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Rapid needs assessment in response to conflict escalation in Greater Idlib

October 2023 | Northwest Syria

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Since 5 October, Greater Idlib has been hit by a series of airstrikes and shelling attacks. [Estimates as of 13 October](#) for affected areas in Idlib and Western Aleppo are that at least 53 people have been killed, 303 injured and 68,000 displaced. In addition to this, it has also been reported that access to essential services has been disrupted and critical infrastructure has been damaged.

These developments follow a steadily worsening humanitarian situation in the region in general and have exacerbated several preexisting challenges and trends. In response to the conflict escalation, REACH carried out a rapid needs assessment (RNA) to provide humanitarian actors with timely information about related humanitarian impacts and needs.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This RNA was conducted using a key informant (KI) methodology at the community level. REACH enumerators interviewed 1 KI per community relying on REACH's extensive KI network in Greater Idlib. The brief presents information gathered from 199 communities across Greater Idlib. Communities were selected based on a pre-assessment conducted by REACH to identify the locations that have been most affected by the conflict escalation.

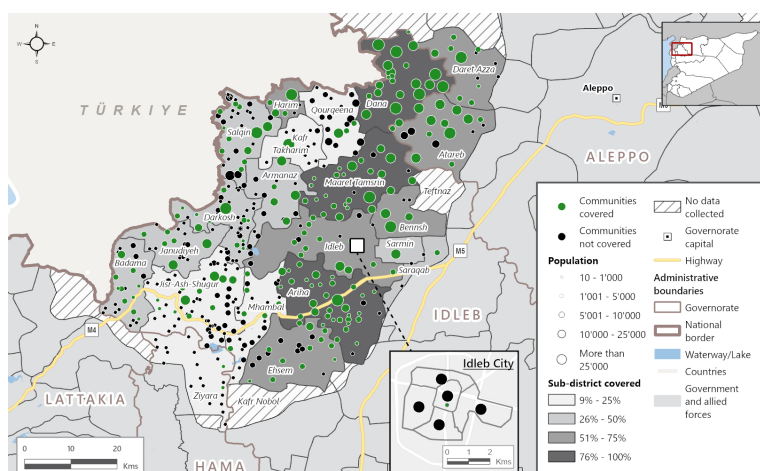
Data collection took place on the 10-11 October. For the selection of communities, REACH conducted a pre-assessment to include those communities which have been most severely affected by the attacks and which showed strong patterns/movements of displacement. All indicators refer to the situation since the conflict escalation on 5 October up to the date of data collection.

KEY MESSAGES

- The escalation has led to **significant displacement across Greater Idlib** as well as a **range of protection concerns**, including family separation and psychological trauma.
- Findings indicate that **the bombardments in Greater Idlib have had negative impacts on households' access to basic services** across all sub-districts.
- Education was the most significantly impacted basic service across sub-districts**, with nearly all communities reporting the closure of educational facilities.
- As a result of conflict escalation, **the fear of insecurity, particularly with regard to travel**, has been a significant barrier for access to a range of basic services.
- Closure of key institutions**, including schools, workplaces, and markets have also prevented access to basic services, **but direct damage to infrastructure is less widely reported**.

Where possible, the brief also draws on relevant indicators from the August round of [Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria \(HSOS\)](#) for indicative comparative purposes. Findings are indicative rather than representative and should not be generalised across the population and the region. The complete dataset and descriptive analysis can be accessed [here](#).

Coverage Map: Assessed communities in Greater Idlib



Displacement and protection issues

The conflict escalation has led to significant displacement across Greater Idlib, illustrated in Map 1. As such, KIs in 91% of assessed communities reported the risk of displacement due to the conflict escalation as a protection issue. [Secondary sources](#) and REACH's ongoing dedicated displacement tracking continue to monitor displacement across the region. It is worth noting that IDPs displaced since the start of the hostilities have started returning to their previous locations.

