³⁸ and the GoS' subsequent removal of Idlib from the national power grid.²³⁹ Access to electricity across NWS is **highly variable across areas of control**, with **frequent disruptions and inconsistencies** even in the best-served areas. Turkish companies are the primary providers of electricity in many communities, particularly in OES territory, and **solar panels are widespread**. Access to heating fuel **remains a challenge** across NWS, with affordability proving a primary barrier.²⁴⁰

Overall NWS Electricity and Fuel Conditions

Electricity access is poor across NWS, with most reporting electricity for seven to eight hours per day as of June and July 2021- an increase from five to six hours a day for the first five months of 2021.²⁴¹ Solar power is a popular alternative to the national grid or Turkish power sources, with 57% of those surveyed reporting **utilizing solar panels as an electricity source**.²⁴² However, with solar panels costing an estimated \$50 and batteries ranging in price from \$70-250, this is not a financial option for most households.²⁴³ In 99% of assessed communities, solar panels and batteries were reported as unaffordable for most people.²⁴⁴

In the **IASC Framework**, access to basic shelter and housing of sufficient quality and quantity is considered an aspect of ability to enjoy an adequate *standard of living without discrimination*.

Material safety concerns, including access to adequate housing, are not covered in detail by the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**.

235 Ibid.

236 Ibid.

237 Al-Monitor. [Displaced Syrians left out in rain by HTS government's building fees](#). February 2021.

238 Mercy Corps. Situation Report: Turkish Electricity Arrives in Idlib- A New Type of Integration? June 2021.

239 New York Times. [Syria's Surprising Solar Boom: Sunlight Powers the Night in Rebel Idlib](#). May 2021.

240 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria – Electricity and Infrastructure](#). July 2021.

241 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria – Electricity and Infrastructure](#). January-July 2021.

242 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria – Electricity and Infrastructure](#). July 2021.

243 Syria Observatory for Human Rights. [With support of the Salvation Government | Turkish private company accomplishes last stages of providing power supply to Idlib](#). May 2021

244 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria – Electricity and Infrastructure](#). July 2021.

Heating fuel is similarly inaccessible for many, with people in 92% of assessed communities noting that heaters and heating fuel were too expensive for most people in July 2021.²⁴⁵ Notably, 63% of IDPs living in IDP sites across NWS reported that they have **no access to fuel** in the winter.²⁴⁶

Access to Electricity in Turkish-controlled Areas

In areas under Turkish-backed control under OES, individual local councils including those in Azaz, al-Bab, Suran, and Marea have **secured electricity from private Turkish companies**.²⁴⁷ These companies have constructed power plants, most notably in Azaz.²⁴⁸ Companies often rely on large generators, with the eventual goal of connecting OES territory to the Turkish power grid,²⁴⁹ although there is little evidence of any efforts made towards this goal and services are reportedly deteriorating.²⁵⁰ Electricity coverage was estimated to be at over 90% in Azaz, al-Rai, and Jarablus in January of 2021, but only 70% in al-Bab and 60% in Afrin. **Infrastructure damage** in al-Bab poses a barrier to electricity provision in the area.²⁵¹

Despite reports of high levels of coverage, **electricity services have been noted to be inconsistent**, with low voltage and frequent power cuts. Mounting **frustration at poor and deteriorating services**, particularly electricity, has recently manifested as protests in Azaz and al-Bab, with residents calling for local council leaders to resign and for the company providing electricity to both, AK Energy, to be replaced.

Access to Electricity in HTS and Opposition Areas

In areas of Idlib under the control of HTS and opposition groups, electrical service provision is inconsistent or nonexistent, with only 54% of HHs surveyed in the region reporting regular access to electricity.²⁵² Those who can afford to do so **rely heavily on individual generators**, which cost an average of six to eight dollars per month.²⁵³ However, rising prices of generator fuel have led some to search for alternatives. Solar power has risen as a popular alternative to generators, although it requires a large up-front investment.²⁵⁴

In March of 2020, the SSG-affiliated General Electric Company (GEC) signed an agreement with a private energy company to deliver electricity from Turkey to areas under its control.²⁵⁵ This is initially expected to supply Idlib and several cities near the Turkish border, but may not extend to IDP camps and more southern communities.²⁵⁶ This plan is anticipated to initially provide nine hours of electricity per day, with projections for eventual provision of 24 hours per day.²⁵⁷ The GEC had originally projected for electricity to reach the region in mid-2020, but the **project has faced significant delays due to infrastructure damages and difficult topography**.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Damage assessments to local electricity infrastructure
- Scope and funding of electricity and other infrastructure rehabilitation programs
- Sufficiently detailed electricity networks in Idlib and SSG controlled area

245 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria – NFIs](#). July 2021.

246 CCCM Cluster NWS. [Fact Sheet](#). Accessed September 2021.

247 Al-Monitor. [Protests Against Turkish-backed Local Councils in Northern Syria Expand Over Bad Services](#). August 2021.; Enab Baladi. [Surge of Investments Restores Electricity to Rural Aleppo](#). May 2019.

248 Enab Baladi. [Surge of Investments Restores Electricity to Rural Aleppo](#). May 2019.

249 Ibid.

250 Al-Monitor. [Protests Against Turkish-backed Local Councils in Northern Syria Expand Over Bad Services](#). August 2021.

251 European University Institute- Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: Sinane Hatahet. [The Recovery of the Local Economy in Northern Aleppo: Reality and Challenges](#). March 2021.

252 H NAP. Summer 2021 Report Series: Priority Needs and Services. August 2021.

253 Al-Monitor. [Turkey Offers to Supply Electricity to Idlib](#). May 2021.

254 New York Times. [Syria's Surprising Solar Boom: Sunlight Powers the Night in Rebel Idlib](#). May 2021.

255 Mercy Corps. Situation Report: Turkish Electricity Arrives in Idlib- A New Type of Integration? June 2021.; Al-Monitor. [Turkey Offers to Supply Electricity to Idlib](#). May 2021.

256 Mercy Corps. Situation Report: Turkish Electricity Arrives in Idlib- A New Type of Integration? June 2021.

257 Ibid.

ACCESS TO SAFE, AFFORDABLE WATER

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population with access to safe, affordable water in sufficient quantities

Access to safe, clean drinking water **remains a challenge** in NWS, with heavy **reliance on water trucking** and high dependence on and vulnerability to interruption of humanitarian services.²⁵⁸ Increasing water prices present a barrier to water access for many households, and water is **not always safe to drink** even when it is available, with increasing incidences of waterborne illnesses across the region.²⁵⁹

Overview of Water Access

Of communities assessed across NWS, 63% overall reported that **some HHs did not have access to sufficient running water**, with most communities having access to the water network zero to two days per week. As a result,

many communities rely heavily on water trucking, leaving **them vulnerable to high costs and poor infrastructure**. Further, the number of waterborne illnesses reported increased substantially in NWS from January to July of 2021 by nearly 30% in Idlib and 65% in Northern Aleppo, likely because of poor conditions in camps and various sites in NWS.

Prolonged conflict has **significantly impacted the water supply** in NWS, as massive displacement and population disruption has led to years of ad-hoc drilling of wells, depleting groundwater stocks.²⁶⁰ This has been further compounded by inconsistent rain, attributed to climate change, with irregular rainfall impacting agriculture, shelter, and other conditions.²⁶¹ The vast majority of IDP sites in NWS are fully reliant on the provision of water trucking by humanitarian actors.²⁶² Of 242 camps assessed in NWS in early 2021, 236 reported water trucking as their primary source of drinking water.²⁶³ Such reliance leaves many IDPs vulnerable to cuts funding or restrictions on humanitarian access.

Water Crisis in al-Bab

Across Turkish-controlled areas, as of mid-2021 **sufficient access to safe water was reported by just 32% of surveyed populations**.²⁶⁴ In the Jarablus region, 33% of respondents surveyed in April 2021 indicated a need for drinking water, with IDPs indicating a far greater need for increased drinking water at 38% need expressed versus only 25% among the resident population.²⁶⁵

Water availability in the Turkish-controlled areas of NWS varies significantly, with the Maydanki dam providing water to Afrin and Azaz, and Afrin further accessing water from the Black River, Afrin River, and a water canal. Jarablus has typically relied on the Euphrates and Sajur rivers. Within OES territory in northern Aleppo, al-Bab city and the surrounding area face the greatest challenges in water access.²⁶⁶ When al-Bab's corresponding water station, Ain al Bayda, fell under GoS control in 2016, water piping to the area was cut off.²⁶⁷ This led the city and surrounding area to become **increasingly dependent on groundwater**, which has been heavily depleted, leading to advocacy by locals and the proposal of a plan to channel water from the Euphrates to the area.²⁶⁸

IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs:

Access to potable water is considered an aspect of IDPs' ability to enjoy an adequate standard of living without discrimination.

Material safety concerns, including WASH, are not covered by the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**.

258 CARE. [Rapid WASH and Settlement Assessment: IDP Sites in North West Syria](#). January 2021.

259 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria](#). July 2021.

260 Al-Monitor. [Camp residents in northwest Syria struggle to secure clean water](#). May 2021.

261 UNOCHA. [Developments in Northwest Syria and Ras al Ain – Tell Abiad](#). July 2021.

262 CARE. [Rapid WASH and Settlement Assessment: IDP Sites in North West Syria](#). January 2021.

263 CARE. Emergency Response in NWS- Need Assessment Report. February 2021.

264 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series: Priority Needs and Access to Services. August 2021.

265 Syria Development Center and Nasaem Khair Organization. Needs Assessment – Jarablus. 2021.

266 KII with Expert 2.

267 Al-Monitor. [Turkish-controlled Syrian region faces water crisis](#). July 2021.

268 Ibid.

Water Access in Idlib

In SSG controlled Idlib and its environs, each community is **largely responsible for sourcing its own water**.²⁶⁹ Across the area, meaningful access to safe water was reported by only 31% of surveyed communities in mid-2021.²⁷⁰ Various efforts have been made to improve water access, such as a recently finished project to improve water infrastructure in Deir Hassan and its surrounding camps.²⁷¹ 80% of water trucking vendors in Idlib said that they would run out of their supplies in 3 days or less in the case of supply line disruptions.²⁷²

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Impact of inadequate water on COVID-19 spread
- Mapping of water trucking and providers across areas
- Sources for increased reports of water born illnesses

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Guiding Indicators:

- Primary school net attendance ratio in target population
- Existence of processes recognized by Syrian authorities for the equivalency of academic/professional and vocational certificates, degrees and diplomas obtained during displacement

Repeated displacement, conflict, and COVID-19-related interruptions, lack of qualified educators, and poor economic conditions have posed **significant challenges to education** across Syria. Across Idlib and Aleppo Governorates, over 1 million people need education support, more than any other area of Syria.²⁷³ In Idlib, almost **one-quarter of IDP children are not attending primary school**. Students in opposition-controlled areas face additional challenges as local curriculums are not nationally recognized, and **access to cross line travel to take exams has significantly decreased** since 2020.

Education in NWS

Aleppo and Idlib Governorates have the **greatest need for education interventions** of any regions of Syria.²⁷⁴ Over the course of the conflict, NWS, and Idlib especially, has suffered from conflict-related damage to schools, with significant outstanding **needs for school rehabilitation and new construction**.²⁷⁵ As of April 2021, 12% of schools operating in Idlib are still partially damaged from conflict.²⁷⁶ While security incidents involving schools have decreased significantly since 2019, Save the Children recorded at least nine such incidents that occurred after the March 2020 ceasefire²⁷⁷ and found that 35% of teachers cite attacks on education facilities as a primary reason children drop out of school.²⁷⁸

IASC Framework: Access to primary school education, at a minimum, is considered an aspect of IDPs' ability to enjoy an adequate standard of living without discrimination.

