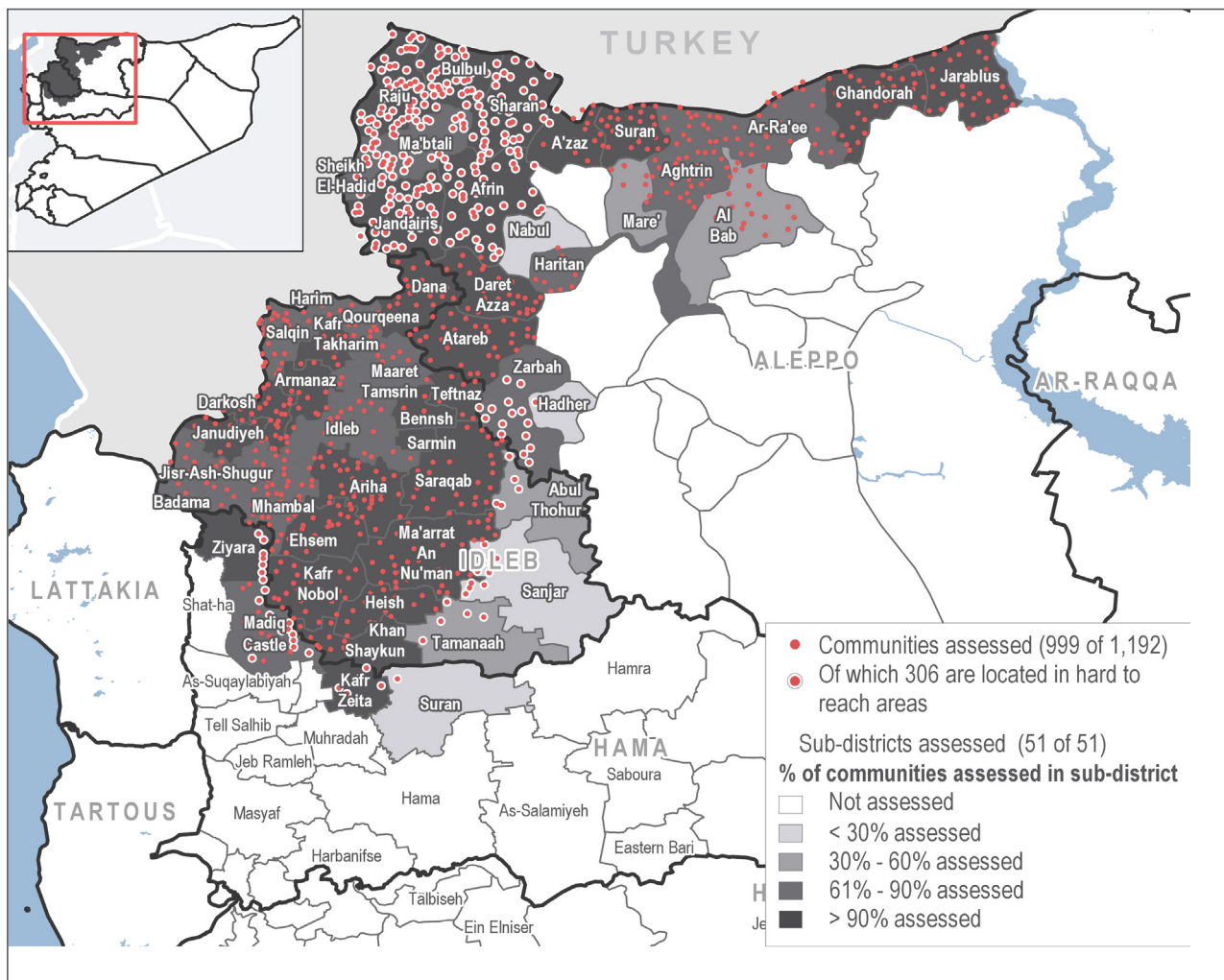


Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS)

Northwest Syria, March 2019

Coverage



Introduction

HSOS is a monthly assessment that aims to provide comprehensive, multi-sectoral information about the humanitarian situation inside Syria. The assessment is conducted at the community level covering [displacement](#), [food security and livelihoods \(FSL\)](#), [education](#), [water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#), [health](#), and [shelter and non-food items \(SNFI\)](#).

The factsheet presents information gathered in 999 communities across Idlib (426 communities), western Aleppo* (81 communities), northern Aleppo (452 communities), and northern Hama (40 communities) governorates.** Data was collected during the month of April 2019, and refers to the situation in the northwest region in March 2019. Findings are indicative rather than representative, and should not be generalised across the region.

Community-level datasets are available on [REACH Resource Centre](#) and [Humanitarian Data Exchange](#).

*The western part of Aleppo where humanitarian response and coordination is conducted from the northwest rather than the northeast.

**To provide insight on areas recently affected by conflict, the March 2019 factsheet includes additional analysis on Idlib and surrounding areas. This region includes most communities in Idlib governorate, communities in Atareb, Daret Azza, Haritan, Jebel Saman and Zarbah sub-districts in western Aleppo governorate, and Kafr Zeita, Madiq Castle, Suran and Ziyara sub-districts in north-western Hama governorate.

Top 3 reported priority needs in assessed communities:

- 1 Healthcare
- 2 Food Security
- 3 Livelihoods

People in need (PIN) Demographics*

2,594,798 PiN **1,459,754** People in Acute Need

Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB):^{1,2}

Average price in March 2019 **63,683 Syrian pound (SYP)**
 One month change: **+3%**
 Six month change: **+15%**

* PiN refers to people whose physical security, basic rights, dignity, living conditions or livelihoods are threatened or have been disrupted, and whose current level of access to basic services, goods and protection is inadequate to re-establish normal living conditions within their accustomed means without assistance.

People in Acute Need refers to those facing more severe forms of deprivation in terms of their security, basic rights and living conditions and face life-threatening needs requiring urgent humanitarian assistance ([HNO 2019](#)).

The calculated PiN numbers are indicative as they are calculated using the OCHA dataset and coverage varies slightly.

