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FACTSHEET

Northeast Syria Needs Update
Ar-Raqqa Governorate Profile

August 2026 | Syria

Key Messages

- **Ar-Raqqa has made the strongest progress towards recovery in Northeast Syria, driven by significant improvements in electricity and water service provision and security.**
- **Economic vulnerability remains a major constraint to recovery. Rising prices, increasingly widespread livelihood coping, and a sharp rise in reliance on loans** are squeezing household purchasing power, highlighting the need to pivot towards **longer-term livelihood recovery** while maintaining targeted humanitarian support.
- The governorate's diverse population profile, including l**arge proportions of IDPs, returnees, and refugee returnees**, highlights the need to **simultaneously support durable solutions for displaced households and sustainable reintegration** for those returning home.

Top 3 Reported Priority Needs, by % of households

76% Livelihoods

53% Food

29% Health

Map 1: Assessment coverage

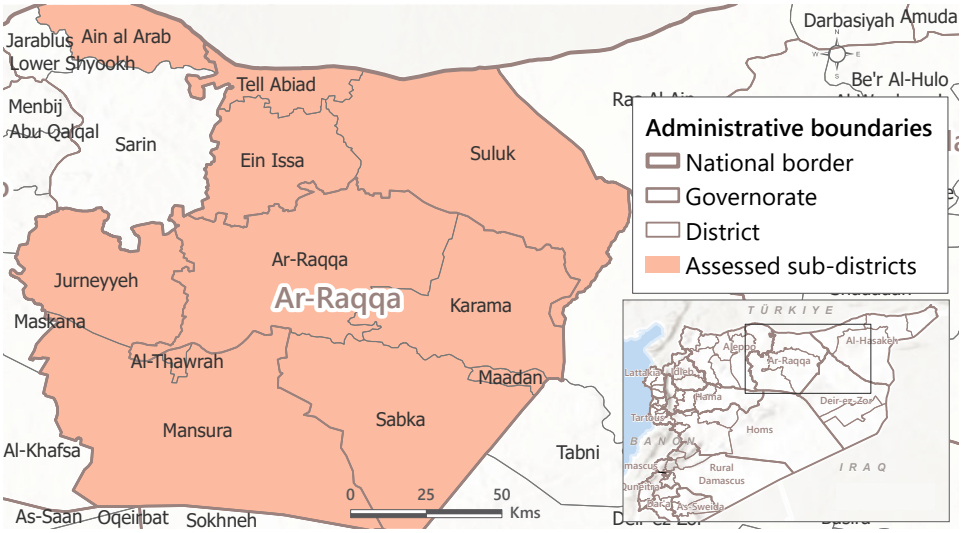


Image: Ar-Raqqa, Syria, REACH 2026.

Context & Rationale

On 30 January 2026, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) and the Government of Syria entered into a ceasefire agreement and initiated the formalised integration of governance structures in the governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqa, in addition to the Ain-al-Arab district of Aleppo.

The key objective of the Northeast Syria Needs Update was to identify any material changes in humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities following this major contextual shift in the region, using data from the October 2025 Syria Needs Profile[1] as a baseline. The analysis also delves into the differences in vulnerability profiles between population groups and sub-districts to support evidence-led targeting and area-based prioritisation.

Assessment Overview

The Northeast Syria Needs Update is a comprehensive, multi-sectoral assessment developed in consultation with humanitarian sectors.

The assessment surveyed 862 households across 246 communities in 10 sub-districts in Ar-Raqqa. Data was collected between 10 May and 3 June 2026 using a stratified two-stage sampling approach. The methodology generated representative estimates at the sub-district level and ensured representativeness of key population groups (residents,[2] IDPs, returnees, and refugee returnees) at the governorate level, with a 90% confidence level and a 10% margin of error. Please see the Methodology Overview and Limitations section for more details.

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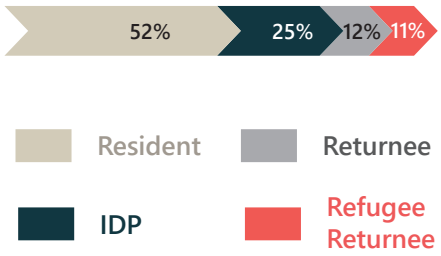
Displacement & Returns

Ar-Raqqa had the most diverse population profile of the three northeastern governorates, with residents comprising 52% of households alongside substantial proportions of IDPs (25%), returnees (12%), and refugee returnees (11%). Return movements were particularly pronounced in some sub-districts, with returnees comprising 68% of households in Suluk and 64% in Maadan, while refugee returnees accounted for 38% in Tel Abiad and 31% in Maadan.