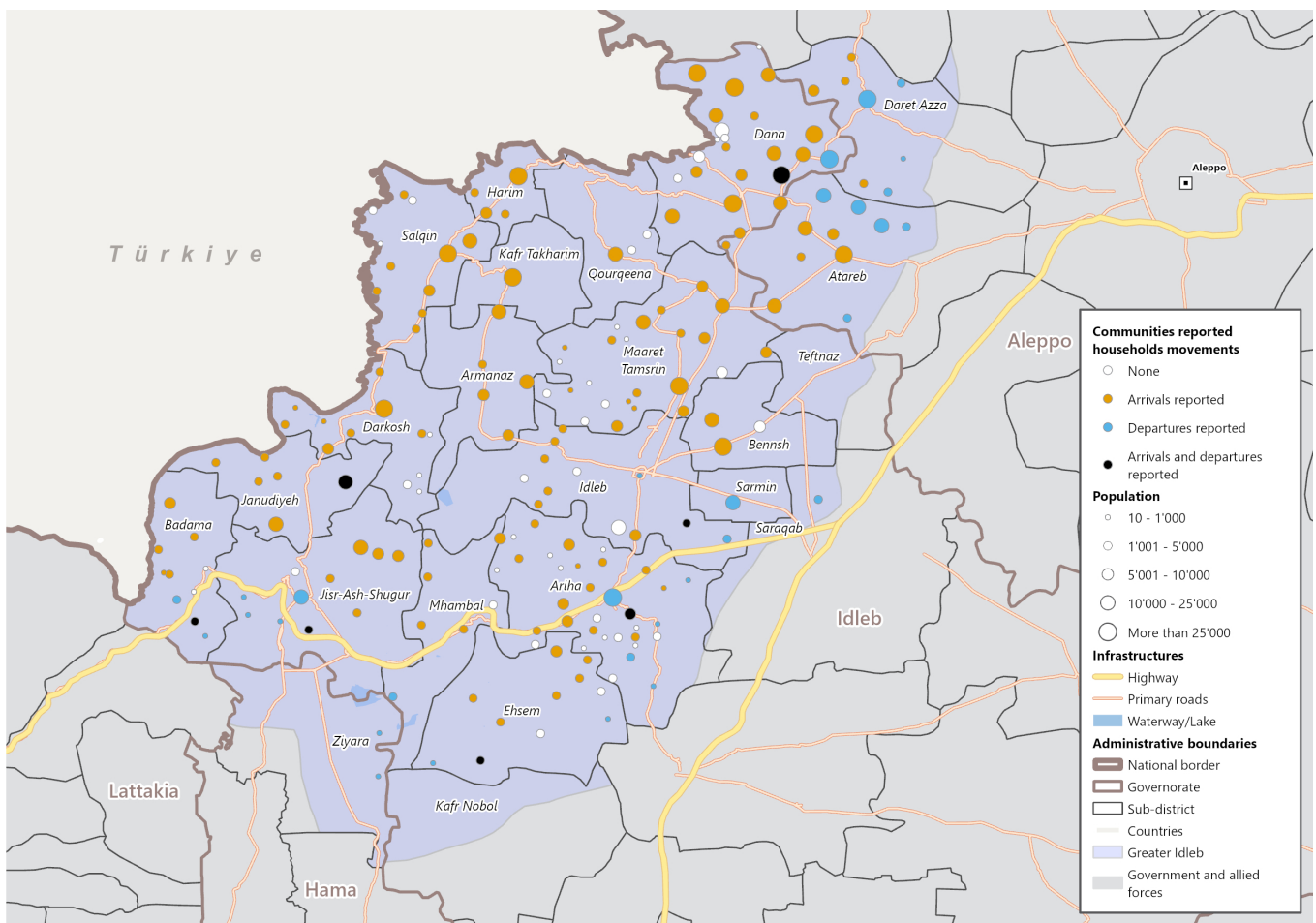
In terms of protection issues, the risk of shelling and airstrikes was reported by KIs in 52% of assessed communities. In addition to safety concerns from conflict, the issues of family separation (20%), psychological trauma (19%), and lost civil documentation (16%), were also prevalent.

High reports of psychological trauma align with [secondary data sources](#), which highlighted that the provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) was among the top pressing protection needs following the conflict escalation in the region.