Key events impacting the humanitarian situation in Northwest Syria (NWS)

Operation "Olive Branch" commences in Afrin. ^a	213,000 individuals spontaneously return to 287 communities in rural Aleppo governorate and 355,000 individuals return to Aleppo city. ^b	Approximately 1.9 million IDPs reside in Idlib, western Aleppo, northern Hama and eastern Lattakia according to UNHCR. ^c	Announcement of a demilitarised zone in NWS that bars the presence of heavy weaponry and certain armed opposition groups. ^d	Cold temperatures, heavy rainfall, and flooding lead to deterioration of the humanitarian situation in IDP camps in Idlib and Aleppo governorates. ^e	Renewed escalation of conflict in southern Idlib and northern Hama in February 2019. ^f Displacement of approximately 86,000 individuals since the beginning of March. ^g
January 2018	February 2018	End of August 2018	17 September 2018	December 2018	February 2019 - March 2019

Northwest Syria, March 2019

CONTEXT

The security situation further deteriorated across Northwest Syria (NWS) during the first two weeks of March, as southern Idlib and northern Hama governorates witnessed a continuation of conflict escalation. However, conflict-related incidents began decreasing in the second half of the month.^h Displacement resulting from the recent escalation in violence has been estimated at 86,000 individuals by the end of March.^g Furthermore, heavy rains beginning on 30 March led to severe flooding across the region. Approximately 573 camps and 73,000 IDPs were affected in the rural areas of northern, western, and southern Idlib governorate.ⁱ Damage from flooding resulted in school closures across southern Idlib and northern Hama governorates.^j Despite such conditions, over 1,500 refugees returned from Turkey through the Bab el-Hawa border crossing in March.^k

KEY HIGHLIGHTS^g

Access to education deteriorates in northern Hama

In northern Hama governorate, the education system has come under pressure from the heightened conflict and insecurity as well as weather conditions. In March, KIs in 26 (65%) of 40 assessed communities reported the availability of functioning primary schools, compared to 85% in February.* As for functioning secondary schools, the reported availability decreased from 40% in February to 33% in March, while a similar decrease was observed for functioning high schools (from 25% in February to 20% in March). This is a trend that has been repeatedly reported in NWS: access to services (education and others) consistently declines during times of heightened conflict. In addition, KIs in only 13 (33%) assessed communities reported that children were attending school in nearby villages if no facilities were available or functioning in March, compared to KIs in 17 (43%) in February. The most commonly reported reason why school-aged children were not attending school, indicated by KIs in 25 (63%) of 40 assessed communities, is that the route to services is unsafe. This marks a sharp increase compared to February, when KIs in 14 (35%) assessed communities reported this barrier. The second most common barrier is the distance to education services: KIs in 22 (55%) assessed communities reported this barrier in March, compared to 40% in February; which is again linked to the deterioration of the security environment, as longer routes potentially pose larger security risks.

Livelihoods continued priority need in NWS

For five consecutive months, livelihoods have been reported as a top priority need in NWS. In northern Hama governorate, this need has been persistently and significantly higher, reported in 36 (90%) of 40 assessed communities in March (compared to 40% across all four governorates). To cope with the lack of income, KIs in 516 (52%) communities across NWS reported that children were sent to work or beg, suggesting a need for integrated education and protection programming. The use of this coping strategy appears particularly high in western Aleppo, as it was reported in 78 (96%) communities. Another prevalent coping strategy indicated by KIs in NWS is borrowing money from friends, reported in 683 (68%) of 999 assessed communities. As prices continue to rise in NWS and populations' purchasing power continues to reduce, livelihoods interventions are critical to supporting the resilience of residents across the region.

* As of March 2019, coverage in Hama governorate decreased from 88 to 40 communities. To compare data with the previous month, the March coverage was compared with the 40 communities that were previously assessed in February. Hence, the numbers differ from those presented in the February 2019 factsheet.



Displacement⁴

- Of the 547 assessed communities in Idlib and surrounding areas, KIs in 67 (12%) assessed communities reported that pre-conflict population left during March 2019. Most of these communities were in Jisr-Ash-Shugur sub-district (Idlib governorate) and Madiq Castle sub-district (northern Hama governorate), areas that have faced high levels of insecurity.
- In March, the IDP Situation Monitoring Initiative (ISMI) monitored 48,816 IDP departures from Idlib and surrounding areas, largely from Madiq Castle sub-district (27,916), and saw most arrivals in Dana (18,749) and Kafr Nobol (12,094) sub-districts (see [IDP Situation Monitoring Initiative \(ISMI\) Monthly Overview in Northwest Syria, March 2019](#)).



Food Security & Livelihoods

- KIs in 445 (81%) of 547 assessed communities in Idlib and surrounding areas reported that most households in their community earned an income of less than 50,000 SYP,¹ compared to KIs in 250 (55%) of 452 assessed communities in northern Aleppo governorate. Given that the overall cost of SMEB in March was 63,683 SYP per month (see [Northwest Syria Market Monitoring Exercise March 2019](#)), it is not surprising that KIs in 882 (88%) of the 999 assessed communities across NWS reported that income was insufficient to cover household needs.
- Moreover, in northern Hama governorate, KIs in 34 (85%) of 40 assessed communities reported that some types of foods are too expensive, compared to 70% in February, possibly indicating an increase in prices and reduction in purchasing power.



Education

- KIs in over half (52%) of assessed communities in Idlib and surrounding areas reported that not all children were accessing education services, compared to KIs in one-third (32%) of assessed communities in northern Aleppo governorate.
- The deterioration of access to education services in Idlib and surrounding areas is largely linked to the intensification of conflict in the area. KIs indicated the long distance (52%), unsafety of routes (33%), destruction of facilities (22%), and early marriage (12%) as the most commonly encountered challenges to accessing education.



WASH

- According to KIs in 135 (25%) of 547 assessed communities in Idlib and surrounding areas, free public garbage collection was available in their communities. In northern Aleppo governorate, this service was reported by KIs in 154 (34%) of 452 assessed communities. The reported availability of free public garbage collection was particularly low in Idlib and northern Hama governorates (respectively 22% and 23%).
- In these governorates, the number of KIs reporting that garbage is being left in the streets or public areas is relatively high (respectively 12% and 10%). These findings are concerning given the rapid spread of skin diseases in NWS, for which inadequate waste management is a compounding factor.



Health

- Amongst the 547 assessed communities in Idlib and surrounding areas, KIs in 421 (77%) communities reported difficulties in accessing healthcare services. Amongst those the most commonly reported challenges were the lack of available facilities (50%), the lack of transportation and long distance to facilities (41%), and the high cost of transportation to health facilities (37%), reflecting the wider erosion in access to services across NWS.
- In northern Hama governorate, KIs in 12 (30%) of 40 assessed communities reported that IDPs were facing larger barriers accessing healthcare, marking an increase since February, when this was reported in only 9 (23%) communities.