Material safety concerns, including access to education, are not covered in detail by the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**.

269 KII with Expert 2.

270 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series: Priority Needs and Access to Services. August 2021.

271 2021 الالهلال الأحمر القطري. [سازن صحفي: بالشراكة مع الأوتشال، فائدة 530,54 شخصا](#). فبراير 2021.

272 Ibid.

273 Education Sector Findings, 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview. There are five categories of need: Minor/minimal, stress, severe, extreme, and catastrophic - with catastrophic being the highest level of need.

274 Ibid.

275 KII with Expert 13.

276 ACU. [Schools in Syria](#). April 2021.

277 Save the Children. [Northwest Syria: Schools and Children Still Under Attack Despite Year of Ceasefire](#). May 2021.

278 Save the Children. [Reversing Gains: Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Syria](#). December 2020.

Lack of teachers and funding for teacher salaries exacerbates school overcrowding. **In Idlib particularly, between one-third to one-half of teachers are estimated to be working without salaries.**²⁷⁹ Schools thus struggle to recruit qualified educators, maintain consistency in their curriculums, and sustain attendance. 12% of classrooms in Idlib are reported to suffer from extreme overcrowding, compared to 2% in the Northern Aleppo countryside, and 4% in Afrin.²⁸⁰ In Northern Aleppo, teachers receive salaries from the Turkish Endowment,²⁸¹ which increases staff retention in comparison to other parts of NWS.²⁸² However, **bullying** was found to be common in Afrin and in the northern Aleppo countryside, reported by 64% and 55% of teachers respectively, compared to 33% nationwide.²⁸³

Since **COVID-19** arrived in NWS, 57% of students reported being affected by school closure. In some areas, schools have split classes into shifts to accommodate social distancing, which has led to fewer contact hours for students and more working hours for teachers, creating exhausting conditions with little or no additional support.²⁸⁴ COVID-19 also impacted student access to supplementary services. For example, Save the Children's partners reported losing access to almost half of their student beneficiaries in March 2020. While regulations have since relaxed, NWS is currently experiencing a **significant COVID-19 outbreak.**²⁸⁵ This new wave of COVID-19 cases led to the SIG's imposition of a 15-day temporary lockdown in October 2021.²⁸⁶

School Attendance in NWS

While **most children in NWS attend primary school**, attendance rates are low and often related to displacement history. In Aleppo, primary school attendance is 73% for resident households, and 62% for IDP households. In Idlib, the discrepancy is even more notable, with 84% of non-displaced children attending primary school compared to 64% displaced children. **Attendance rates for secondary school are much lower**, with only about half of eligible children in school.²⁸⁷ According to the 2021 MSNA, only 30% of IDP households in Aleppo, and 44% of IDP households in Idlib have secondary-school aged children enrolled in education. Generally, **displaced families face additional challenges in accessing education** which can include interruption of studies and increased economic burdens of displacement.²⁸⁸ Accessing schools can also be a challenge, with many camps and informal settlements lacking schools, thus necessitating long journeys to attend class.²⁸⁹ An assessment of 18 camps in northern Aleppo found that tents were often utilized as educational spaces, and were subject to overcrowding, poor weather, and poor sanitation and ventilation.²⁹⁰ The same study also noted that no children with special needs were able to access education due to lack of specialized services.

Poor economic conditions are the greatest barrier to school attendance reported by both parents and teachers in NWS. According to one study, 68% of teachers indicated that parents' inability to afford education was the biggest reason children drop out, with 51% indicating child labor as a common factor for dropping out, particularly in secondary school.²⁹¹ Parents in Idlib indicated that "children working to support the household" was the most common reason for their children to be out of school (27%) and in Aleppo "can't afford for children to go" was the top response (21%).²⁹²

279 ACU. [Schools in Syria](#). April 2021.; KII with Expert 1. This is a notably outlier among all areas of Syria, with the next highest rate of unpaid teachers at 6% in the Ras al Ain – Tel Abiad OPS area.

280 ACU. [Schools in Syria](#). April 2021.

281 Ibid.

282 KII with Expert 1.

283 ACU. [Schools in Syria](#). April 2021. (31% in Idlib)

284 KII with Expert 1.

285 See Access to Basic Healthcare Services section for more information.

286 . October 2021. [الحكومة السورية المؤقتة، الحكومة السورية المؤقتة تتخذ إجراءات جديدة للحد من إنتشار فيروس كورونا في المناطق المحررة.](#)

287 KII with Expert 1. KII with Expert 13.

288 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment. Education Data. 2021.

289 KII with Expert 1.

290 Qatar Charity. Education in Camps. 2021.

291 Save the Children. [Reversing Gains](#). December 2020

292 Save the Children. [Reversing Gains](#). December 2020

Curricula and Recognition of Certificates

Enrollment in school for displaced persons is a relatively straightforward process. A new IDP in NWS would require a placement test or similar assessment and the presence of a parent or guardian to confirm the enrollment.²⁹³ The education bodies in both the SSG and SIG offer their own curricula which are **modified from the GoS national curriculum**,²⁹⁴ but not recognized or accredited by the GoS.²⁹⁵ There are a small number of operational universities in Idlib and northern Aleppo,²⁹⁶ and the curriculum in northern Aleppo may offer pathways to higher education in Turkey or with Turkish institutions in the region.²⁹⁷ Additionally, GoS qualifications are now beginning to be rejected within some areas of NWS. For example, in Idlib, teacher qualifications from the GoS civil servant exam taken after 2016 are not recognized - and any qualifications after 2016 must be based test administered by the Idlib Department of Education.²⁹⁸ These documentation changes may hinder new arrivals from working in the education sector and constrain livelihoods prospects for educators wishing to move elsewhere in Syria.

In June 2020, the UN estimated that thousands of students in NWS undertake risky trips **across control lines** into GoS areas each year to take the nationally accredited exams, rendering them vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, and being turned back.²⁹⁹ However, poor security conditions and closures of crossline checkpoints have significantly decreased this trend, **and few students reportedly now make this journey from NWS**.³⁰⁰

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Detailed education infrastructure damage assessments
- Updated school attendance and education data post COVID-19; disaggregated by displacement history
- Average distance to nearest primary and secondary school by village and displacement history
- Average class size by area location and setting

ADEQUATE FOOD CONSUMPTION

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of households in target population with acceptable food consumption, based on the Food Consumption Score.

Food insecurity is **increasingly widespread across Syria**, including in NWS, with 12.4 million persons food insecure across the country³⁰¹ and **3.1 million persons acutely suffer from food insecure in NWS alone**.³⁰² As of mid-2021, food was the most commonly reported need in Idlib and Northern Aleppo,³⁰³ with 97% of communities in the region housing families that are **struggling to access sufficient food**.³⁰⁴ **Impact of Food Shortages**

293 KII with Expert 1.

294 ACU. [Schools in Syria](#). April 2021.

295 KII with Expert 1.

296 Idlib University reopened in 2016, and three types of universities in Northern Aleppo, Aleppo University (under control of the SIG), Sham university (private), and Turkish Institutes supported by Turkish universities offering specific program tracks. KII with Expert 1.

297 KII with Expert 13.

298 Idlib Department of Education. Announcement Number 1/948. August 2021.

299 UNOCHA. [Joint Statement on safe access for students to sit final examinations](#). June 2020.

300 KII with Expert 1.

301 WFP Syria. [Situation Report #7](#). July 2021.

302 South Turkey Food Security & Livelihood Cluster. [What's at Stake? Fact Sheet #1](#). July 2021.

303 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series- Priority Needs and Services. August 2021. Here, NS refers to Turkish controlled areas under OOB, OES, and OP.

304 REACH. [HSOS Factsheet- Northwest Syria](#). July 2021.

Basic food items have become increasingly unaffordable across Syria. As of June 2021, it cost 251,710 SYP to purchase the minimum amount of food necessary to meet SMEB levels,³⁰⁵ with 85% of persons in assessed communities **reporting high cost of food as a challenge.**³⁰⁶ **IDPs report food as a priority need at a rate higher than residents** in NWS, although they also have greater access to food assistance programming.³⁰⁷

IASC Framework: Access to essential food and potable water is considered an aspect of IDPs' ability to enjoy an adequate standard of living without discrimination.

Material safety concerns, including food security, are not covered by the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds.**

Children are particularly impacted by food shortages, with 60% of children ages 6-24 months not consuming diets of acceptable quality.³⁰⁸ These numbers are rising, with the Executive Director of UNICEF estimating that acute malnutrition is reaching emergency levels for 15% of displaced children across NWS.³⁰⁹ The expiration of UNSCR 2585 in July 2022 threatens the future of essential cross-border aid through the Bab al-Hawa crossing. The critical aid provided by the UN cannot be replaced. We estimate that UN cross-border aid represents up to 50% of all cross-border humanitarian deliveries. The proportions vary depending on the type of assistance. For example, between 70 and 80% of emergency food assistance is delivered by the World Food Programme.

Access to Food in OES Areas

OES territory has a lower number of people in need (PiN) than areas controlled by opposition groups in Idlib (as well as a significantly lower overall population). However, relative to the PiN, OES has **more gaps in coverage of humanitarian food assistance.** Of nine subdistricts in the area, **four had less than 25% coverage of PiN** by the FSL cluster's support- a far larger gap percentage than for the areas under HTS/ opposition control.³¹⁰ Of 640,000 PiN of food basket assistance located in the region³¹¹ only 260,000 PiN (or nearly 41%) receiving food baskets in the area.³¹²

Access to Food in HTS/ Opposition Areas

In SSG controlled areas of Idlib, **76% of the population surveyed reported food as a top priority need.**³¹³ The majority of the 2.87 million people in NWS in acute need of food aid (excluding Afrin/ OOB territory) reside in Idlib Governorate.³¹⁴

Local conflict and governance dynamics continue to impact food security. In May and June of 2021, aerial attacks on Idlib and opposition-held Hama **disrupted harvesting in important agriculture areas** in the southern areas of the region, killing several farmers and igniting fires that destroyed 35 hectares of wheat.³¹⁵ Furthermore, the SSG has recently implemented policies seeking to prevent the importation of some types of produce from OOB territory, **in an effort to support local agricultural production.** This has led to **a rise in prices** of banned forms of produce, frustrating many of the region's residents.³¹⁶

305 REACH. [Northwest Situation Overview- Market Monitoring](#). June 2021.

306 REACH. [HSOS Factsheet- Northwest Syria](#). July 2021.

307 Ibid.

308 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syria](#). March 2021.

309 United Nations. [Press Release: As Hunger, Malnutrition Rise in Syria, Security Council Must Ensure Border Crossing Remains Open, Aid Flows to Millions, Humanitarian Affairs Chief Stresses](#). March 2021.

310 South Turkey Food Security & Livelihood Cluster. [Insights on Northwest Syria: Issue 12](#). September 2021.

311 South Turkey Food Security & Livelihood Cluster. [FSL Cluster Response- June 2021 Actual and Plans for 3 months](#). Accessed September 2021.

312 Ibid.

313 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series- Priority Needs and Services. August 2021.

314 South Turkey Food Security & Livelihood Cluster. [FSL Cluster Response- June 2021 Actual and Plans for 3 months](#). Accessed September 2021.