Protection issues reported across all assessed communities (% of 199 assessed communities)



Map 1: Reported displacements in Greater Idlib since 5 October



Reduced access to basic services and livelihoods

Percentage of KIs reporting access had significantly decreased since 5 October

Districts	Markets	Health	Education	Water	Electricity	Livelihoods
Ariha (51)*	39%	59%	100%	24%	6%	59%
As-Suqaylabiyah (2)	50%	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Harim (47)	4%	4%	85%	2%	4%	6%
Idleb (41)	39%	54%	100%	15%	100%	49%
Jebel Saman (19)	68%	68%	100%	16%	21%	74%
Jisr-Ash-Shugur (39)	21%	23%	85%	10%	0%	18%

0% 50% 100%

*Numbers of assessed communities per district

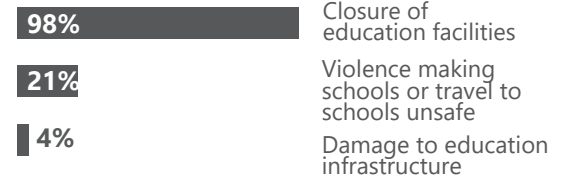
Education

Change in access to education as of 5 October (by % of assessed communities)



Education is **the most severely impacted basic service across sub-districts**. In 17 out of 21 of the assessed sub-districts all KIs reported a significantly decrease in access to education.

Most commonly reported barriers to accessing education (by % of assessed communities)



Electricity

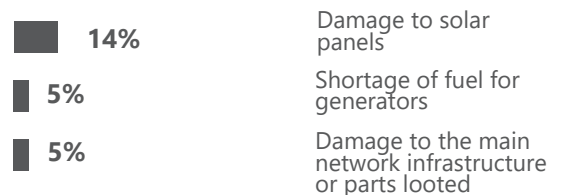
Change in access to electricity as of 5 October (by % of assessed communities)



64%

Of community KIs in REACH's [August HSOS*](#) reported **solar panels are the main source of electricity**. This RNA finds damage to solar panels as the **most widely reported barrier to accessing electricity** across communities.

Most commonly reported barriers to accessing electricity (by % of assessed communities)



Livelihoods

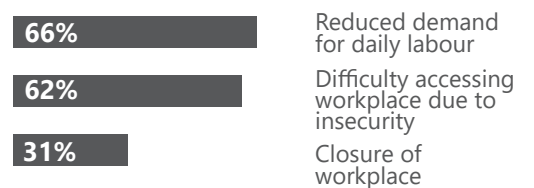
Change in access to markets as of 5 October (by % of assessed communities)



93%

Of community KIs in REACH's [August HSOS](#) reported **daily labour as a common source of meeting basic needs**. This RNA finds reduced demand for daily labour to be the **most widely reported barrier to accessing livelihoods** across communities.

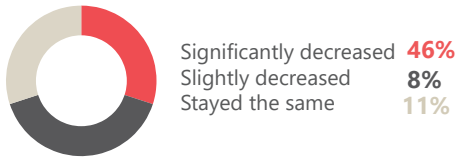
Most commonly reported barriers to accessing livelihoods (by % of assessed communities)



* Humanitarian Situation Overview of Syria (HSOS) assessment.

Markets

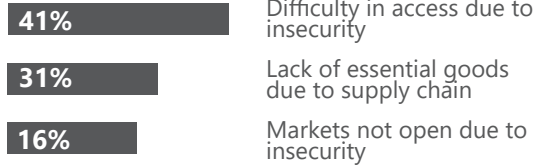
Change in access to markets as of 5 October (by % of assessed communities)



81%

Of communities in which KIs reported **households purchased food from stores and markets** in REACH [August HSOS](#).

Most commonly reported barriers to accessing markets (by % of assessed communities)



Health

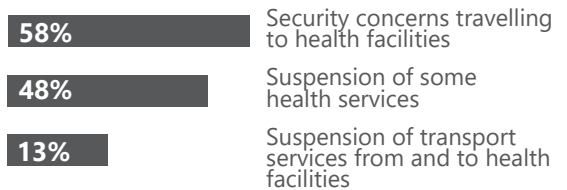
Change in access to health as of 5 October (by % of assessed communities)



58%

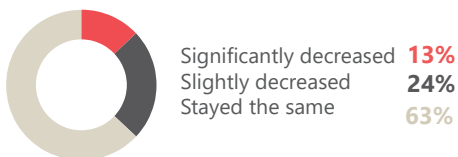
Of assessed communities where KIs reported **security concerns in traveling to health facilities** suggesting a substantial change from the [August HSOS](#) where no KIs reported this barrier.