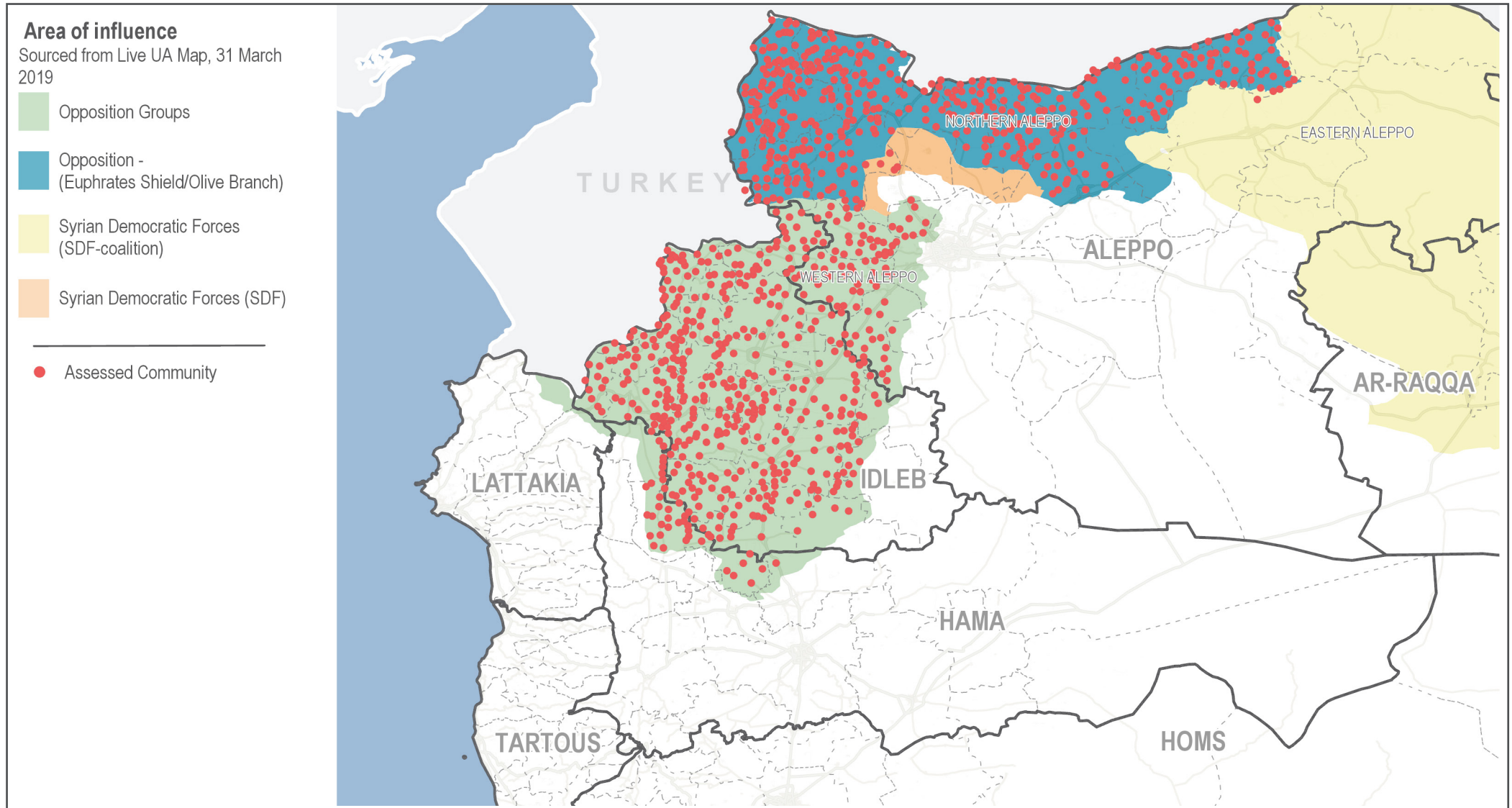


Shelter and NFI

- In northern Aleppo governorate, KIs in 359 (79%) of 426 assessed communities reported that generators were the most commonly used source of electricity, suggesting that the electricity network is largely out of use. In Idlib and surroundings, the most commonly used electricity sources reported were generators (40%), solar alternative (26%) and batteries (22%).
- Of the 426 assessed communities in northern Aleppo, KIs in 174 (38%) communities reported a lack of fuel and KIs in 247 (55%) communities reported that 1-25% of buildings were uninhabitable due to damage by conflict in March.

Northwest Syria, March 2019

Regional areas of influence:



Northwest Syria, March 2019

DISPLACEMENT⁴

30,850 - 35,010 Estimated number of IDP arrivals in assessed communities in March 2019

4,990 - 5,810 Estimated number of spontaneous returns in assessed communities in March 2019.⁵

Communities with the largest estimated number of IDP arrivals:

Hanbushiyeh (Jisr-Ash-Shugur, Idleb) **1,680 - 1,700**

Ayn al Dayr (Ma'arrat An Nu'man, Idleb) **1,350 - 1,360**

Faqie (Kafr Nobol) (Al Ma'ra, Idleb) **1,030 - 1,050**

*Reported as community, (sub-district, governorate)

Top 3 reported subdistricts of origin for IDP arrivals:^{6,7}

Khan Shaykun (Idleb)

Madiq Castle (Hama)

Saraqab (Idleb)

*Reported as sub-district (governorate)