315 Syria Direct. [Sowing fear, burning crops: The latest regime offensive terrorizes farmers in northwest Syria](#). June 2021.

316 COAR. [Agricultural Protectionism Expands in Idlib- Syria Update, Vol. 4 No. 35](#). September 2021.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Full impact of NES water challenges on NWS food security
- Data on agricultural harvests and impact of climate issues, bombings within NWS

ACCESS TO CASH PROGRAMMING AND STATE PROTECTION SERVICES**Guiding Indicators:**

- Proportion of target population accessing humanitarian cash programs
- Proportion of target population covered under state- administered social protection programs.

Access to social protection programming **varies by area of control in NWS**, with little or no formally provided social protection. **Limited humanitarian cash programming** has sought to fill this gap.

Humanitarian Cash Programming in NWS

Numerous factors **have limited regular, widespread cash and voucher assistance (CVA) programming** by humanitarian practitioners in NWS,³¹⁷ despite CVA being one of the “backbone strategies” of aid provision for the newly displaced in the region.³¹⁸ Notably, **financial service providers (FSPs) are in short supply which hinders people’s ability to manage their finances**, while CVA programming is frustrated by the challenges of remote humanitarian monitoring, absence of recognized governmental authorities, and general instability.³¹⁹ The **potential for diversion of CVA by non-state armed groups represents a major perceived risk in the region**,³²⁰ with cash perceived as being more risky reputationally than in-kind assistance.³²¹ Programs that include a CVA component are thus subject to extensive, and sometimes burdensome, monitoring and compliance requirements³²² although support for cash-based interventions is reportedly gaining momentum.³²³

The existence of state social protection mechanisms and cash transfer programs or vouchers are not directly addressed in either **the IASC Framework** or **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**. However, given Syria’s increasingly dire economic crisis, the high level of economic need, the existence and efficacy of short- and long-term social protection and cash assistance should be considered in considerations of durable solutions.

The global weight of evidence regarding the suitability of cash in humanitarian settings, and market availability, combined with uncertainty surrounding the future of food assistance through the Bab al-Hawa crossing (**which did not threaten operations of cash lenders (hawaladars)**³²⁴), has made cash programming **an increasingly relevant option for implementors** on the ground.³²⁵ Recent months have seen an uptick in CVA programming,³²⁶ with 23% of surveyed residents and 25% of IDPs having received CVA assistance as of August 2021.³²⁷ The backbone of CVA programming has been **unconditional cash provision**, with cash-in-hand and voucher programming being utilized for food aid, winterization materials, cash-for-work programming, and more.³²⁸

317 IOM & NWS CWG. [Cash Feasibility Assessment 2020: Northwest Syria](#). April 2020.

318 KII with Expert 4.

319 IOM & NWS CWG. [Cash Feasibility Assessment 2020: Northwest Syria](#). April 2020.

320 IOM & NWS CWG. [Cash Feasibility Assessment 2020: Northwest Syria](#). April 2020.

321 WFP & UNICEF. Cash Feasibility in Northwest Syria: Scoping Mission Report. December 2020.

322 KII with Expert 4.; IOM & CWG NWS. [Cash Feasibility Assessment 2020: Northwest Syria](#). April 2020.

323 KII with Expert 4.

324 NWS CWG. Donor’s Workshop on Financial Service Providers: Notes: May 2021.

325 KII with Expert 4.

326 Ibid.

327 REACH. [HSOS, Northwest Syria: Humanitarian Assistance](#). August 2021.

328 KII with Expert 4.

FSPs in NWS are limited to the Turkish Post Office (PTT), which provides checking accounts to people in areas SIG controlled areas, or the semi-formal *hawala* money transfer system.³²⁹ PTT offices are available in areas SIG control³³⁰ while over 800 Hawala offices exist across NWS.³³¹

Cash Programming Preferences in NWS

At the WoS level, 70% of survey respondents in mid-2021 **preferred to receive cash aid**, while 26% preferred vouchers.³³² In early 2021, **cash was the preferred modality for aid delivery** across the top 3 priority needs (food, fuel, and income generation).³³³ In SSG/SIG areas, cash was the preferred modality for receiving aid for food, fuel, and rent, while in Idlib it was also preferred for income-related aid.³³⁴

31.1% of camp residents in NWS reported that, from September 2019 through October 2020, they had **sold a portion of received in-kind assistance**.³³⁵ This trend suggests that, in many cases, in-kind assistance is seen as **less desirable than direct cash transfers**.³³⁶

Cash and Formal Social Protection Programming in SIG Territory

In OES territory, the SIG has introduced the Turkish Lira as the primary currency,³³⁷ with 53% of the area's surveyed population indicating preference for CVA over in-kind assistance as of mid-2021.³³⁸ With no formal banking system, **hawalas and PTT offices provide financial services**.³³⁹ PTT utilization is further complicated by the division of jurisdiction of PTT offices in OES and OOB territories between multiple Turkish branches, and a cap on money transfer amounts.³⁴⁰ *Hawala* lenders are illegal in Turkey, which complicates their use for humanitarian practitioners, **further limiting cash programming**.³⁴¹ Only 13% of FSPs surveyed in November 2020 said they had worked with humanitarian cash programming, indicating that NWS has capacity for cash programming that has not been utilized.³⁴²

In order for individuals to make PTT accounts in NWS, **they must possess an SIG biometric ID card** created by the Population Departments founded by Turkey in NWS and issued by local civil council registries.³⁴³ Access to other official social services **is dictated by possession of these SIG biometric ID cards**³⁴⁴ which are linked to a Turkish Civil Registry database.³⁴⁵

Turkey is also subsidizing a number of sectors in its areas of control, often with the support of local councils. Local and municipal councils also manage public bakeries, although prices are not regulated and vary by community. Education and public hospitals are also subsidized throughout the region, with **service gaps being filled by NGO programming**.³⁴⁶

Cash and Formal Social Protection Programming in SSG-controlled Idlib

In SSG controlled areas of Idlib, 100% of assessed populations **indicated preference for CVA over in-kind assistance**.³⁴⁷ In early 2021, residents also showed the highest preference for voucher assistance of any region of Syria at 43%.³⁴⁸

329 KII with Expert 4.

330 Private Source 7.

331 REACH & NWS CWG. Financial Service Provider (FSP) Assessment in NWS. November 2020.

332 HNAP. Summer 2021 Report Series: Priority Needs and Services. August 2021.

333 HNAP. Spring 2021 Report Series: Priority Needs and Services. March 2021.

334 Ibid.

335 REACH. [Camp Profiling Analysis – Sale of In-kind Assistance](#). March 2021.

336 IOM & NWS CWG. [Cash Feasibility Assessment 2020: Northwest Syria](#). April 2020.

337 Mercy Corps. [The Public Monetary Authority in Northwest Syria: Flash Report](#). July 2020.

338 REACH. [Cash and Markets Snapshot for Northern Syria](#). July 2021.

339 Private Source 7.

340 NWS CWG. NWS Cash Working Group Members and PTT Bank Gaziantep Branch Discussion Meeting Minutes. April 2021.; NWS CWG. NWS Cash Working Group Coordination and PTT Bank Kilis Branch Meeting Minutes. June 2021.

341 KII with Expert 4.

342 REACH & NWS CWG. Financial Service Provider (FSP) Assessment in NWS. November 2020.

343 NWS CWG. NWS Cash Working Group Members and PTT Bank Gaziantep Branch Discussion Meeting Minutes. April 2021.; NWS CWG. NWS Cash Working Group Coordination and PTT Bank Kilis Branch Meeting Minutes. June 2021.

344 Clingendael Institute. Yüksel, E. & E. Van Veen. [Turkey in Northwestern Syria: Rebuilding Empire at the Margins](#). June 2019.

345 Private Source 7.

346 Private Source 7.

347 REACH. [Cash and Markets Snapshot for Northern Syria](#). July 2021.

348 HNAP. Spring 2021 Report Series: Priority Needs and Services. March 2021.

In July 2020, the SSG formed the Public Monetary Authority (PMA), which has the mandate to oversee all *hawala* and currency exchange offices in the area under SSG control, for which it has **implemented mandatory registrations**.³⁴⁹ The PMA banned usage of the SYP in the territory,³⁵⁰ instead utilizing the Turkish Lira, of which it is the sole entity distributing the currency in the area.³⁵¹ Further, the body has the **ability to monitor all transactions** by the FSPs in territory under its control, which creates **data collection and security concerns** for cash programming and financial transactions.³⁵² Ninety two percent of service providers surveyed in Idlib in November 2020 reported that financial regulations had changed in the 6 months prior, while 75% indicated that such changes had impacted their business.³⁵³ Ninety three percent of those assessed in Idlib in February 2021 reported that remittance offices in their areas were licensed, while this figure was only 65% for northern Syria, including areas under SIG control, despite local councils **requiring such licenses** in these areas of Aleppo Governorate.³⁵⁴

In the absence of a recognized government **information on state service provision and formal social programming is nonexistent**. One community was noted to have combatted this with a community fund collected to financially support those members in need.³⁵⁵

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Attempts at social programming by relevant authorities in Idlib
- Extent of informal social support provided by local communities
- Extent of monitoring of FSPs by PMA

EMPLOYMENT, LIVELIHOODS, AND POVERTY

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population employed in formal and informal sectors (employment rate)
- Proportion of target population living below the poverty line

NWS has experienced increasingly dire economic conditions since the outset of Syria's conflict. Employment rates vary dramatically by gender, and differences also exist based on displacement history. Much reported employment is short term or daily labor, and income insufficiency remains a widespread challenge, with many employed individuals living in poverty in addition to those out of work.

Livelihoods Conditions in NWS

Sixty three percent of residents and 55% of IDPs in NWS indicated livelihoods as a top-three priority need, ranking first for residents and second, behind food, for IDPs. Specific livelihoods challenges include income insufficiency, mismatches between skills and employment opportunities, the unavailability of financial resources, and other barriers.³⁵⁶

Across NWS, 42% of the working age population (those 18+) indicated that they had worked in the past 3 months. The reported **employment rate among males ages 18 and above is 79%**, with the primary employment types being business ownership, then short term or daily labor, followed by regular employment. For women 18+, the employment rate is only 7%, with the primary employment type being daily labor, followed by regular employment- signifying not only that **women are employed at vastly lower rates**, but also that they are proportionally less likely to have stable employment. Median monthly incomes also vary by gender, with the average monthly income for men at 232,192 SYP and only 148,000 SYP for women. Reasons for being out of work differed by gender, with women citing reasons such as being occupied with homemaking.³⁵⁷

349 Mercy Corps. [The Public Monetary Authority in Northwest Syria: Flash Report](#). July 2020.

350 NWS CWG. Donor's Workshop on Financial Service Providers: Notes: May 2021.

351 Mercy Corps. [The Public Monetary Authority in Northwest Syria: Flash Report](#). July 2020.

352 Ibid.

353 REACH & NWS CWG. Financial Service Provider (FSP) Assessment in NWS. November 2020.

354 Assistance Coordination Unit/ Information Management Unit. [Economic Reality in Northern Syria](#). April 2021.

355 KII with Expert 18.

356 REACH.HSOS Dashboard Northwest Syria. October 2021.

357 HNAP, UNDP, & NWS ERL Cluster. Livelihoods Situation Analysis in North-west Syria. September 2021.

Employment also varied by displacement history, with returnees having significantly higher rates of employment than other populations. While 96% of returnee men and 13% of returnee women indicated being employed, this was true for only 81% and 79% of resident and IDP men respectively, and 8% of resident and 7% of IDP women.³⁵⁸ **Returnees' relatively higher rates of employment** is likely tied to their social ties and may be indicative of economic pull factors to returns.³⁵⁹ However, returnees do not compose a large percentage of the NWS population, with 15,000 estimated returnees to the region from January through September of 2021.³⁶⁰

IASC Framework acknowledges that durable solutions are dependent on access to employment and livelihoods that allow them to fulfill “at least their core socio-economic needs,” especially in the absence of effective welfare programs.