Most commonly reported barriers to accessing markets (by % of assessed communities)



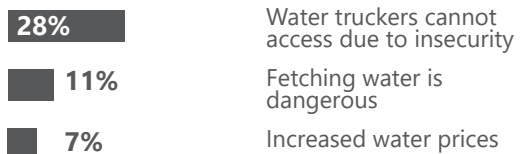
Water

Change in access to drinking water as of 5 October (by % of assessed communities)

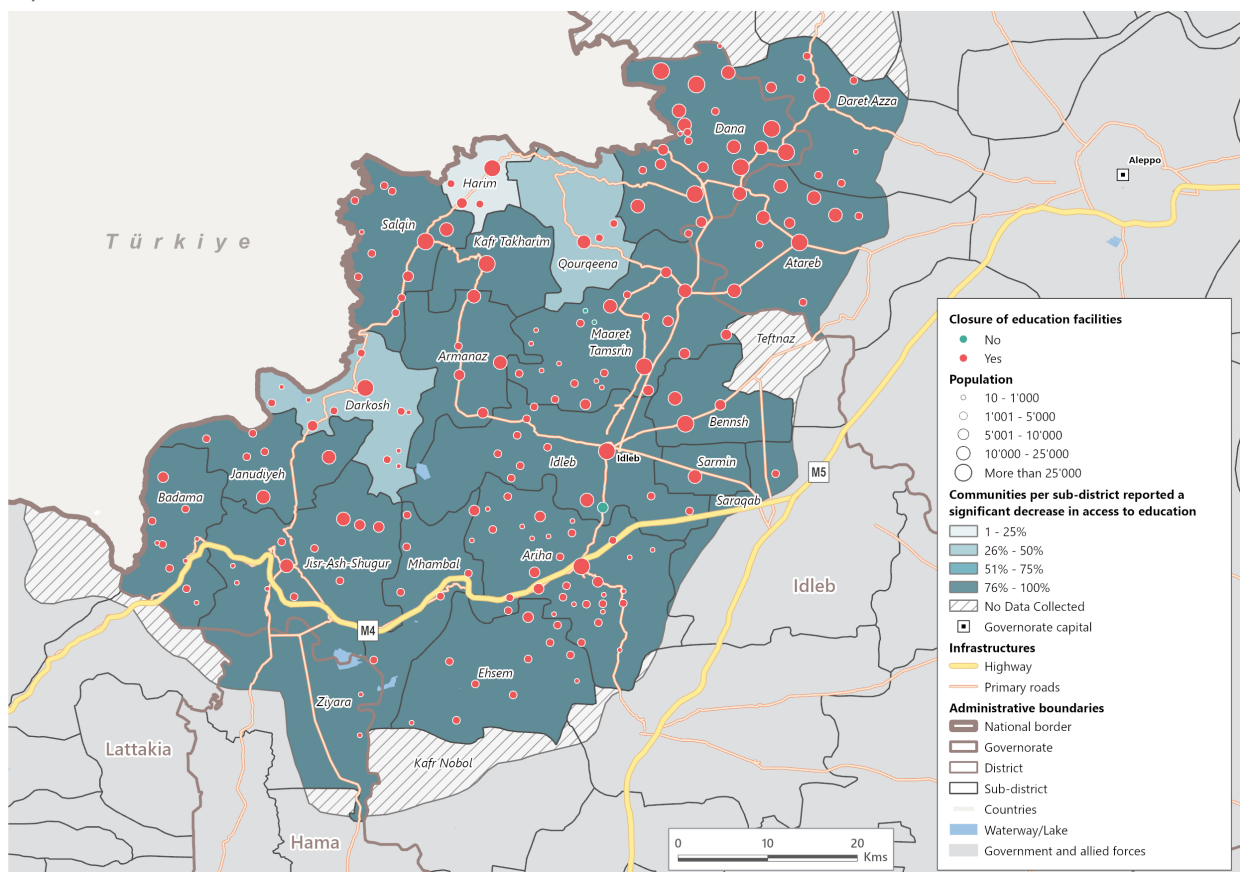


In the sub-districts of Ziyara, Darkosh, Kafr Takhar, Badama, and Harim all community KIs reported **no barriers in access to drinking water**.

Most commonly reported barriers to accessing drinking water (by % of assessed communities)



Map 2: Impacts to education access



Cross-cutting barriers

The findings show that one of the biggest barriers assessed communities in Greater Idlib face in accessing basic services is the fear of insecurity, particularly with regard to travel.

Across education, health and livelihoods, KIs report barriers in this regard. 62% of assessed communities reported difficulty in accessing workplaces due to insecurity, 58% reported security concerns in travelling to health facilities, and 21% reported that violence makes travel to education facilities unsafe.