Among IDPs currently residing in Ar-Raqqa, 50% planned to remain in their current location over the three months following data collection, **while return intentions increased from 5% in October 2025 to 46% in May 2026**, the highest among the three governorates. This may partly reflect the profile of displacement: 60% of IDPs in Ar-Raqqa originated from Aleppo, Homs, and Hama, governorates that have experienced comparatively high levels of return.[3] Among IDPs intending to return, an emotional desire to return (52%) and improved political stability (45%) were the most commonly reported pull factors.

Overall, Ar-Raqqa's population dynamics point to multiple durable solutions pathways occurring simultaneously. While growing return intentions suggest improving conditions for some IDPs, the substantial populations of IDPs, returnees, and refugee returnees mean that recovery efforts will need to support both those choosing to remain and those returning, while strengthening conditions for sustainable reintegration.

Population group profiles, *by % of households*



68% of households in **Maadan** were **returnees**

Shelter

Top 3 sub-districts with reported shelter damage, *by % of HH*



23% of **IDP** households in **Ar-Raqqa** lived in **camps** or **collective centers**

Shelter damage remained relatively widespread in Ar-Raqqa, with nearly half (48%) of households reporting some form of damage. However, the severity was considerably lower than in Deir-ez-Zor, with 93% of reported damage classified as minor or negligible. The highest levels of damage were reported in Sabka (81%) and Maadan (69%). Repair nevertheless remained challenging, with the cost of labour (94%) and materials (61%) the most frequently reported barriers. **For IDPs, conditions in areas of origin presented an additional challenge: 87% reported damage to their shelter there**, including 34% reporting major damage or total collapse, representing a significant barrier to return.

Beyond physical damage, housing, land, and property (HLP) conditions will be important in shaping durable solutions. **While most IDPs lived in individual shelters within the community (71%), their occupancy arrangements were often precarious, with 54% hosted free of charge and 32% living under informal verbal agreements.** A further 14% lived in camps and 9% in collective centres. As camps begin to close under the "No Camps, No Tents" vision[5], ensuring secure and sustainable housing arrangements will become increasingly important for IDPs transitioning into communities and seeking to integrate locally. At the same time, Ar-Raqqa's diverse population profile, with substantial IDP, returnee, and refugee returnee populations, means recovery efforts must balance durable solutions for displaced households with sustainable reintegration for returnees, while ensuring that any returns are voluntary, safe, and dignified.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Water access improved substantially in Ar-Raqqa between October 2025 and May 2026, driven by a marked expansion in piped water services. The proportion of households relying on piped water into the home as their primary drinking water source increased from 67% to 88%, contributing to **Ar-Raqqa recording the lowest level of household water insecurity in Northeast Syria (18%).**

Despite this progress, water insecurity remained higher in Al-Thawrah (65%) and Maadan (40%), and among IDP households (22%), suggesting that some households have yet to benefit equally from these improvements. Overall, the findings represent a significant improvement in basic service provision and highlight the role of restored public water infrastructure in supporting Ar-Raqqa's broader recovery.

Water insecurity (HWISE-4)[4]
by % of households



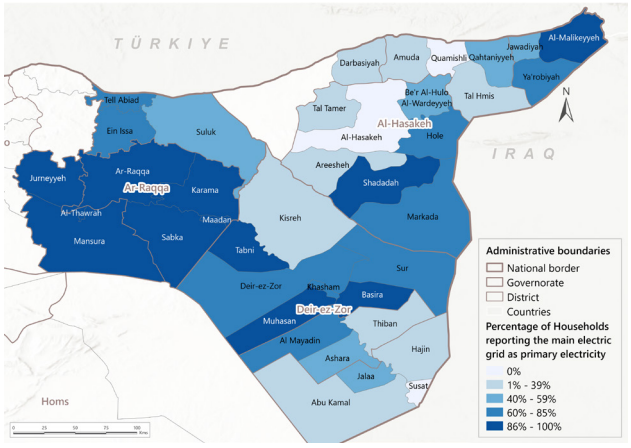
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Electricity

Electricity access improved substantially in Ar-Raqqa between October 2025 and May 2026. The proportion of households connected to the main electricity grid increased from 62% to 90%, the strongest improvement across Northeast Syria.

This translated into a median of 13 hours of electricity per day, the highest among the three governorates. Even in Suluk, which recorded the lowest grid connectivity in Ar-Raqqa (58%), households received a median of seven hours per day, still exceeding the Deir-ez-Zor governorate median.