Material safety is not explicitly addressed the **UNHCR Protection Thresholds**.

Jobs available in areas with high concentrations of IDPs are often more reliant on humanitarian programming, such as cash-for-work programs.³⁶¹ Despite significant efforts by the new Chambers of Commerce and Industry in areas of NWS under SIG control, there have been “**no significant investments**” made or seen come to fruition in the region, with security concerns and uncertainty over the region’s future deterring potential financing.³⁶²

Agriculture is the largest sector of employment, with 20% of working men and 37% of working women in NWS reported agriculture and livestock as their livelihood source.³⁶³ Threats to this sector include seasonal variability, high operational costs, and a lack of sufficient water and other relevant resources.³⁶⁴ Operations and markets for the agricultural sector vary by region in NWS based on local governance and regulations. In **Afrin** in particular, the agriculture sector is the **primary source of income** for a majority of residents, but has been threatened by continued insecurity, taxes on olive and olive oil harvests, and externally imposed prices that disadvantage the local agriculture sector.³⁶⁵ The Turkish Tarım Kredi Kooperatifi (Agricultural Credit Cooperative of Hatay) is the only entity able to buy Afrin’s olive oil, giving it a monopoly on the product’s purchasing and the ability to influence prices.³⁶⁶ Further, armed factions in the region grow olives on confiscated lands, impose heavy taxes on landowners, and cut and sell olive trees.³⁶⁷

Poverty in NWS

Many employed workers receive incomes that are **insufficient to meet their basic needs**. While a challenge for populations across NWS, this phenomenon is particularly acute in rural areas.³⁶⁸ The situation for livelihoods remains “dramatic” even for those in employment,³⁶⁹ with 91% of working individuals being members of HHs living in extreme poverty (versus 95% for the unemployed or seeking employment and 93% of those not in or pursuing employment).³⁷⁰ As of July 2021, the **average daily laborer would need to work for 56 days in order to afford the monthly survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB)**³⁷¹, and 44% of employed individuals in the region in June 2021 were receiving wages below the SMEB cost.³⁷² In rural areas, 36% of working individuals fell significantly below the SMEB, versus only 7% in urban areas.³⁷³

358 Ibid.

359 KII with Expert 11.

360 HNAP. MNM Dataset. September 2021.; UNOCHA. Areas of Influence Localities Data. July 2021.

361 KII with Expert 11.

362 European University Institute- Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: Sinane Hatahet. The Recovery of the Local Economy in Northern Aleppo: Reality and Challenges. March 2021.

363 HNAP, UNDP, & NWS ERL Cluster. Livelihoods Situation Analysis in North-west Syria. September 2021.

364 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria- Factsheet](#). July 2021.

365 ACAPS. [Syria: Humanitarian Needs in Afrin](#). March 2021.

366 European University Institute- Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: Sinane Hatahet. The Recovery of the Local Economy in Northern Aleppo: Reality and Challenges. March 2021.

367 AI Monitor. [Turkish-backed rebels leave trail of abuse, criminality in Syria's Afrin](#). July 22, 2021.

368 HNAP, UNDP, & NWS ERL Cluster. Livelihoods Situation Analysis in North-west Syria. September 2021.

369 KII with Expert 11.

370 HNAP, UNDP, & NWS ERL Cluster. Livelihoods Situation Analysis in North-west Syria. September 2021.

371 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria- Factsheet](#). July 2021. The SMEB is comprised of the estimated basic needs for a household of 5 individuals for a period of one month.

372 HNAP, UNDP, & NWS ERL Cluster. Livelihoods Situation Analysis in North-west Syria. September 2021.

373 Ibid.

Coping Strategies

Research has identified multiple coping strategies used by residents to make ends meet. The vast majority of both resident and IDP communities in NWS reported **borrowing money** from family or friends as a common coping strategy.³⁷⁴ In an August 2021 REACH assessment, KIs indicated that child labor was a coping strategy utilized by residents and IDPs in 73% and 79% of assessed communities respectively to meet basic needs, either to supplement or to replace income from adults in their households.³⁷⁵ **Buying on credit was cited as a strategy** in 57% of communities, with other cited tactics including early marriage and spending savings. Such strategies often compound economic hardship over the long term; 55% of assessed households in NWS reported their household debt had increased in 2020.³⁷⁶

Humanitarian programming in NWS has sought to remedy existing issues surrounding income insufficiency, lack of available livelihood opportunities, and poverty with programming, including cash-for-work, vocational training, and microfinancing.³⁷⁷ Livelihoods programming has sought to target economically vulnerable households, targeting root causes of child labor or potential armed group recruitment, as well as poverty-related SGBV.³⁷⁸ However, income insufficiency has been reported even in humanitarian-funded short-term cash-for-work programs.³⁷⁹ Much of existing livelihood-focused programming is reportedly **concentrated in specific areas of Idlib**, primarily Dana subdistrict, leaving geographic gaps in access to such coping strategies.³⁸⁰ Further, IDPs were far more likely to be utilizing of humanitarian assistance, including cash and in-kind programming, to meet basic needs (with KIs indicating IDPs receiving aid in 39% of communities vs. 18% for residents).³⁸¹

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Informal and formal sector definitions and statistic in the context of NWS
- Extent of “public sector” employment in regions on NWS, given lack of recognized authorities



374 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria: Livelihoods](#). August 2021.

375 Ibid.

376 Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey). [Coping Mechanisms- Key Informants](#). Accessed September 2021.

377 KII with Expert 11.; Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF). [The SRTF Approves the Establishment of a Revolving Credit Fund to Support Livelihoods in Northwest Syria](#). September 2021.; Al-Monitor. [French NGO Provides Temporary Jobs for Syrians in the Northwest](#). March 2021.

378 KII with Expert 11.

379 Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF). [The SRTF Approves the Establishment of a Revolving Credit Fund to Support Livelihoods in Northwest Syria](#). September 2021.

380 KII with Expert 11.

381 REACH. [HSOS Northwest Syria: Livelihoods](#). August 2021.

LEGAL SAFETY

Category	Indicator Topic
Legal Safety	Civil documentation
	Housing, land, and property rights
	Family separation
	Participation in returns decision-making
	Access to Justice

ACCESS TO CIVIL DOCUMENTATION

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population currently in possession of valid civil documents among: birth certificates, national ID cards or other personal identification document (e.g., birth certificate, Syrian family booklet, death/ marriage certificates, other) by type of document.
- Existence of safe and accessible mechanisms for obtaining/replacing documents for all Syrian nationals in Syria and abroad without discrimination.

A significant portion of the NWS population are IDPs, and **lack of civil documentation is widespread** and pervasive especially among women and children. Lack of documents can create significant challenges to claiming property, proving familial relationship (including marriage and parenthood), freedom of movement, and accessing services and humanitarian aid. **Inability to claim basic legal rights** poses significant barriers to durable solutions, challenging prospects for integration, return, and onward movement.

Accessing GoS-Issued Civil Documentation in NWS

GoS civil registry offices **do not operate in non-GoS controlled areas of NWS** including all SSG and SIG controlled areas. While GoS-issued documents are still **preferred by many**³⁸² for items such as birth and marriage certificates, and are required for passports and national IDs³⁸³ **accessing GoS documents requires cross-line travel** which is often inaccessible and widely considered dangerous.³⁸⁴ IDPs whose original documents were registered in distant governorates such as Dara’a and Rural Damascus face additional challenges in obtaining documents, as records are not always nationalized and may be unavailable in nearby GoS registries in Homs or Aleppo.³⁸⁵ In some cases, people in these areas may be able to hire brokers to obtain documents, however this requires a significant fee and is inaccessible to most. A 2017 study indicated that only 6% of people in non-GoS controlled areas of NWS reported having access to GoS issued civil documentation.³⁸⁶ While more recent data is not available, this trend is unlikely to have significantly changed since that time, and is expected to have remained around 5% over the last two years.³⁸⁷ Further, COVID-19 travel restrictions in Idlib **increased the reliance on SSG-issued documents** due to the inability to cross into GoS areas.³⁸⁸

Access to documentation is one of eight IASC Framework criteria for durable solutions. A durable solution requires that IDPs “have access to the personal and other documentation necessary to access public services, reclaim property and possessions, vote or pursue other purposes linked to durable solutions”. Therefore, “the competent national or local authorities need to facilitate the issuance of new documents, or the replacement of documents lost in the course of displacement, without imposing unreasonable conditions.”

382 While GoS documents are largely preferred by many, the SSG has shown signs of moving away from the recognition of GoS documents. Recently, reports indicated that SSG offices have begun asking people to give up their GoS issued family books in order to be issued a new by the SSG. Additionally, field reports indicate that SSG officials were not recognizing GoS documents issued since the document COVID-19 pandemic. KII with Expert 7.

383 All Syrians over the age of 14 are legally required to have national IDs according to Syrian law. NRC July 2017.

384 KII with Expert 7.

385 KII with expert 5.

386 NRC, [Displacement, HLP and access to civil documentation in the north west of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017

387 KII with expert 6.

388 KII with Expert 7.

Accessing Locally Issued Civil Documentation in NWS

Local authorities in non-government-controlled areas of NWS (the SIG in northern Aleppo and SSG in Idlib) also issue civil documentation. These documents often closely resemble GoS-issued documents following the same format and general appearance.³⁸⁹ While these documents are not recognized by the GoS, reports indicate that the SSG and SIG mutually recognize documents issued by the other and are often indistinguishable between each other.³⁹⁰ However, access challenges also exist for those seeking locally issued documents. For example, in Idlib, SSG offices issuing documentation are not present in every sub-district, which can create cost and transportation related barriers to access.³⁹¹

The **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** specify that the appropriate governing bodies commit to “recognizing changes in returnees’ personal/civil status occurred, during the conflict, including in displacement and abroad. All returnees have access to affordable civil registration and documentation and validation of education certificates obtained abroad. Documents issued by a competent authority indicating such changes is validated or re-issued.

Appropriate evidentiary value is given to civil documentation issued by non-state entities and documentation issued in non-government-controlled areas by local actors; and legitimate documentation issued by the competent Syrian authorities is recognized. For those not holding identity documentation, alternative forms of evidence are accepted. Documentation from UNHCR or other internationally mandated organizations is recognized.

Legislative measures allow for issuance of documents necessary to establish identity, family composition and nationality. To prevent statelessness, legislative measures are undertaken to ensure refugees born to a Syrian parent – female or male – are considered citizens of Syria, and birth certificates are issued to refugee children who are not in possession of such documents.