917 communities reported no PCP departures.⁸

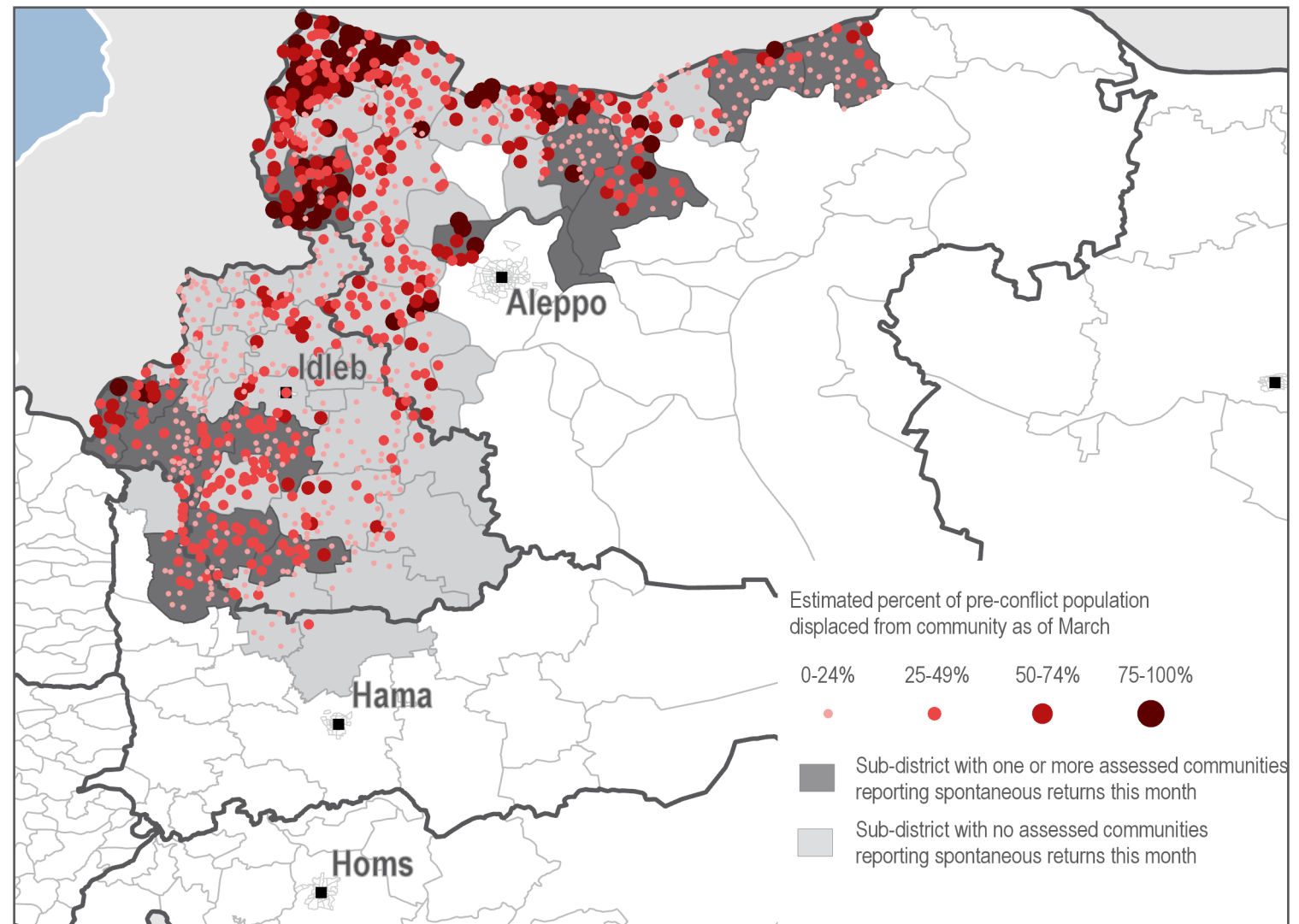
Top 3 reasons for PCP departures in the remaining 82 assessed communities:^{6,7,9}

Escalation of conflict 49%

Reduced access to basic services 43%

Loss of income 40%

Estimated proportion of pre-conflict population (PCP) displaced from community:



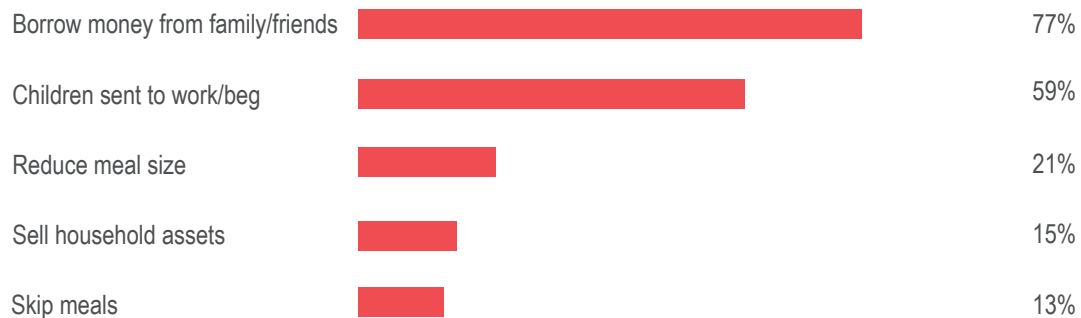
Northwest Syria, March 2019



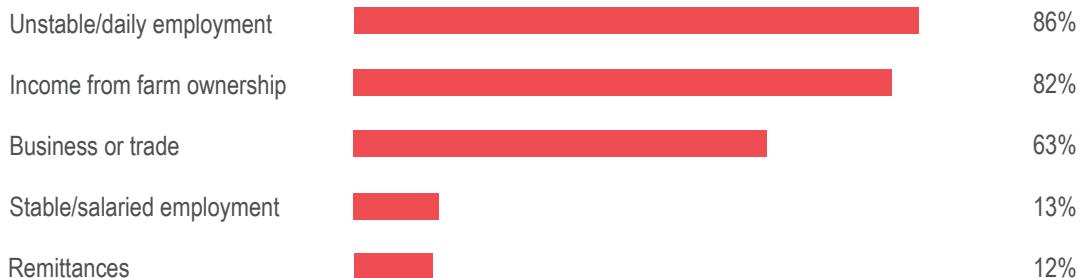
FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

- 240/999** Communities reported having received food distributions in the last month.
- 204/999** Communities reported that residents were unable to access shops and markets.
- 3/999** Communities reported that residents used extreme food-based coping strategies to deal with insufficient income.¹⁰
- Less than 50,000 SYP** Most commonly reported household monthly income range.¹