Map 2: % of households reporting main electricity network as primary source, *by sub-district*



Education

73% of households in **Ar-Raqqa** had **all school-aged children enrolled during the 2025-2026 academic year**

Overall school enrolment increased from 68% in October 2025 to 73% in May 2026, while learning conditions stayed the same with the proportion of households reporting that children attended school in acceptable conditions remained around 65%. Enrolment was highest in Jurneyyeh (90%) and Tell Abiad (82%), while Ein Issa (51%) and Maadan (55%) reported the lowest rates. School conditions also varied across the governorate, with Maadan (39%) and Ein Issa (47%) reporting the lowest levels of acceptable learning conditions. The main constraints included cost (34%) and children particiapting in income-generating activities (14%).

School enrolment also varied across population groups. Children from returnee households (68%) reported the lowest enrolment rates, compared with IDPs (69%), residents (75%), and refugee returnees (79%). These findings reflect the lasting impacts of conflict on Ar-Raqqa's education system, while also pointing to the gradual restoration of education services. Many schools sustained damage during the conflict and continue to face gaps in infrastructure, furniture, and teaching staff. Recent government measures, including teacher salary increases and plans to rehabilitate 10 schools across the governorate, represent important steps towards restoring education services.[6] However, improving educational outcomes will require continued rehabilitation of school infrastructure alongside measures to address the economic and other barriers that continue to prevent children from attending school.

Sub-districts with the lowest reported acceptable school conditions, *by % of HH*

Sub-district	% of HH
Maadan	39%
Ein Issa	47%
Suluk	50%

Health

Overall access to healthcare in Ar-Raqqa decreased between October 2025 and May 2026, with 89% of households reporting they were able to access healthcare when needed in May 2026, compared with 99% in October 2025. Access varied across the governorate, with the lowest rates reported in Maadan (57%) and Suluk (66%).

The types of health services households relied upon also shifted considerably. **Public health facility use increased from 56% in October to 70% in May, although private facilities remained the preferred source of care (80%).** This contrasts with HeRAMS data indicating continued constraints in public health capacity: while all four public hospitals were at least partially operational, 89% of public health centres were not operational.[7] This divergence may partly reflect differences in the timing of data collection. Use of NGO-supported health facilities also declined substantially, from 28% to 6%, against a backdrop of major reductions in humanitarian health financing and NGO service provision.

Sub-districts with the lowest reported rates of access to healthcare when needed, *by % of HH*

Sub-district	% of HH
Maadan	57%
Suluk	66%
Tell Abiad	72%

Treatment costs remained the most commonly reported barrier to healthcare (80%). Reported service unavailability decreased from 36% to 15%, while waiting times increased from 24% to 38%.

Overall, the findings suggest a gradual shift towards greater reliance on public healthcare in Ar-Raqqa, alongside a substantial reduction in NGO-supported service use. However, significant gaps in public health capacity and continued barriers to access indicate that restoration of the health system remains incomplete. Strengthening public services while addressing affordability and other remaining access barriers will be important to sustain progress as the governorate moves further towards recovery.

Nutrition

Access to nutrition services for households requiring support, including malnutrition treatment, deworming, and Vitamin A supplementation, improved substantially in Ar-Raqqa, increasing from 10% in October 2025 to 43% in May 2026. However, more than half of households requiring support remained unable to access services, with 29% of those unable to access them citing a lack of available facilities as the primary barrier. Access also varied considerably across population groups: only 16% of female-headed households reported accessing nutrition services when needed, compared with 56% of IDP households, while no surveyed returnee or refugee returnee households requiring services reported access. This disparity may suggest that nutrition outreach and service delivery remain more accessible in locations hosting displaced populations, such as camps and collective centres, while returnee populations face greater barriers to accessing or being aware of available services.

Reported child illness also declined, with the proportion of households reporting illness among children under five in the two weeks preceding data collection falling from 25% in October to 17% in May. Fever, diarrhoea, and cough were the most frequently reported symptoms. While encouraging, this improvement should not be attributed solely to increased nutrition service access, as childhood illness is influenced by seasonality, WASH, and living conditions. The October assessment coincided with the onset of colder weather, while Ar-Raqqa also recorded substantial improvements in water security between the two assessments.