Additionally, lack of knowledge and information related to types of documents available and risks, requirements, and processes to obtain them may limit access for some.³⁹²

SIG authorities with technical support from Turkey, also issue identification cards.³⁹³ Available to people of all ages, the cards include the holder’s basic family and biodata as well as a personal number (different from the national number on the Syrian ID).³⁹⁴ Reported fees for obtaining the SIG card range from 500 – 5,000 SYP suggesting variation across communities and overall **lack of standardization of pricing**.³⁹⁵ Possession of a SIG card is essential to accessing basic rights and services in SIG controlled areas such as healthcare, humanitarian aid, access to employment, and the ability to open a business or enter a lease.³⁹⁶

Prevalence and Impact of Lack of Civil Documentation

While recent data on the exact number of people in NWS lacking specific documents is unavailable, **missing documentation is widespread**. In 2017, an NRC study found that a quarter of IDP household members in NWS aged 14 or older did not have ID cards.³⁹⁷ Another assessment from 2018 found that almost half of IDP children aged five and under were **not included in their family booklet**.³⁹⁸ Returnees have also been found to be likely to be missing documents, with 67% of reporting missing GoS-issued documents in the 2020 MSNA.³⁹⁹

Lack of documentation has been highlighted by the protection sector as an issue **preventing people in NWS from accessing humanitarian services**.⁴⁰⁰ Legal rights are also heavily reliant

389 KII with Expert 6.

390 KII with Expert 7.

391 KII with Expert 7.

392 KII with Expert 6.

393 KII with Expert 5; KII with Expert 7.

394 Enab Baladi. [Cards Bearing New “National Number” Issued to Residents of Aleppo Countryside](#). May 2019.

395 Dutch Foreign Ministry. Country of Origin Information Report Syria. December 2019.

396 Atlantic Council. The potential loss of refugee status for Palestinian-Syrians in Afrin. April 2019.

397 NRC. [Displacement, HLP and access to civil documentation in the north west of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017

398 FMR. [Establishing Legal Identity for Displaced Syrians](#). February 2018.

399 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#). March 2021

400 OCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria](#). December 2020.

on civil documentation. In addition to being more likely to be lacking documents,⁴⁰¹ female headed households - especially widowed or divorced women - are particularly vulnerable to issues inheriting property, remarrying, and registering births and gaining custody of children.⁴⁰² Individuals without documents are also more likely to face restricted freedom of movement.⁴⁰³ While lacking documentation has not been identified as a barrier to accessing education in NWS⁴⁰⁴ children who lack documentation ultimately **face greater exposure to protection risks** including family separation and have less access to legal recourse.⁴⁰⁵

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Percentage of people missing key documents by displacement, camp vs. urban, gender, age, and by type of document
- Detailed procedures for obtaining civil documents issued by SIG or SSG offices and barriers to access by displacement history, gender, ethnicity etc.

SECURE TENURE OF HLP AND RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population with secure tenure of housing, land, and property
- Existence of accessible mechanisms for resolving housing, land, and property disputes/claims

HLP issues challenge durable solutions across Syria. In NWS, those displaced both to and from the region face HLP challenges including widespread property disputes and often inaccessible legal mechanisms for resolution, insecure legal tenure of informal settlements and collective shelters, inability to prove and maintain rights to abandoned properties, and ongoing cases of land appropriation and expropriation.



401 Ibid.

402 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#). March 2021

403 UNOCHA. [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#). March 2021 and OCHA. [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in Northwest Syria](#). December 2020.

404 KII with expert 7.

405 NRC. [Displacement, HLP and access to civil documentation in the north west of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017.

Challenges to Secure Tenure of HLP in NWS

NWS has approximately 1,400 IDP sites including 1,240 informal settlements,⁴⁰⁶ more than any other area of Syria. More than half (54%) of IDPs across the region living in informal or planned settlements, with the highest rates in Idlib.⁴⁰⁷ **Legal tenure in these in these last resort sites is insecure**, with only 10% reporting having a valid legal HLP status, and 79% with pending validity.⁴⁰⁸ The majority of IDP sites (67%) are on privately owned lands,⁴⁰⁹ and **few have official agreements with land or property owners, leaving those living in these areas vulnerable to disputes.**⁴¹⁰ A 2017 study found that 74% of respondents had no written agreement, and of those 60% also had no clear verbal agreement.⁴¹¹ The same study found that 84% of IDP households felt only somewhat sure or were not sure at all that they could remain in their current residence for three more months if desired. While evictions are currently relatively uncommon,⁴¹² tenure is rarely guaranteed, and a sense of insecurity is widespread.

Restoration of housing, land, and property is one of 8 **IASC Framework** criteria for durable solutions. “IDPs who have achieved a durable solution have access to effective mechanisms for timely restitution of their housing, land and property, regardless of whether they return, opt to integrate locally, or settle elsewhere in the country. These standards apply not only to all residential, agricultural, and commercial property, but also to lease and tenancy agreements.

The **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** specify that the relevant governing body (or bodies) sets up “efficient, accessible, and affordable mechanisms to address housing, land and property (HLP) issues and to provide for property restitution and compensation in line with international law. Particular attention must be paid to the rights of returnee women heads of households and the rights of secondary occupants of refugees’ property.”

Legal mechanisms for securing and resolving HLP claims are limited, and disputes are common – primarily related to inheritance, rental, and ownership claims.⁴¹³ GoS-administered land registries do not operation in non-government-controlled areas of NWS. Accordingly local authorities in Idlib, Afrin, and Azaz have begun issuing documents and registering land sales and collecting related taxes and fees.⁴¹⁴ However, these documents are not recognized by GoS registries, and can be vulnerable to fraud.⁴¹⁵ In Idlib, recent evictions have been tied to increased SSG scrutiny of proper existing documentation.⁴¹⁶ **Securing HLP rights is often dependent on having adequate civil documentation**, which many people lack across NWS.⁴¹⁷ While many first turn to family-based mechanisms of conflict resolution, actors including community mukhtars, local Sharia courts, police, and local and municipal councils may be involved in resolution efforts depending on the area and case. Armed actors have also been involved in HLP disputes, most commonly related to eviction, occupation, and access/use cases.⁴¹⁸ Overall, **resolution mechanisms suffer from lack of consistency, limited legal expertise, poor coordination, and lack of transparency and accessibility.**⁴¹⁹

406 ISIMM. IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix

407 H NAP. Shelter Conditions Across North-West Syria. Summer 2021

408 ISIMM. IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix

409 Ibid

410 From 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syria, “Also called spontaneous settlements or self-established camps. They [informal settlements] are a group of tented of other types of housing units established by the IDPs themselves or by non-experienced actors, often erected on land that the occupants have no legal claim to.”

411 NRC. [Displacement, HLP, and Access to Civil Documentation in the North West of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017.

412 H NAP. Shelter Conditions Across North-West Syria. Summer 2021. 3% of households reported facing eviction between summer 2020 and summer 2021.

413 NRC. [Displacement, HLP, and Access to Civil Documentation in the North West of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017.

414 The Day After. [Reality of Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Syria](#). December 2020. And KII with Expert 6

415 KII with Expert 6 and NRC. [Displacement, HLP, and Access to Civil Documentation in the North West of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017.

416 KII with Expert 7.

417 Ibid.

418 NRC. [Displacement, HLP, and Access to Civil Documentation in the North West of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017.

419 NRC. [Displacement, HLP, and Access to Civil Documentation in the North West of the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2017. And KII with Expert 6.

Impact of HLP Conditions on Prospects for Integration and Return

Within NWS, **HLP issues** can create community disputes and create restrictions for humanitarian and development programs, impacting prospects for durable **integration** into the host community. For example, complex and overlapping land registries make HLP due-diligence difficult and time consuming which poses challenges to more durable dignified shelter interventions.⁴²⁰

While more research is needed on exact procedures, current reports indicate that those displaced from NWS have **little recourse for securing their abandoned housing, land, and property**, or accessing new, renewed, or replaced HLP documents.⁴²¹ The ability to resolve these or any HLP claims in court, including those related to inheritance or ownership, are limited by challenges facing the justice systems in NWS generally,⁴²² and even more inaccessible to those physically outside the region.⁴²³ Generally, displaced people appear to have to rely on personal connections and support of any family members present in the area to maintain their HLP claims.⁴²⁴ However, In Idlib, there have been reports of appropriation of land of GoS-supporting absentees.⁴²⁵ In Afrin, reports of appropriation and expropriation land are even more widespread, with numerous claims of confiscation of land without due process.⁴²⁶ Accordingly, HLP issues also impact prospects for return for those whose property has been confiscated, or they are unsure of their ability to claim their lands. Notably, **eviction rates are much higher among returnees**, with 13% of returnee households reporting being evicted between summer 2020 and summer 2021 compared to just 3% of households overall.⁴²⁷

IDPs in NWS from GoS-controlled areas are also subject to HLP concerns that impact their prospects for return including the destruction of property and cases of expropriation, including reports of unilateral sale of HLP by the GoS especially for those originating from recently retaken areas as well as around Damascus.⁴²⁸ There are also **active counterterrorism laws** that allows the seizure and expropriation of properties of terrorism suspects.⁴²⁹ Large numbers of individuals are still being prevented from accessing their homes in GoS areas without compensation.⁴³⁰

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Scope and prevalence of HLP expropriation and appropriation events by actor
- Percentage of HLP claims settled in community mediation, SSG or SIS courts, or through other mechanisms
- Proportion of displaced people holding HLP ownership documents for their original place of residence

420 KII with Expert 5.

421 KII with Expert 6.

422 See access to Justice Section for more information

423 KII with Expert 6

424 Ibid.

425 KII with Expert 7

426 The Day After. [Reality of Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Syria](#). December 2020. And; OHCHR. [Syria: Violations and Abuses Rife in Areas under Turkish-affiliated Armed Groups – Bacelet](#). September 2020. And; UN Human Rights Council. [Statement by the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2021. "To the east in Afrin... members of SNA brigades... looting and appropriating properties throughout areas of control. Many are still unable to return to their homes.

427 HNAP. Shelter Conditions Across North-West Syria. Summer 2021. Overall, 3% of people in non-GoS controlled areas of Aleppo reported being subject to eviction over the previous 12 months compared to 2% in Idlib.

428 Syria Direct. [Security-sponsored investment auctions: a new violation of displaced farmers' property rights in northwestern Syria](#). February 2021. And Human Rights Watch. [Syria: Government Stealing Opponents' Land](#). April 2021.

429 Syrian Law No 19/2012, Law No. 22/2012 and legislative decree No. 63/2012.

430 UN Human Rights Council. [Statement by the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic](#). July 2021.

FAMILY SEPARATION & REUNIFICATION

Guiding indicators:

- Existence of accessible mechanisms to reunite separated family members, including unaccompanied or separated children.
- Proportion of Syrian households with separated family members.

Across Syria, 32% of families surveyed in the summer of 2021 reported one or more missing family members, with the **vast majority of these missing members (90%) being male**. Separations are largely due either to movement outside of Syria or, to a lesser extent, conflict-related deaths. There is **no evidence of significant programming aimed at reuniting separated family members** with family in NWS.

Family Separation Across NWS

In SSG Idlib, 21% of IDP households assessed in the summer of 2021 reported that they had one or more absent family members.⁴³¹ This was reported to be 20% among populations in northern Syria (including OOB and OES territories).⁴³² In 2020, these figures were 16% in northern Syria and 24% in Idlib among IDP households- far below 35% for IDPs in WoS, although updated figures are not yet available.⁴³³ **Family separation has reportedly increased due to COVID-19** quarantines and travel restrictions.⁴³⁴

Family reunification is one of eight **IASC Framework** criteria for durable solutions. Reunification means that: “families separated by displacement should be reunited as quickly as possible, particularly when children, older persons or other vulnerable persons are involved”.

The **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** have two thresholds related to family reunification. One focuses on the principle of family unity being upheld, while the other states that unaccompanied or separated children should not be returned prior to tracing family members.