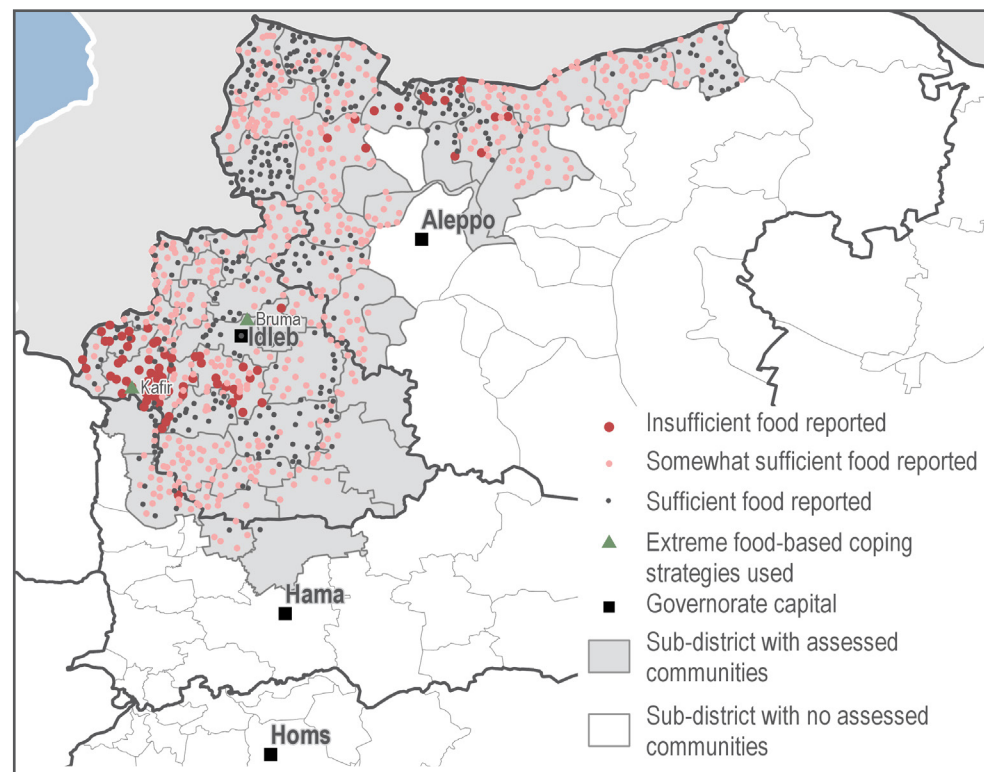
117 communities reported that residents had enough income to cover household needs. The most commonly reported coping strategies to deal with a lack of income in the remaining **882 assessed communities** were:^{6,7,9}



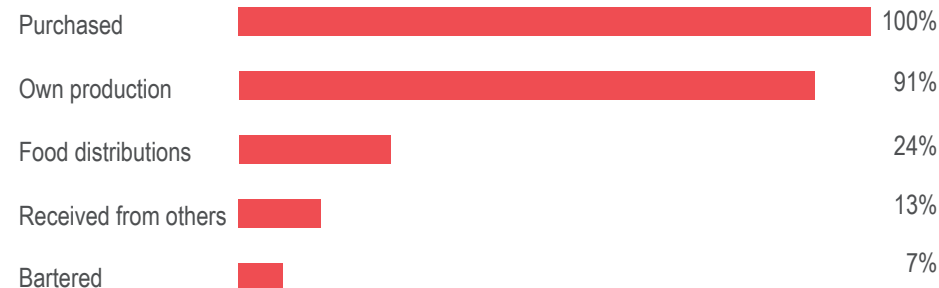
Most commonly reported main sources of income:^{6,7}



Communities that reported having an insufficient quantity of food:¹¹



Most commonly reported ways of obtaining food:^{6,7}



Northwest Syria, March 2019



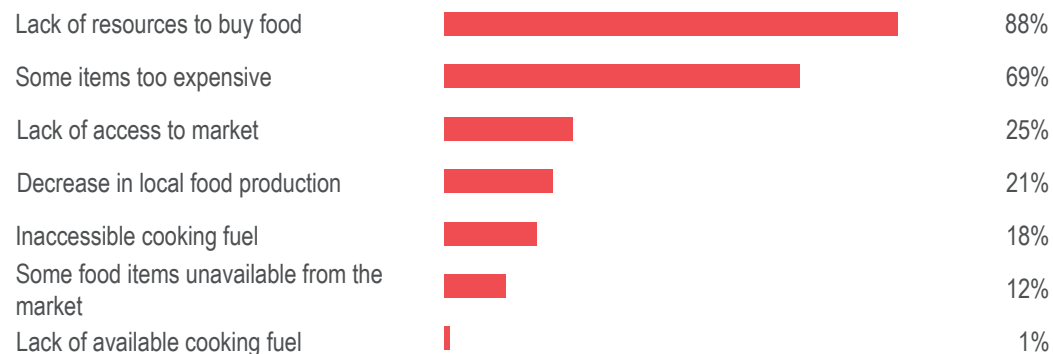
FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

Core food item prices reported (in SYP):^{1,12}

Food item:	Regional average price in March 2019:	One month change:	Six month change:
Bread (8 pieces)	150	0%	0%
Rice (1 kilogram)	325	+5%	+13%
Lentils (1 kilogram)	275	+10%	+38%
Sugar (1 kilogram)	275	+10%	+22%
Cooking oil (1 litre)*	3,850	+1%	+9%

*includes the combined vegetable oil and ghee prices

178 communities reported that residents experienced no challenges in accessing food. The most common difficulties experienced in the remaining 821 assessed communities were:^{6,7,9}



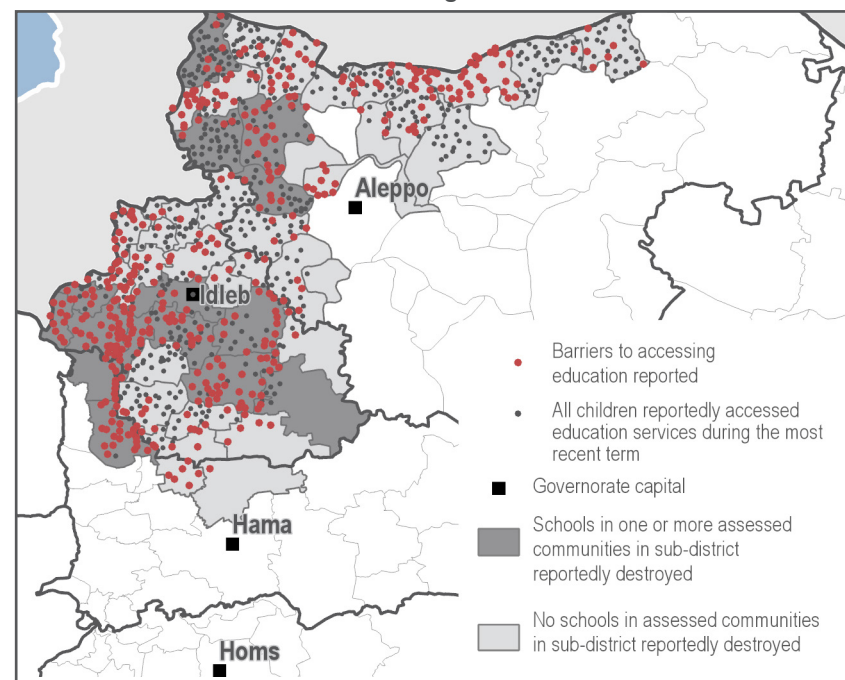
EDUCATION

928/999 communities reported having functioning primary education facilities, while 452 communities reported having functioning secondary education facilities.¹³