Overall, Ar-Raqqa recorded substantial improvements in both nutrition service access and reported child illness. Nevertheless, more than half of households requiring nutrition support remained unable to access services, with particularly pronounced gaps among female-headed, returnee, and refugee returnee households. Expanding service coverage beyond locations hosting displaced populations and ensuring more equitable access across population groups will therefore remain important to sustaining improvements in child health.

Food Security

Following the exceptionally dry 2024/2025 rainy season, improved rainfall in 2025/2026 contributed to stronger agricultural production in Ar-Raqqa.[8] **Among households engaged in crop production, 60% reported larger harvests than in previous years.** However, more extensive flooding occurred along the Euphrates River in late May 2026; as data collection had already concluded, these findings do not reflect the impacts of the floods on agricultural production, livelihoods, or food security.[9]

FCS, *by % of households*

Acceptable	Borderline	Poor
87%	12%	1%

Improved harvests did not translate directly into improved household food security, as agricultural production primarily supports income rather than self-consumption. **Only 10% of households relied on their own production as their primary food source, while 90% primarily purchased food, leaving households highly exposed to market prices.** Since February, food prices across Northeast Syria increased by around 5%, including a 25% increase in the price of bread, placing additional pressure on household purchasing power.[10]

20% of households in **Maadan** had **poor FCS**

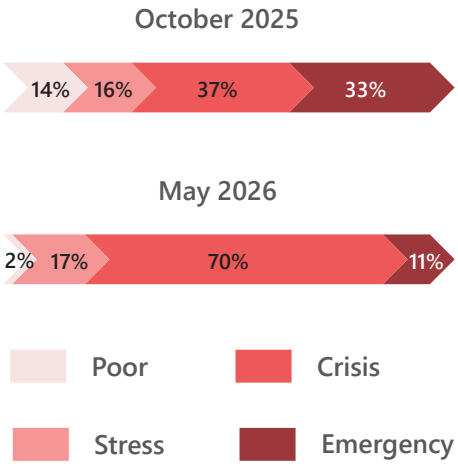
Overall, 87% of households reported an acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS),[11] although poorer outcomes were concentrated in Maadan (20% poor FCS). **A more concerning picture emerged through the Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI),[12] with 57% of households reporting medium or high rCSI.** Relying on less preferred foods was the most common strategy, used a median of 2.5 days per week. High rCSI was particularly prevalent among the returnee population (15%), especially in Maadan where 69% of the population are those that returned this year.

rCSI, *by % of households*

Low	Medium	High
43%	50%	7%

Livelihoods

LCSI-EN, *by % of households*



Livelihoods emerged as a particularly pressing concern in Ar-Raqqa between October 2025 and May 2026. **The proportion of households employing emergency strategies to meet essential needs, as measured by the Livelihood Coping Strategies Index (LCSI-EN),[13] fell substantially from 33% to 11%. However, this improvement masks a broader increase in livelihood stress: the proportion reporting no coping strategies fell from 14% to just 2%, while 70% were using crisis strategies**, such as selling productive assets. This suggests that while fewer households resorted to the most severe forms of coping, economic pressures became more widespread, pushing previously better-off households to adopt strategies that may undermine their longer-term resilience. **Overall, 73% of households remained unable or only partially able to meet their basic needs**, with rising prices (94%) and lack of employment (72%) the most commonly reported barriers.

Household income sources reinforce this picture. Income from own agricultural production fell substantially from 53% to 19%, although this should be interpreted in light of data collection taking place at the end of the lean season, when agricultural earnings are typically at their lowest. Salaried employment increased from 43% to 51% and casual labour nearly doubled from 22% to 41%, while remittances declined from 21% to 10%, potentially reflecting increased refugee returns. Most strikingly, reliance on loans as an income source rose from just 1% to 39%, while humanitarian assistance became negligible (3% to <1%). The sharp increase in borrowing suggests that for many households, employment and other sustainable income sources[14] were insufficient to cover their needs.

Median Monthly Income - SMEB
October 2025 vs. May 2026 (Old SYP)

	Oct 2025	May 2026	Change
Income	2,738,100	2,300,000	-16.0% ▼
SMEB	2,090,460	2,266,162	+8.4% ▲

This is reflected in the growing pressure on household purchasing power. **Reported median monthly income fell by 16% between October 2025 and May 2026, while the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)[15] increased by 8.4%, reducing the buffer between median income and the SMEB by 95%.**[9] More concerningly, when loans and humanitarian assistance are excluded and only sustainable income sources are considered, median income falls below the SMEB, resulting in a negative gap. This suggests that borrowing is increasingly helping households bridge the shortfall between sustainable earnings and the minimum cost of meeting essential needs.