Child Separation in NWS

Of particular concern in NWS is **child separations**, which are reported by 7% of households surveyed (4% reporting sons under 18 not in the home, 2% daughters, and 1% both). There are a number of reasons for these absences, the most common of which are early marriages, leaving to seek employment, or deaths.⁴³⁵ There are reportedly **cases of child abandonment due to increasingly dire circumstances** in NWS, with instances of families abandoning children due to inability to care for them.⁴³⁶ Others may send children to orphanages or relatives due to the economic situation, where the **humanitarian community has little access**.⁴³⁷

Family Reunification Efforts

Family reunification, whether for voluntary or involuntary separation, are **challenged by international borders or lines of control**, as well as detainment or additional factors. While there have been **attempts made to prevent child separation** through returns of abandoned children or preventative programming,⁴³⁸ there is **little available information on efforts to combat other forms of separation** in NWS.

431 HNAP Syria. Summer 2021 Report Series: Demographic Overview. July 2021.

432 Ibid.

433 HNAP Syria. IDP Demographic Survey 2020. December 2020.

434 KII with Expert 20.

435 Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey). [NWS Protection Dashboard](#). Accessed October 2021.

436 Al-Monitor. [NGOs make case for keeping UN border crossing into Syria open](#). June 2021.

437 KII with Expert 16.

438 Al-Monitor. [NGOs make case for keeping UN border crossing into Syria open](#). June 2021.; KII with Expert 16.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Full extent of child separation in NWS
- Conditions in orphanages and their prevalence in NWS
- Information on programming seeking to contribute to reuniting family members in NWS

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING**Guiding Indicators:**

- Prevalence of displaced persons contributing to decision-making, including returns planning (if relevant) in their places of residence

Individuals displaced to or within NWS, as well as more widely in Syria, are **generally unable to participate in local councils or other government entities**, leaving them **underrepresented in decisions** that affect the regional displacement landscape, including return or local integration initiatives. **IDPs are systematically excluded** from participating in local governance structures and in their selection. While multiple organizations have made efforts to increase IDP representation in local decision-making bodies, challenges remain to including IDPs in systems that are historically closely tied to prominent local families and tribes.⁴³⁹

The **IASC Framework** notes that IDPs must be able to participate in planning of the durable solution they pursue.

The **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** specify the need for refugees and returnees to participate effectively in decision making and planning related to return and reintegration processes.

The principle of “voluntariness” is further elaborated in **UNHCR’s Handbook on Voluntary Repatriation**, which stipulates the absence of any physical, psychological, or material pressure influencing decision-making. It notes that UNHCR should generally be convinced that positive pull factors rather than negative push factors primarily influence decisions to return in order for these to be deemed voluntary, and that only informed decisions can be voluntary.

In regards to durable solution decision making, there is ongoing deportations of Syrians from Turkey through Bab al-Hawa border. Forced IDP returns to or from NWS are not currently occurring, however, numerous factors influence individuals’ durable solutions decision such as political, economic, and security conditions that are largely out of displaced people’s control

Pathways to Turkey

Both SSG/SIG controlled areas have in previous years been convenient stopping points for those seeking to reach Turkey from within the regions themselves and other parts of Syria. Although Turkey was a safe haven for refugees seeking to stay or transit to Europe in the early years of the Syrian conflict, the country began to tighten border security and visa requirements in 2016. More recent years have seen increasingly anti-Syrian rhetoric and policies, refugee arrests and deportations, and stabilization of the number of Syrians residing in Turkey.⁴⁴⁰

In the onset of COVID-19, Turkey closed its borders with even its Syrian enclaves, limiting troop movements in its Syrian zones of operation.⁴⁴¹ In the early months of the pandemic, borders remained closed even to medical patients who previously had been able to obtain special visas to seek treatment in Turkey, with only a reduced number of emergency patients allowed to cross.⁴⁴² Although numbers of those allowed to cross for medical treatments has largely picked back up

439 KII with Expert 24.

440 iMMAP. Thematic Report 3: Return Pathways from Turkey to Syria. April 2021.

441 Carnegie Middle East Center, M. Yahya. [Syria and Coronavirus](#). April 2021.

442 The New Humanitarian. [COVID-19 border closure cuts off Idlib cancer patients from treatment](#). May 2020.

since June of 2020, despite a dip in July 2020, and have remained similar to pre-pandemic figures in the months following.⁴⁴³ Further, Turkey discontinued the prior visa program in September 2021, replacing it with a medical tourism program that places limits on the time patients can spend in Turkey and leaves them to pay for their treatments.⁴⁴⁴

With borders officially closed for entry to Turkey from NWS (with some limited exceptions for humanitarian and/or medical visits⁴⁴⁵), and resumed GoS military activities in the region, Syrians in NWS (and from other regions) have turned to illegal smuggling to cross the border.⁴⁴⁶ In the onslaught of conflict in areas of NWS, people have often fled towards the region's borders, and may seek to travel on to Turkey due to the poor living conditions along the border.⁴⁴⁷ Further, although cross-line checkpoints from GoS areas are officially closed,⁴⁴⁸ individuals reportedly pay thousands of dollars to be smuggled from GoS areas across areas of control to Idlib or northern Aleppo, from which point they attempt to cross the border to Turkey with varied success.⁴⁴⁹ Tunnels are one method that has been utilized by smugglers to transport Syrians from Idlib to Turkey, reportedly with the knowledge and cooperation of HTS.⁴⁵⁰

However, smuggling has become increasingly dangerous, and thus more expensive and difficult.⁴⁵¹ In August 2021, Turkey reportedly conducted a mission to locate and destroy tunnels utilized by smugglers along the border.⁴⁵² Although there are no official data reflecting the extent of smuggling in the region, difficulties posed by COVID-19 closures and other factors contribute to increased costs, likely influencing reduced numbers.

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Attempts to regulate IDP's exit from informal or formal camps
- Factors influencing failure of previous attempts to return

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Guiding Indicators:

- Proportion of target population who feel confident and able to contact local authorities and/or international actors to resolve serious issues related to their physical, material, legal, or psycho-social safety.
- Existence of accessible mechanisms for remedy to violations suffered, and capacity to enact these mechanisms.
- Proportion of target population involved in local reconciliation initiatives, confidence-building initiatives, or formal peace processes in the last 12 months.

With little progress towards a formal peace process and national political solution, **reconciliation initiatives are not underway**, creating uncertainties for the future of this contested region of Syria and severely hinders the ability to move towards durable solutions prospects for the 4.4 million individuals residing in the region. Within NWS itself, the justice sector across regions is weak, **with few remedies for violations** available to residents regardless of area of control.

443 Facebook. [Bab Alhawa Crossing Border](#). Accessed October 2021.

444 Al-Monitor. [Turkey suspends free medical treatment for Syrians](#). September 2021.

445 For more information on these exceptions, please refer to "Health" and "Freedom of Movement".

446 KII with Expert 10.

447 Al-Monitor. [Turkish army on lookout for tunnels in northern Idlib](#). August 2021.

448 Al-Monitor. [Syrians suffer as crossings remain closed, and smuggling operations become pricey](#). December 2020.

449 KII with Expert 10.

450 Al-Monitor. [Turkish army on lookout for tunnels in northern Idlib](#). August 2021.

451 KII with Expert 10.

452 Al-Monitor. [Turkish army on lookout for tunnels in northern Idlib](#). August 2021.

Political Dialogue and Transitional Justice

The current status quo in NWS, with the presence of multiple opposition and international actors in large sections of the region and the absence of political dialogue, reconciliation, and agreements leaves NWS highly vulnerable to renewed conflict. Continued lack of political progress and absence of assurances, capacity, and will to secure conditions that support durable solutions will persist in limiting durable solutions prospects for the vast majority of those displaced to and from NWS. With the future of the region uncertain, and no current pathway towards a political solution, concrete long-term durable solutions planning is largely unfeasible. However, under the current conditions, there is a critical need for interim solutions that are evidence-based and directly relevant to improving immediate conditions for those affected by displacement and, where possible, creating an environment that will be better equipped to support durable solutions in the long-term.

Access to effective remedies and justice are a key component of the **IASC Guidelines**, which emphasize the establishment of mechanisms to remedy past harm to displaced individuals and groups. **UNHCR Protection Thresholds** touch on a range of issues related to access to justice, although remedies are not specified.

Access to Justice in NWS: Areas Under SIG Control

In parts of northern Syria, including OES and OOB territories, the justice sector is impeded by the lack of a legislature, limited enforcement capacity, and a lack of recognition of SIG rulings by some members of the local population. The justice system is **officially administered by the SIG** however, the Turkish government has reportedly funded the establishment of court, assisted with judge selection, and supported in other essential tasks.⁴⁵³ Courts in the OES areas primarily oversee cases regarding marriages and divorces and similarly issues, as well as criminal cases involving murder, kidnapping, possession of weapons, drug and people smuggling, and more.⁴⁵⁴ However, the **system is plagued by challenges** including a shortage of judges and courts, security threats made against judges and lawyers, and reported instances of corruption⁴⁵⁵ and significant challenges to enforcement of decisions.⁴⁵⁶ There are also **significant economic and social constraints to access**.⁴⁵⁷ Rural women are notably unaware of their political rights, having been subject to extended exclusion.⁴⁵⁸ Access to justice for HLP issues in Afrin, where the resident Kurdish population has been largely displaced, is particularly poor.⁴⁵⁹

Many residents under SIG areas eschew the formal justice sector, instead choosing to **resolve disputes informally**.⁴⁶⁰ People seeking to mediate disputes in areas under SIG control often **refer first to community leaders or traditional justice mechanisms**⁴⁶¹ - the latter of which is restricted in some areas by the power exerted by various factions.⁴⁶² Other Non-court methods of resolution include **arbitration and mediation centers**, typically resulting in decisions requiring judicial ratification.⁴⁶³

453 Al-Monitor. [Northern Syria takes step toward new judicial system](#). October 2018.

454 KII with Expert 14.

455 ILAC. [Rule of Law Assessment Report: Syria 2021](#). June 2021.

456 ILAC. [Rule of Law Assessment Report: Syria 2021](#). June 2021.

457 KII with Expert 14.

458 Ibid.

459 KII with Expert 14.

460 Ibid.

461 Ibid.

462 KII with Expert 12.; KII with Expert 14.

463 Ibid.

Access to Justice in NWS: SSG Areas

In neighboring HTS and opposition-controlled areas, weak judicial structures, HTS influence over SSG-administered courts, the lack of a written constitution, and challenges to the legitimacy of SSG court rulings contribute to an environment of “ongoing violence and lawlessness”.⁴⁶⁴ The justice system under the SSG is **largely grounded in sharia** (Islamic law), with the Universal Arab Code⁴⁶⁵ adopted in 2017 and a gradual trend towards alignment with Syrian national law. While the SSG’s Ministry of Justice has issued some decrees to regularize the application *sharia* law in the region, judicial decisions are not published publicly, making it **difficult to ascertain how rulings are determined**.⁴⁶⁶ Judges and other officials **may not have relevant degrees or qualifications**, leaving them with no consistent, uniform basis from which to make legal decisions and thus often leaving cases up to individual interpretations of *Sharia*.⁴⁶⁷ HTS also reportedly **influences some judicial decisions**.⁴⁶⁸

Displaced people are **often limited economically** from accessing formal justice mechanisms or court systems.⁴⁶⁹ Many in of HTS-controlled areas often **resort to community arbitration** before resorting to the formal legal system. However, informal systems in Idlib are limited due to a high degree of SSG interest in maintaining control of access to justice institutions and proceedings.⁴⁷⁰

Across areas of NWS, residents often decline to seek support, informal or otherwise, for sensitive issues such as SGBV, and **matters are resolved privately**, if at all. Communities often have difficulty accessing and affording legal services, with relevant humanitarian efforts focusing on building legal capacity, raising awareness, providing counseling, and other efforts.⁴⁷¹

Key Knowledge Gaps

- Extent of HLP cases heard in court systems across NWS
- Comprehensive overview of basis of legal systems in NWS, particularly in areas under SIG control
- Extent of attempts to make Sharia interpretations more consistent in Idlib

464 ILAC. [Rule of Law Assessment Report: Syria 2021](#). June 2021.

465 The Universal Arab Code or “Unified Arab Code” is a body of law based in Sharia that is utilized by Syrian rebel groups in territories under their control. International Crisis Group. [Silencing the Guns in Syria’s Idlib](#). May 2020.