572 communities reported that all children were able to access education. The most commonly reported barriers to education in the remaining 427 assessed communities were:^{6,7,9}



Prevalence of barriers to accessing education services:



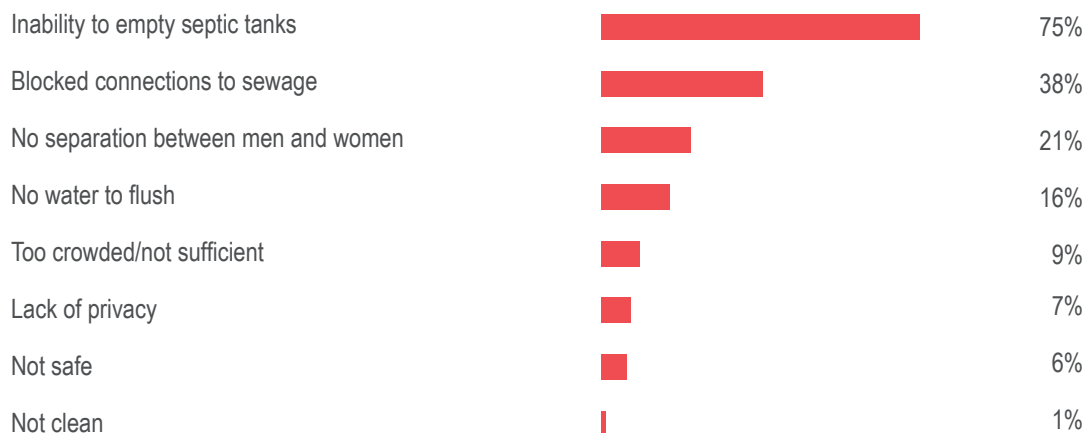
Northwest Syria, March 2019



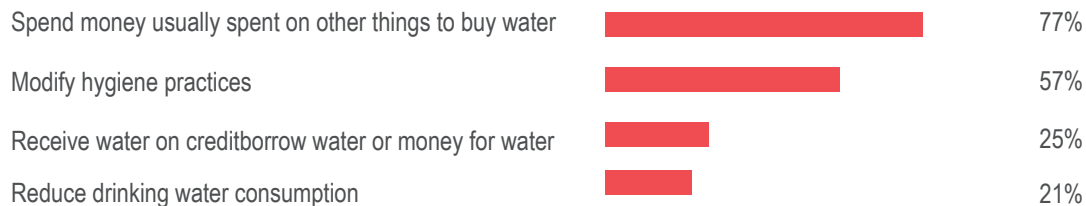
12/999 Communities reported that water from their primary source tasted and/or smelled bad.

2/999 Communities reported that drinking water from their primary source made people sick.

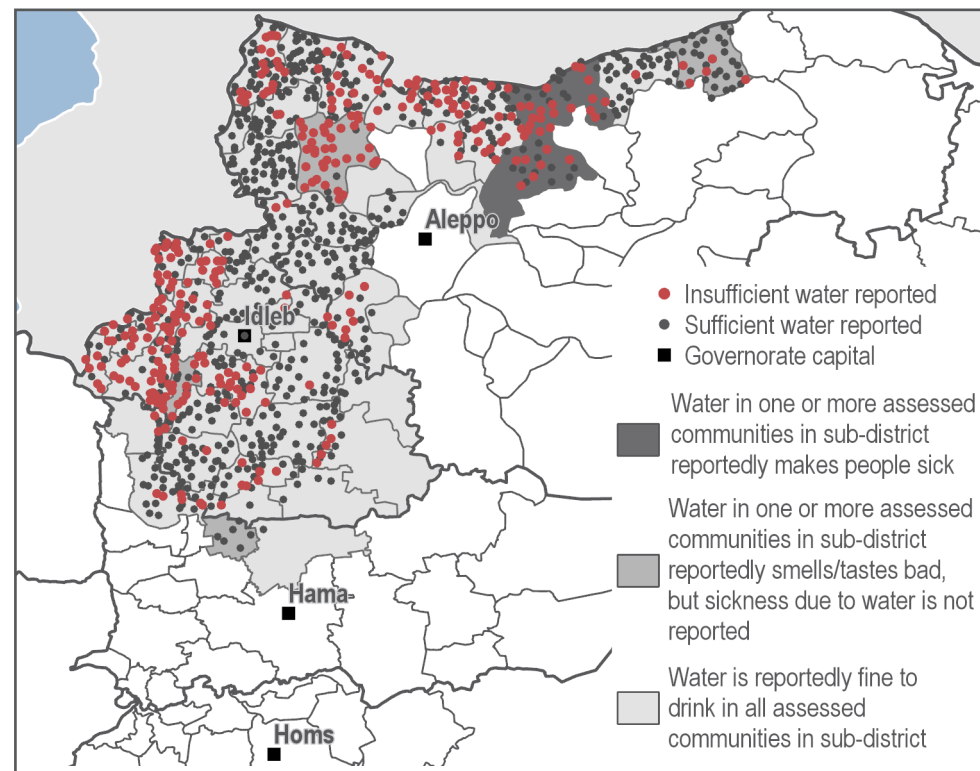
626 communities reported that residents had no problems with latrines. The most commonly reported problems with latrines in the remaining **373** assessed communities were:^{5,7,9}



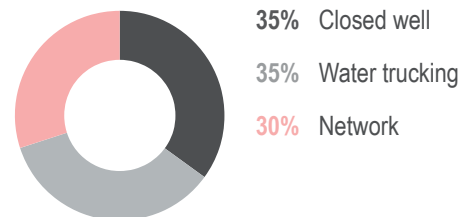
688 communities reported that they had sufficient amounts of water to meet household needs. The most common coping strategies to deal with a lack of water in the remaining **311** assessed communities were:^{6,7,9}



Communities that reported insufficient amounts of water to meet household needs:¹¹



Primary drinking water source reported:⁷



Primary method of garbage disposal reported:^{6,7}



Northwest Syria, March 2019

HEALTH

215/999 Communities reported that no assessed medical items were available in their community.¹⁴

126/999 Communities reported that the majority of women did not give birth in a formal health facility.