The findings also show that the barriers to safe travel are not necessarily related to movement restrictions or physical access constraints. For instance, whilst 53% of assessed communities reported difficulty in accessing markets due to insecurity, only 3% reported difficulty in access due to physical access constraints.

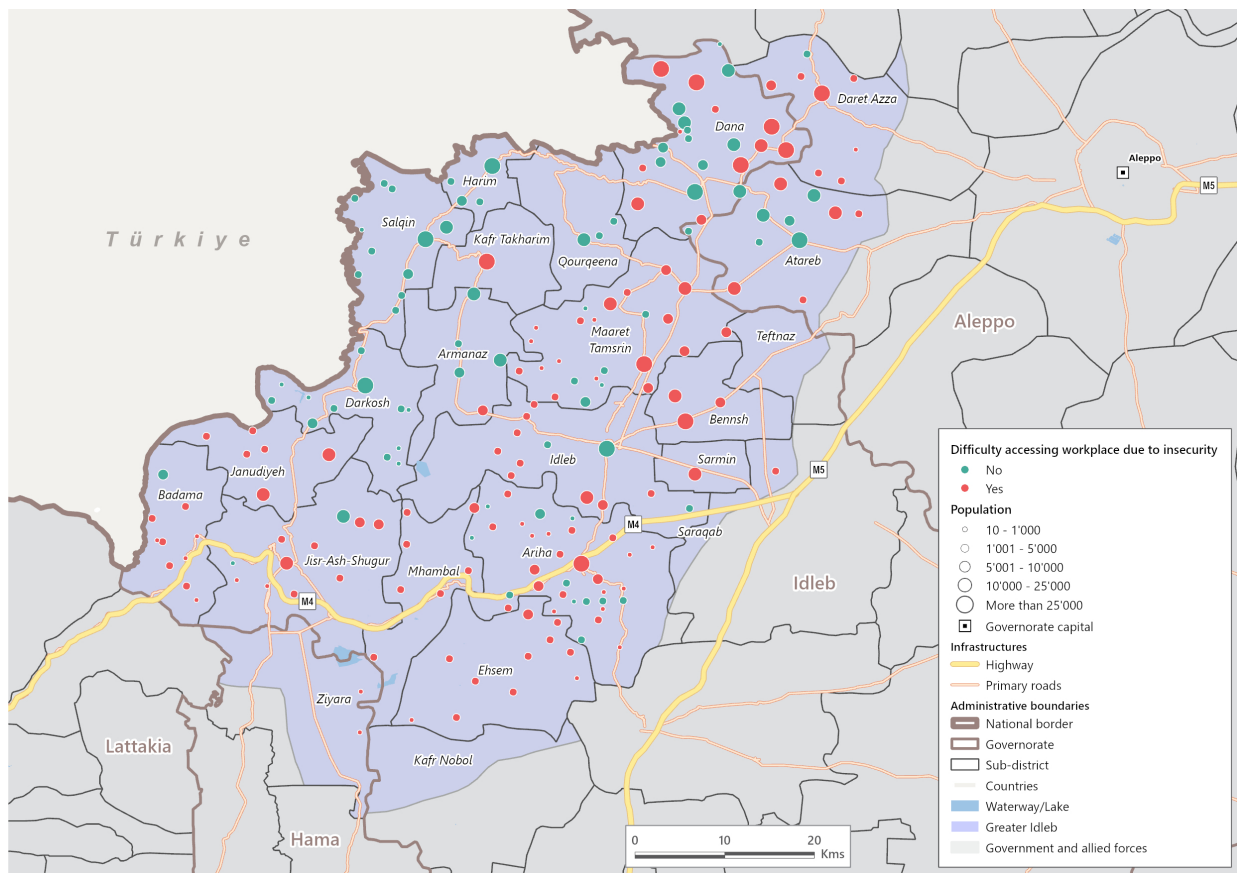
All of this indicates that the threat of insecurity is having a damaging effect on the ability of affected communities to meet their basic needs.

In addition to the fear of insecurity, another cross-cutting barrier to the access of basic services is the closure of key institutions.

This is most prevalent in education, where 98% of communities reported the closure of education facilities. This is line with the news reports from [secondary sources](#) that local authorities have ordered the closure of schools until further notice. The rapid and severe impacts that the recent escalation has had is underlined by a comparison to REACH's [June HSOS](#) data, where 91% of assessed communities reported that education facilities were functioning.