466 ILAC. [Rule of Law Assessment Report: Syria 2021](#). June 2021.

467 KII with Expert 12.

468 Al-Monitor. [Syrian jihadist group expands control in areas outside Idlib](#). August 2021. SJAC. [The State of Justice: Syria 2021](#). March 2021.; OHCHR. [Press Briefing Note on Syria- Idlib Violations and Abuses](#). November 2020. For example, it has reportedly exerted control over the Idlib branch of the Lawyers Syndicate as only lawyers registered with the organization are able to represent clients in SSG courts. As well as conducted extrajudicial killings outside of court proceedings.

469 Ibid.

470 KII with Expert 14.

471 KII with Expert 8.



CONCLUSION

A comprehensive assessment of physical, material, legal, and psycho-social safety conditions across NWS demonstrates that, for the majority of displaced persons in the region, durable solutions remain out of reach in the near- to medium-term future. Moreover, in many cases host community residents are also experiencing emergency humanitarian conditions that limit their ability to live a safe and dignified life. This report has laid out, at a top-line level, key gaps that can be filled to build an evidence base that would support humanitarian programming, including early recovery programming, that contributes to improvements in material safety to support future pathways towards durable solutions.

Durable solutions challenges will continue to be particularly intractable given ongoing hostilities and the lack of political solutions for the region. It is therefore essential that steps are taken to maintain, strengthen, or expand humanitarian programming where relevant, in order to prevent further back-sliding in areas where gains have been made. Moreover, humanitarian actors should continue to advocate on behalf of displaced Syrians in NWS, including supporting their rights to durable solutions in the future. In doing so, stakeholders may contribute to creating conditions that allow for the sustainable return or reintegration of IDPs in a manner that is voluntary, informed, and dignified.

ANNEX 1: DATA AVAILABILITY

The below table summarizes existing data gaps for each of the indicators in the analytical framework. These are also mentioned at the end of each indicator section and are not comprehensive.

Physical Safety	
Indicator	Existing Data Gaps
Proportion of target population experiencing imposed or self-imposed restrictions to their freedom of movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of detainment at checkpoints across NWS • Frequency of detainment due to lack of civil documentation • Impact of current escalations on freedom of movement
Proportion of target population who report that they, or a relative or friend, have been subjected to physical violence in the previous 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent and forms of non-conflict related crime in Idlib and Afrin • Full extent of ISIS and armed-group presence in areas of NWS • Occurrence and frequency of kidnapping in NWS
Proportion of target population who report that they, or a relative or friend, have been subjected to sexual or gender-based violence in the previous 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of sexual harassment in NWS across areas • Frequency of occurrence of all forms of SGBV • Situation of LGBTQI individuals in NWS • Data on SGBV in detention
Proportion of target population feeling safe in their place of residence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of safety by community type
Proportion of target population who report feeling concerns about future (further) displacement or forced return/relocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent qualitative and quantitative information on forced returns to NWS • Data on existence of forced returns to NWS from other parts of Syria or forced returns from NWS
Proportion of target population concerned that they, or a relative or friend, are at risk of forced conscription or recruitment into armed groups, including the Syrian Arab Army.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HTS intentions surrounding potential future recruitment, forced or otherwise • Detailed recruitment strategies by opposition groups in NWS
Psycho-social safety	
Indicator	Existing Data Gaps
Proportion of target population claiming to have access to social support networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of community centers on social cohesion and social support in various communities across NWS • Distribution of forms of community centers across NWS • Detailed information on manifestations of tensions between different population groups
Proportion of target population who report feeling part of their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above

Proportion of target population reporting having been discriminated against in the past 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative data on experiences of discrimination in specific circumstances (education, health, etc.) Current status of anti-Kurdish discrimination Data on discrimination against returnees
Proportion of the displaced population reporting having access to timely, reliable information relevant to their situation and decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to information by location of displacement and gender Information on potential returnees who are undecided or have decided against returns based on information received, and the types and sources of this information
Material Safety	
Indicator	Existing Data Gaps
Proportion of target population reporting access to essential (physical) health services in the past 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of utilization of private sector health care Attempts to provide education/ training for additional regional health workers
Proportion of target population living in adequate housing (sufficient living space, durable housing structure).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current status of HTS taxation on new construction Affordability or changes in rents in informal sites
Proportion of target population living in housing with sufficient access to electricity and heating fuel in the past 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damage assessments to local electricity infrastructure Scope and funding of electricity and other infrastructure rehabilitation programs Sufficiently detailed electricity networks in Idlib and SSG area
Proportion of target population with access to safe, affordable water in sufficient quantities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of inadequate water on COVID-19 spread Mapping of water trucking and providers across areas Sources for increased reports of water born illnesses
Primary school net attendance ration in target population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed education infrastructure damage assessments Updated school attendance and education data post COVID-19; disaggregated by displacement history Average distance to nearest primary and secondary school by village and displacement history Average class size by area location and setting
Existence of processes recognized by Syrian authorities for the equivalency of academic/ professional and vocational certificates, degrees and diplomas obtained during displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above

Proportion of households in target population with acceptable food consumption, based on the Food Consumption Score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full impact of NES water challenges on NWS food security • Data on agricultural harvests and impact of climate issues, bombings within NWS
Proportion of target population accessing humanitarian cash programs (in contexts where humanitarian assistance is being provided)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts at social programming by relevant authorities in Idlib • Extent of informal social support provided by local communities • Extent of monitoring of FSPs by PMA
Proportion of target population covered under state- administered social protection programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
Proportion of target population employed in formal and informal sectors (employment rate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal and formal sector definitions and statistic in the context of NWS • Extent of “public sector” employment in regions on NWS, given lack of recognized authorities
Proportion of target population living below the poverty line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
Legal Safety	
Indicator	Existing Data Gaps
Proportion of target population currently in possession of valid civil documents among birth certificates, national ID cards or other personal identification document (e.g., birth certificate, Syrian family booklet, death/ marriage certificates, other) by type of document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of people missing key documents by displacement, camp vs. urban, gender, age, and by type of document • Detailed procedures for obtaining civil documents issued by SIG or SSG offices and barriers to access by displacement history, gender, ethnicity etc.
Existence of safe and accessible mechanisms for obtaining/replacing documents for all Syrian nationals in Syria and abroad without discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
Proportion of target population with secure tenure over housing, land, and property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and prevalence of HLP expropriation and appropriation events by actor • Percentage of HLP claims settled in community mediation, SSG or SIS courts, or through other mechanisms • Proportion of displaced people holding HLP ownership documents for their original place of residence
Existence of accessible mechanisms for resolving housing, land, and property disputes/ claims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
Existence of accessible mechanisms to reunite separated family members, including unaccompanied or separated children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full extent of child separation in NWS • Conditions in orphanages and their prevalence in NWS • Information on programming seeking to contribute to reuniting family members in NWS

<p>Proportion of target population households with separated family members, by type of separation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
<p>Prevalence of displaced persons contributing to decision-making, including returns planning (if relevant) in their places of residence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to regulate IDP's exit from informal or formal camps • Factors influencing failure of previous attempts to return
<p>Proportion of target population who feel confident and able to contact local authorities and/or international actors to resolve serious issues related to their physical, material, legal, or psycho-social safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of HLP cases heard in court systems across NWS • Comprehensive overview of basis of legal systems in NWS, particularly in areas under SIG control • Extent of attempts to make Sharia interpretations more consistent in Idlib
<p>Existence of accessible mechanisms for remedy to violations suffered, and capacity to enact these mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
<p>Proportion of target population involved in local reconciliation initiatives, confidence-building initiatives, or formal peace processes in the last 12 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.



ANNEX 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The Analytical Framework draws its design and indicators from the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, the ReDSS Solutions Framework, JIPS Durable Solutions Indicator Library, the INGO Durable Solutions Indicator Framework, and UNHCR's Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria. Its purpose is to put forth a framework that is specific to the Syria displacement context and can be used to assess progress towards durable solutions for displaced Syrians both inside and outside the country. This framework is an analytical tool that helps researchers, monitoring and evaluation teams, and other actors to better incorporate a durable solutions lens into their methodologies, research tool design, report writing, and other efforts aimed at increasing knowledge on displacement in the Syria context. It is appropriate for use both inside Syria as well as in nearby states hosting Syrian refugees. By creating a shared set of indicators by which organizations can collect data on and assess progress towards durable solutions, this framework is intended to not only increase the analytic rigor of individual research efforts, but also contribute to an information landscape where evidence on durable solutions is being gathered in a meaningful and mutually intelligible manner. As more organizations collect and share durable solutions data according to a shared framework, more data can be combined to monitor progress towards durable solutions for displaced Syrians.

NOTES ON USING THIS FRAMEWORK

1. If one is wishing to conduct a holistic assessment of durable solutions conditions for a given area or population, it is suggested that all indicators are utilized so as to obtain a full picture of relevant physical, psycho-social, material, and legal dimensions affecting a target population. However, in the case of a specific project, or more targeted thematic research, it is possible to only utilize the indicators, survey questions, and proxy indicators that are relevant to the task at hand. For example, a livelihoods researcher wishing to add a durable solutions lens to their work may focus on indicators related to material safety. Similarly, the M&E team of an education intervention may wish to measure indicators related to education only and choose to monitor these indicators over the course of their project's lifespan.
2. Conducting research on durable solutions in the Syria displacement context can often be sensitive, particularly if collecting information from displaced Syrians themselves. In all cases, it is essential that researchers assess the **protection risks** of collecting information on a given indicator in their given context. In some cases, in order to minimize protection risks, it is suggested that data on an indicator be collected through key informant interviews and literature review rather than from the target population itself.
3. The word **target population** is used throughout this framework and means the total population living in a displacement-affected community – both displaced (IDPs or refugees) and non-displaced households. Progress towards any one durable solutions indicator can be calculated by comparing measurements for displaced Syrians against their non-displaced counterparts. The discrepancy (or lack thereof) between displaced and non-displaced members is the primary measure by which progress towards durable solutions can be assessed.
4. When the displaced population experiences equal physical, psycho-social, legal, and material safety conditions as their non-displaced counterparts, as defined by the indicator matrix below, a durable solution to that population's displacement can be assessed to have occurred. However, it is important to note that both inside and outside Syria, conditions may occur where both displaced and non-displaced community members are experiencing similar levels of vulnerability, where they are unable to achieve key safety thresholds. In such cases, even if both displaced and non-displaced populations are assessed to be experiencing similar conditions, a durable solution has not been achieved.
5. Displacement status is the key level of disaggregation when assessing progress towards durable solutions. However, when possible, to do so, gender and age disaggregated data should also be collected and assessed, along with other demographics as needed. Where relevant, other disaggregation may be advisable, such as ethnic, religious, place of origin, or other dimensions.
6. This framework is a tool for organizations to generate data that can be cross analyzed across organizations and research initiatives. To maximize data interoperability, the framework includes suggestions for **survey questions, additional proxy indicators, and other complementary measurements**.