4/999 Communities reported that some individuals had been diagnosed with SAM (Severe Acute Malnutrition).¹⁵

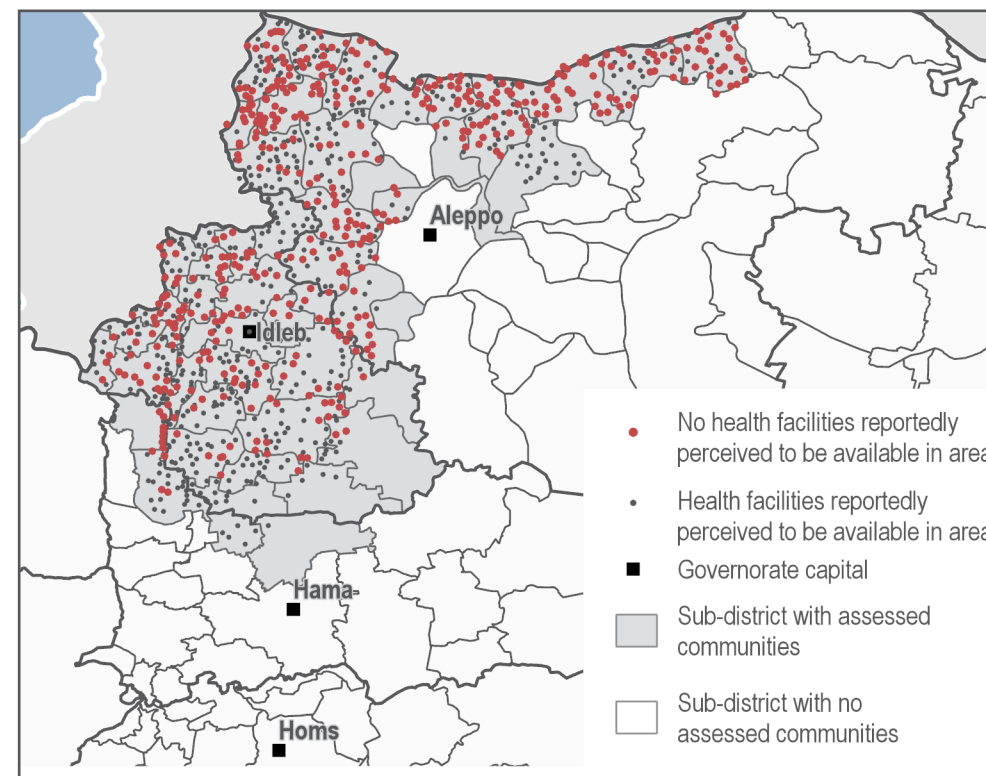
244 communities reported that residents experienced no barriers to accessing healthcare services. The most commonly reported barriers in the remaining 755 assessed communities were:^{6,7,9}



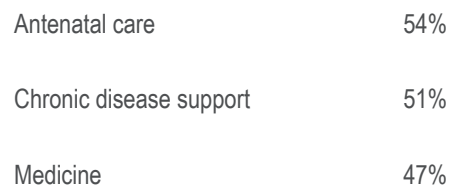
908 communities reported that residents were not using coping strategies to deal with a lack of medical services and items. The coping strategies used in the remaining 91 communities were:^{6,7,9}



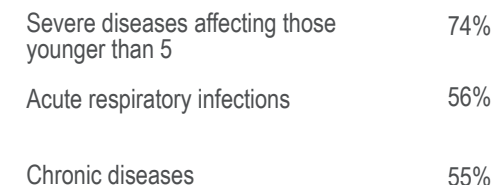
Presence of medical facilities in assessed communities:



Top 3 most needed healthcare services reported:^{6,7}



Top 3 most common health problems reported:^{6,7}



Northwest Syria, March 2019

SHELTER AND NFI

5,445 SYP Regional average monthly reported rent price in SYP across assessed communities.¹

5,819 SYP Northern Syria average monthly reported rent price in SYP across assessed communities.^{1,16}

Most commonly reported shelter type for PCP households:⁷



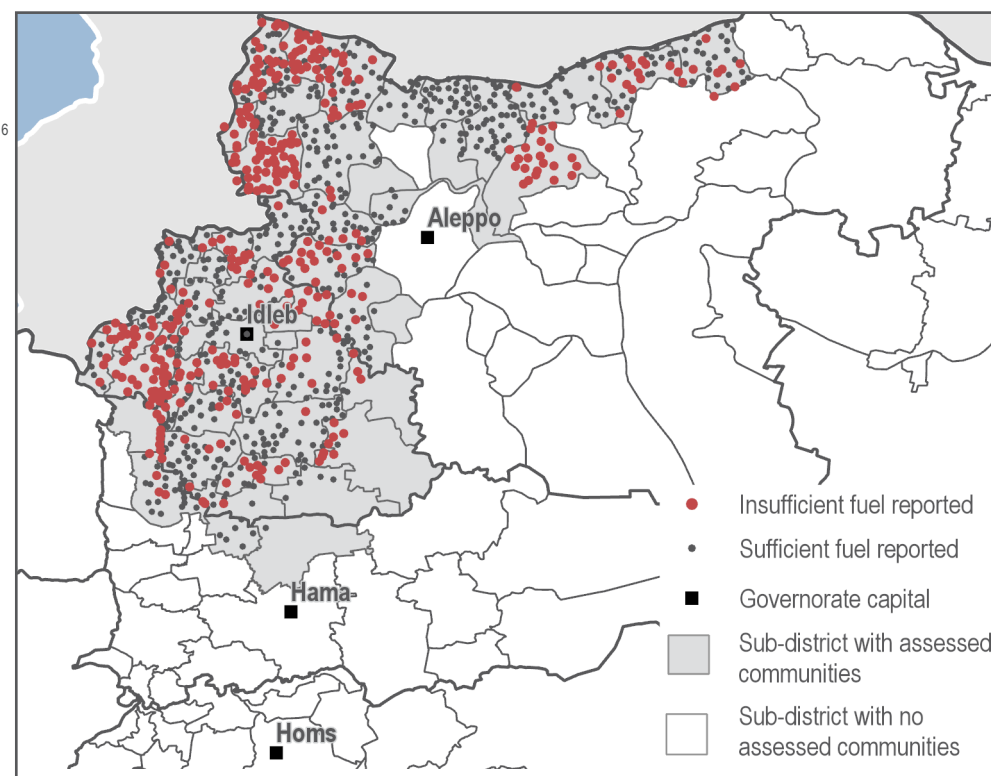
Most commonly reported shelter type for IDP households:⁷