Protection and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Protection conditions in Ar-Raqqa improved substantially between October 2025 and May 2026. The proportion of households reporting threats affecting their ability to access resources or livelihoods to meet essential needs over the previous three months fell from 45% to 11%, although concerns remained elevated in Maadan (32%).

Protection concerns affecting women and girls also declined considerably. **The proportion of households reporting that women and girls avoided areas of their community due to security concerns fell sharply from 40% to just 3%**. Among the small proportion of households that continued to report such concerns, markets (72%) remained the most commonly avoided location, indicating that some barriers to women's safe access to livelihoods and essential services persist. Less than 1% of households reported children under 18 living away from home, substantially lower than in the other governorates of Northeast Syria. Other indicators reinforce this broader improvement.

The proportion of households reporting being able to move freely without protection concerns increased substantially from 21% to 72%, coinciding with the stabilisation of the security and administrative environment following the Government of Syria's assumption of administrative control in January 2026. Access to civil documentation also increased from 76% to 93%. UXO contamination[16] was generally limited across the governorate, although important pockets remained in Ein Issa (46%) and Tel Abiad (15%), both located on the border with Ain-al-Arab, where tensions continue to be heightened between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Government of Syria forces.

Accountability to Affected People (AAP)

Top 3 reported priority needs
by % of households

1. Livelihoods (76%)
2. Food (53%)
3. Health (29%)

Households' priority needs in Ar-Raqqa remained broadly consistent between October 2025 and May 2026, with livelihoods, food, and health continuing to rank among the most frequently reported priorities.[17] **While food (49%) was the most commonly reported need in October, livelihoods (76%) emerged as the highest priority in May, reflecting persistent economic pressures.** Food nevertheless remained a major concern, ranking second and increasing slightly to 53% of households. Drinking water declined considerably as a priority, from 42% to 8%, suggesting improvements in access. Debt repayment was also reported by 34% of households, reflecting continued financial strain.

When asked which actor was best placed to address their priority needs, households most frequently preferred humanitarian organisations (53%), compared with the central government (17%) and local authorities (16%). Respondents primarily attributed this preference to humanitarian organisations' resources and speed of response. Cash assistance (93%), in-kind food assistance (78%), and vouchers (60%) were the preferred modalities of assistance.

Looking towards livelihood recovery, 37% of households prioritised support for agricultural activities, reflecting the importance of agriculture to Ar-Raqqa's economy. Households also identified access to financing (94%), productive assets and equipment (83%), vocational training (52%), and infrastructure rehabilitation (21%) as key enablers of livelihood recovery. Overall, the findings point to a need to gradually pivot towards longer-term livelihood recovery, while maintaining support for households with immediate needs. The strong emphasis on agricultural support, financing, and productive assets highlights opportunities to strengthen sustainable income generation and reduce households' reliance on loans and negative coping strategies.

Conclusion and Implications for the Response

Ar-Raqqa has made some of the strongest progress towards recovery in Northeast Syria, supported by substantial improvements in water and electricity provision, greater freedom of movement, and an improving protection environment. However, economic vulnerability remains a major constraint to recovery. Despite declining emergency coping, livelihood coping has become more widespread, reliance on loans has risen sharply, and sustainable incomes remain insufficient for many households to meet minimum expenditure requirements. This points to a need to gradually pivot towards longer-term livelihood recovery, while maintaining targeted humanitarian support for households with immediate needs.

At the same time, Ar-Raqqa's diverse population profile requires multiple durable solutions pathways. Higher IDP return intentions are encouraging, but recovery efforts must balance sustainable local integration for IDPs choosing to remain with reintegration support for returnees and refugee returnees, particularly as camps begin to close.

Methodology Overview and Limitations

The Northeast Syria Needs Update is a comprehensive, multi-sectoral assessment developed in consultation with humanitarian sector partners to inform humanitarian response and early recovery programming across Northeast Syria. The assessment surveyed 3,235 households across 763 communities in 39 sub-districts within the three governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqa.

The assessment employed a stratified two-stage cluster sampling design to generate representative estimates at both the sub-district (Admin 3) level and, within each governorate, for the four principal population groups: residents, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and refugee returnees. The sampling frame was developed using the October 2025 IOM-DTM Population Mobility and Baseline Assessment, with household estimates derived from sub-district-specific median household sizes.