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Indicators: Inside Syria	Suggested Survey Questions	Suggested Proxy Indicators and Complementary Measurements
Physical Safety	Physical Safety	<p>Proportion of target population experiencing imposed or self-imposed restrictions to their freedom of movement.</p> <p>Proportion of target population who report that they, or a relative or friend, have been subjected to physical violence in the previous 12 months.</p> <p>Proportion of target population who report that they, or a relative or friend, have been subjected to sexual or gender-based violence in the previous 12 months.</p> <p>Proportion of target population feeling safe in their place of residence.</p> <p>5.a. Proportion of target population who report feeling displacement or forced return/relocation</p> <p>6. Proportion of target population concerned that they, or a relative or friend, are at risk of forced conscription or recruitment into armed groups, including the Syrian Arab Army.</p>	<p>**Assess protection risks before asking any question in this framework**</p> <p>1.a. "Do you or your family members experience restrictions on your movement(s) in your community and surrounding area? If yes, why?"</p> <p>1.b. "Do you or your family members modify or restrict your movement(s) in your community or the surrounding area? If yes, why?"</p> <p>2. "Have you, and/or a close family member or friend, experienced physical violence or harm in the past year? If yes, and you feel comfortable to do so, please provide details."</p> <p>3. Unlikely to receive accurate survey responses. Utilize proxy indicators.</p> <p>4. "Do you feel safe in your place of residence?"</p> <p>5. "Are you afraid that you, a relative, or close friend is in danger of being forcibly returned to Syria? If yes, why?"</p> <p>6. "Are you aware of any past or current conscription campaigns in the community?"</p>	<p>1. Qualitative experiences of checkpoints and other security mechanisms; existence of policies and practices restricting movement</p> <p>2. Total reported incidents of targeted violence, compiled by analysis units and human rights monitors; Qualitative experiences of physical violence gathered across all indicators</p> <p>3. Total reported incidents of SGBV compiled by human rights monitors, by number and type; qualitative experiences of SGBV</p> <p>4. Total reported safety incidents compiled by analysis units and human rights monitors, by number and type</p> <p>5. Total reported incidents of retaliation, compiled by border crossings (such as Babal-Hawa) and human rights monitors; total reported incidents of forced population movement within borders</p> <p>6. Total reported forced recruitment incidents compiled by analysis units and human rights monitors, by number and type; existence of coercive recruitment policies and practices; qualitative experiences of forced recruitment</p>
Psycho-social Safety	Social Support Networks	<p>7. Proportion of target population claiming to have access to social support networks.</p> <p>8. Proportion of target population who report feeling part of their community.</p>	<p>7. "Do you have a person in your community that you can go to for help if needed?"</p> <p>8. "How close do you feel to people in your community?"</p>	<p>7. Existence of community centers and/or community-based protection schemes such as collaboratives, parent-teacher associations, etc.</p> <p>8. Demographic clustering within a given community; existence of policies and regulations that prevent integration of different demographic groups (i.e., by restricting movement, property ownership, or rental contracts in or to certain areas)</p>
	Discrimination	<p>9. Proportion of target population reporting having been discriminated against in the past 12 months.</p>	<p>9. "Have you, a family member, or a close friend been discriminated against in the past 12 months? If yes, why do you think this happened?"</p>	<p>9. Qualitative accounts of discriminatory practices; host community perceptions of the displaced population</p>
	Access to information	<p>10. Proportion of the displaced population reporting having access to timely, reliable information relevant to their situation and decision making</p>	<p>10. "Do you feel that you have access to information that you need for you and your family to access the services you need? If no, to make informed decisions about future plans for settlement?"</p>	<p>10. Analysis of available information provision and sources; transparency and predictability of government policies in relation to refugees/IDPs</p>
Material Safety	Health	<p>11. Proportion of target population reporting access to essential (physical) health services in the past 12 months.</p>	<p>11. "Over the last 3 months, has your household had regular and adequate access to health services (including pharmacies)?"</p>	<p>11. Mapping of health services in target area; Existence of policies that facilitate or limit health access for displaced population</p>

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Indicators: Inside Syria	Suggested Survey Questions	Suggested Proxy Indicators and Complementary Measurements
	Housing and Essential Services	<p>12. Proportion of target population living in adequate housing (sufficient living space, durable housing structure).</p> <p>13. Proportion of target population living in housing with sufficient access to electricity and heating fuel in the past 12 months.</p> <p>14. Proportion of target population with access to safe, affordable water in sufficient quantities</p>	<p>All: "What is your household's highest- priority need? (list services)"</p> <p>12. See indicators in right-hand column; all can be assessed in survey form</p> <p>13. Over the past 12 months, has your household had regular and adequate access to electricity/heating fuel?</p> <p>14. Over the past 12 months, has your household had regular and adequate access to safe drinking water?</p>	<p>12. For target population: types of settlements, types of shelters, types of occupancy (owner, renting, etc.); number of families living in a shelter; Proportion of destroyed or damaged dwellings in community, compiled by context monitors</p> <p>13. Electrical coverage in target community; Cost of electricity and fuel; Qualitative barriers to meeting needs</p> <p>14. Prevalence of water pumping, water trucks; Cost of water pumping or trucks; Qualitative barriers to meeting needs</p>
	Education	<p>15. Primary school net attendance ration in target population</p> <p>16.a. Existence of processes recognized by Syrian authorities for the equivalency of academic/professional and vocational certificates, degrees and diplomas obtained during displacement.</p>	<p>15. If enrollment rates are being collected in target region, indicator can be answered without survey. If not, may ask households with school-age children: "Over the past 12 months has your household had regular access to education (schools)?"</p> <p>"Do you feel that your child/children is/ are receiving an acceptable quality of education?"</p> <p>16. a+b. Indicator can be answered through literature review and interviews with education professionals</p>	<p>15. Cost of education; Mapping of functioning schools in target area; Existence of policies that facilitate or limit access to education</p> <p>16. a+b. Qualitative experiences of education quality and availability</p>
	Food Security	<p>17. Proportion of households in target population with acceptable food consumption, based on the Food Consumption Score.</p>	<p>17. Food Consumption Scores are compiled by WFP and other organizations, no survey question needed.</p>	<p>17. Cost of essential food items; qualitative perspectives of food quality and availability at the household level</p>
	Social Protection	<p>18. Proportion of target population accessing humanitarian cash programs (in contexts where humanitarian assistance is being provided)</p> <p>19. Proportion of target population covered under state-administered social protection programs.</p>	<p>18. Utilize indicators in the right-hand column</p> <p>19. Utilize indicators in the right-hand column</p>	<p>18. Total cash programming beneficiaries; Percent of target population receiving cash assistance; Adequacy of cash disbursement to meet basic needs</p> <p>19. Existence of social protection programs; Qualitative experiences of receiving social protection assistance; Adequacy of programs to meet basic needs</p>
	Income and Employment	<p>20. Proportion of target population employed in formal and informal sectors (employment rate)</p> <p>21. Proportion of target population living below the poverty line</p>	<p>20. What was your average household income in the last month? What are the main livelihood activities that your household gains income from [list]?" "What are the main barriers to members of your household gaining stable employment/diversifying income sources [list]?"</p> <p>21. How much did your household spend on the following items in the last month [list - shelter, food, etc.]?; Is your household's monthly income enough to meet its needs? If no, what other income-generating opportunities does the family pursue?"</p> <p>22. "Do you hold a valid work permit?"</p>	<p>20. Most prevalent kinds of employment in target location</p> <p>21. Average income in target location; Qualitative experiences of poverty and/or negative livelihood coping methods</p> <p>20. Work permit policies and limitations; work permit processing times; Qualitative experiences of obtaining or utilizing work permit</p>

Criteria	Sub- Criteria	Indicators: Inside Syria	Suggested Survey Questions	Suggested Proxy Indicators and Complementary Measurements
Legal Safety	Access to personal and other documentation	<p>23. Proportion of target population currently in possession of valid civil documents among: birth certificates, national ID cards or other personal identification document (e.g., birth certificate, Syrian family booklet, death/ marriage certificates, other) by type of document.</p> <p>24. Existence of safe and accessible mechanisms for obtaining/replacing documents for all Syrian nationals in Syria and abroad without discrimination</p>	<p>23 + 24. Do you and all your family members have official [government of Syria and/or host government] documentation? [List]"; "If missing documentation, what are the top three reasons why [List]?" ; if missing documentation, what are the top three impacts of missing these documents?"; (Inside Syria) Have you or your family members obtained civil documentation issued by non-governmental local entities? if yes, specify"</p>	<p>23. Qualitative experiences of risks incurred due to lack of documentation; Qualitative descriptions of policies vs. practices</p> <p>24. Description and assessment of processes to obtain/replace documents; Qualitative descriptions of process to obtain/replace documents</p>
	Effective and accessible mechanisms to restore HLP	<p>25. Proportion of target population with secure tenure over housing, land, and property.</p> <p>26. Existence of accessible mechanisms for resolving housing, land, and property disputes/claims.</p>	<p>25. "Do you believe your household is at risk of losing your current place of residence? if yes, why?" ;viii; See suggested questions and proxy indicators for indicator 12</p> <p>26. Indicator can be answered through literature review and interviews with HLP experts</p>	<p>25. Total reported incidents of HLP violations, compiled by analysis units and human rights monitors</p> <p>26. Qualitative accounts of HLP policies vs. practices</p>
	Family Reunification	<p>27. Existence of accessible mechanisms to reunite separated family members, including unaccompanied or separated children.</p> <p>28. Proportion of target population households with separated family members, by type of separation</p>	<p>27. Indicator can be answered through literature review and interviews with family separation experts</p> <p>28. "Are any members of your household currently not living with you? (list by length absent, age, gender, family relation, reason for absence)"</p>	<p>27. Civil society responses to support family reunification; Awareness of available mechanisms among families with absent members</p> <p>28. Barriers to family reunification; Qualitative consequences of family separation</p>
	Participation in public affairs	<p>29.a. Prevalence of displaced persons contributing to decision-making, including returns planning (if relevant) in their places of residence</p>	<p>29.a+b. "Do you feel included in government and NGO discussions about your conditions of displacement? Of your potential return (to Syria/home community)?"</p>	<p>29. Description and assessment of existing initiatives</p>
	Access to effective remedies and justice	<p>30. Proportion of target population who feel confident and able to contact local authorities and/or international actors to resolve serious issues related to their physical, material, legal, or psycho-social safety.</p> <p>31. Existence of accessible mechanisms for remedy to violations suffered, and capacity to enact these mechanisms.</p> <p>32. Proportion of target population involved in local reconciliation initiatives, confidence-building initiatives, or formal peace processes in the last 12 months.</p>	<p>30. "If you experience a problem or dispute, who would you go to in order to solve it [list]?"</p> <p>31. Indicator can be answered through literature review and expert interviews</p> <p>32. Indicator can be answered through literature review and interviews with transitional justice experts</p>	<p>30. Description of local services and justice entities and processes</p> <p>31. Total available pathways for remedy; qualitative experiences of seeking remedy</p> <p>32. Description and assessment of consultation processes</p>