A similarly stark contrast is found in access to markets, where the findings show that the closure of markets has been reported by KIs in 31% of communities across Greater Idlib. Whereas, in REACH's [August HSOS](#) data, only 1% of communities reported markets not opening due to security issues.

Map 3: Difficulty in accessing workplaces due to insecurity



A counter intuitive finding from this assessment has been the relatively low reporting of damage to infrastructure, with KIs in the sub-districts of Bannash, Darkosh, Harim, Janudiyeh, Kafr Takharim and Ziyara not indicating damage as a barrier across any basic services.

Even with access to healthcare, where 39% of community KIs reported a significant decrease in access, only in 6% of affected communities was there reports of damage to health facilities.

A similar trend is found in access to water where the findings show that damage to water networks and water stations was only reported in 1% and 2% of communities respectively. The same is true with

electricity, where damage to the main electricity network was reported in only 5% of assessed communities. However, damage to solar panels, which according to REACH [HSOS data](#) is the main source of electricity in 64% of assessed communities in Greater Idleb, was more prevalent (14% of assessed communities).

Taken together, this indicates that whilst damage to infrastructure is still evident across communities in Greater Idleb, it is not the primary barrier restricting access to basic services. Instead, the findings indicate that **the threat from insecurity which restricts safe travel and forces the closure of key institutions is a bigger impediment.**

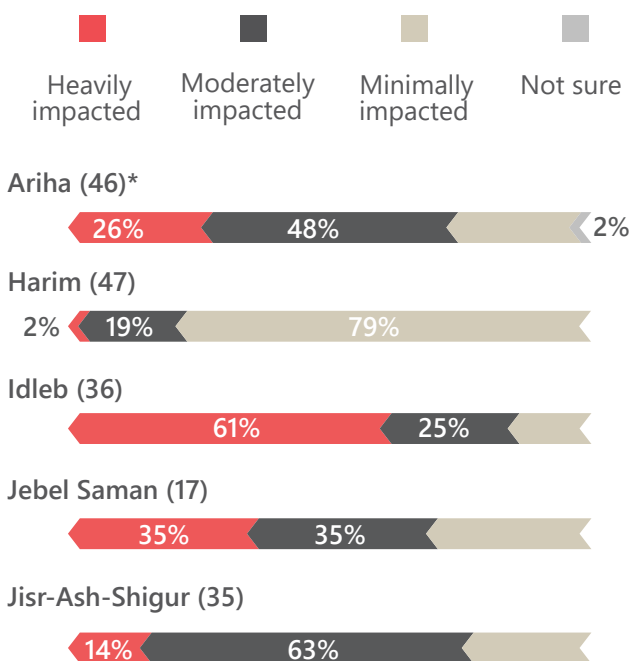
Access to humanitarian aid

Among the 91% of KIs that reported their community was receiving humanitarian aid prior to October 5, 25% indicated that humanitarian aid was heavily disrupted since October 5. On the sub-district level, the heaviest disruption was reported in the sub-districts of Saraqab, Idleb, and Daret Azza. The findings also show that Saraqab and Sarmin were the two sub-districts most heavily reliant on humanitarian aid before 5 October.

Barriers limiting the access to humanitarian assistance

1	Humanitarian actors could not access the community or nearby areas due to insecurity	69%
2	Beneficiaries could not access humanitarian assistance due to insecurity	22%
3	Humanitarian actors could not access the community due to physical access constraints	3%
4	Beneficiaries could not access humanitarian assistance due to physical access constraints	1%

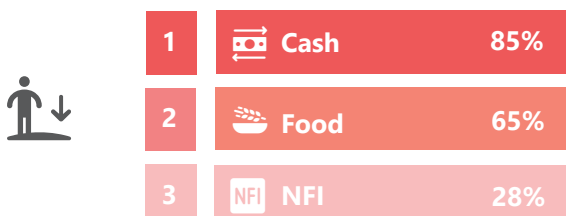
Reported level of disruption of humanitarian activities in assessed communities relying on aid [91%]



*Numbers of assessed communities in which KIs reported humanitarian activities prior to 5 October. As-Suqaylabiyah district does not appear in this graph because no humanitarian activities were reported in any of the two assessed communities in this district.

Priority needs

Top 3 most reported priority needs for host community households



Top 3 most reported priority needs for households displaced since 5 October (new arrivals reported in 61% of assessed communities)