The sampling methodology was designed to achieve two complementary objectives: (1) generate representative estimates at the sub-district level and (2) enable representative analysis of the four population groups at the governorate level. To achieve this, separate sample size requirements were calculated for geographic and population-group representativeness, with the final sample for each sub-district–population group combination set as the larger of the two. Communities were selected using probability proportional to population size, followed by random household selection within sampled communities. The assessment targeted a 90% confidence level and 10% margin of error. Data were collected through face-to-face household interviews using KoBoToolbox and structured questionnaires developed in consultation with humanitarian sector partners.

The findings should be interpreted in light of the following limitations:

- **Comparability:** While the use of the same sampling methodology and population frame supports comparison with the October 2025 Syria Needs Profile, findings should be interpreted as indicative trends rather than statistically tested changes, as the assessment uses repeated cross-sectional sampling rather than following the same households over time.
- **Coverage**: Findings from Ain al Arab (Aleppo) are excluded from this factsheet because access constraints prevented the collection of a representative sample. Ras al Ain (Al-Hasakeh) was inaccessible during data collection and was therefore excluded from the assessment.
- **Timing**: Data collection concluded prior to the late May 2026 flooding along the Euphrates River affecting Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa. Consequently, the findings do not reflect the impacts of these floods.

Please refer to the Terms of Reference and the Dataset and Analysis for more details.

Assessment Coverage

Sub-district	Assessed communities	Assessed HH	Female HoH	Male HoH
Ar-Raqqa	57	128	5%	95%
Sabka	11	78	17%	83%
Karama	25	74	5%	95%
Maadan	11	97	19%	81%
Tell Abiad	17	98	7%	93%
Suluk	35	72	3%	97%
Ein Issa	38	67	6%	94%
Al-Thawrah	3	71	23%	77%
Mansura	18	79	6%	94%
Jurneyyeh	32	98	3%	97%
Total	246	862	9%	91%

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

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Endnotes

1 The 2025 Syria Needs Profile was an unpublished, nationwide multi-sectoral household assessment designed to provide representative findings at the sub-district level and support inter-sectoral needs analysis and humanitarian planning.

2 The IDP Task Force defines "residents" as individuals or groups of people who currently reside in their communities of origin, or communities of permanent residence prior to the Syrian crisis. This includes populations that were never displaced as well as previously displaced populations that have returned to their communities in previous years. This population group generally constitutes individuals present in a community who are neither IDPs nor returnees.

3 CCCM Cluster, International Organization for Migration (IOM), IMPACT REACH, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2025. IDP Movement Intentions Survey – Syria. November 2025

4 The Household Water Insecurity Experiences Scale (HWISE-4) is a validated four-item scale used to measure household water insecurity based on experiences during the previous four weeks.

5 Syrian Arab Republic. Syria National Recovery Plan. November 2025.

6 Syrian Arab Republic. 2026. Presidential Decree Increasing Salaries of Workers in a Number of Sectors - Syria. March 2026.

7 Syrian Arab Republic Ministry of Health and World Health Organization (WHO). 2025 Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS). 2021-2025.

8 Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET). 2026. Insecurity, drought, and economic constraints drive outcomes aligned with Crisis - Syria. February 2026.

9 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2026. Flash Update: Euphrates Floods in Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, Syria. 25 May - 6 June 2026.

10 IMPACT REACH. Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) - Syria. May 2026.

11 Food Consumption Score (FCS) measures the current quality and diversity of a household's diet, based on how often different food groups were consumed over the previous seven days.

12 Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) measures the behaviors households use when they do not have enough food, such as reducing meal sizes, eating less-preferred foods, or borrowing food, usually over the previous seven days. Coping strategies include: relying on less preferred or expensive food, borrowing food, reducing meal sizes, reducing consumption by adults in order for small children to eat, and reduce number of meals per day.

13 The Livelihood Coping Strategies Index - Essential Needs (LCSI-EN) is a standard food security indicator that measures households' use of livelihood-based coping strategies to meet essential needs, with strategies classified as stress, crisis, or emergency according to their severity. Common emergency strategies include migrating informally or engaging in socially degrading activities to meet essential needs. Common crisis strategies include selling productive assets or children (under 15) working to contribute to household income to meet essential needs.

14 All income sources excluding loans and humanitarian assistance.

15 The SMEB is a tool designed by the Cash based responses Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG) for Northern Syria. The SMEB is designed as an indicator of the cost of the minimum, culturally-appropriate items that a family of 6 needs to survive for one month, while meeting basic standards for nutritious food, water use and hygiene in Northern Syria.

16 UXO contamination: Percent of households that reported areas in or near their community that are suspected of containing landmines of UXOs at the time of data collection.