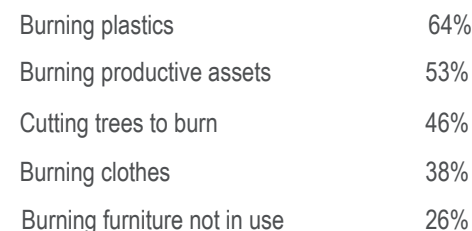
Reported fuel prices (in SYP):^{1,2}

Fuel type (1L):	Regional average price in March 2019:	One month change:	Six month change:
GoS petrol	288	-4%	+15%
GoS diesel	240	0%	+23%
Manually refined petrol	400	0%	-3%
Manually refined diesel	400	+14%	+10%
Cooking fuel	7,500	0%	+20%

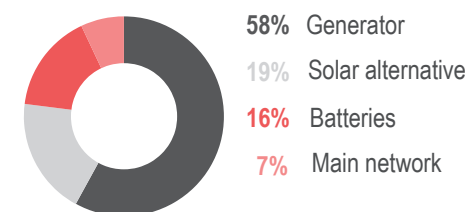
Communities that reported insufficient amounts of fuel to meet household needs:¹¹



626 communities reported no lack of fuel. Most common strategies to cope with lack of fuel in the remaining **373** assessed communities:^{6,7,9}



Primary source of electricity reported:⁷



METHODOLOGY

HSOS data collection is conducted through an enumerator network in accessible locations throughout Idlib, Aleppo, northern Hama, Deir-ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa, and Al-Hasakeh governorates. REACH enumerators are based inside Syria and interview Key Informants (KIs) directly in the community about which they are reporting. Where access and security constraints renders direct data collection unfeasible, some KI interviews are conducted remotely through participants identified in camps and settlements in neighbouring countries by REACH field teams. Participants contact multiple KIs in their community in Syria to collect information about their community. KIs are asked to report at the community level.

KIs generally included local council members, Syrian NGO workers, medical professionals, teachers, shop owners and farmers, among others, and were chosen based on their community-level or sector specific knowledge. In cases where KIs disagree on a certain piece of information, enumerators triangulate the data with secondary sources or select the response provided by the KI with the more relevant sector-specific background. For each question asked, confidence levels are assigned based on the KIs area of expertise and knowledge of the sector-specific situation. The confidence levels associated with each question are presented in the [final dataset](#). The full confidence matrix used to assign confidence levels is available upon request.

Findings are triangulated through secondary sources, including news monitoring and humanitarian reports. Where necessary, follow-up is conducted with enumerators and participants. Findings are indicative rather than representative, and should not be generalised across the region.

About REACH

REACH 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). For more information please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org. You can contact us directly at: geneva@reach-initiative.org and follow us on Twitter [@REACH_info](https://twitter.com/REACH_info).

ENDNOTES

KEYEVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

- ^a Ibrahim and Edelman (26 February 2018). Turkish-backed offensive on Afrin leaves 50,000 students out of school. Retrieved from <https://syriadirect.org>.
- ^b World Health Organisation (1 March 2018). Health Cluster Weekly Situation Report: Whole of Syria, Week 9 (23 February - 1 March 2018). Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int>.
- ^c UN High Commissioner for Refugees (31 August 2018). Cross-Border Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet - Northwest Syria - August 2018. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int>.
- ^d France 24 (17 September 2018). Russia and Turkey agree to demilitarised zone around Syria's Idlib. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com>.
- ^e Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (27 December 2018). Record Rainfall Devastates IDP Camps in Northern Syria. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int>.
- ^f REACH (February 2019). Southern Idlib and Northern Hama Rapid Needs Assessment. Retrieved from <http://reachresourcecentre.info>.
- ^g The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (28 March 2019). The Refugee Brief – 28 March 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org>.
- ^h Syrian network for human rights (3 April 2019). The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in March 2019. Retrieved from <http://sn4hr.org>.
- ⁱ Smart News (31 March 2019). 14,700 displaced families in Idlib governorate were affected by the rainstorm. Retrieved from <https://smartnews-agency.com>.
- ^j Smart News (31 March 2019). Schools stop providing education services in the Atama camps in Idlib because of the rainstorm. Retrieved from <https://smartnews-agency.com>.
- ^k Enab Baladi (1 April 2019). "Bab AL-Salama" announces the number of voluntary returnees from Turkey to Syria. Retrieved from <https://www.enabbaladi.net>.

MAIN TEXT

- ¹ 1 USD = 434 SYP (UN operational rates of exchange as of 1 December 2018)
- ² 18 items comprise the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which represents the minimum culturally adjusted items required to support a 6-person household for a month. SMEB items: Bread, bulgur, chicken, eggs, fresh vegetables, ghee/vegetable oil, red lentils, rice, salt, sugar, tomato paste, bathing soap, laundry/dish soap, sanitary pads, toothpaste, cooking fuel, water trucking, smartphone data, float (other costs).
- ³ All information and figures reported in HSOS factsheets refer to the situation in assessed communities and

MAIN TEXT

cannot be generalised to other non-assessed communities of the region.

⁴ For population numbers, KIs were asked to provide the number of resident and IDPs present in the community as of 31 March 2019. A minimum of three KIs were interviewed in each assessed community. Where discrepancies in the information provided by KIs was deemed too large further triangulation with additional KIs and local organizations was conducted. Estimated individual figures in this report are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Discrepancies with other available population data may be the result of any of the following: differences in assessment coverage dates; differences in definitions of population sub-groups (IDPs and residents); differences in geographic scope of assessed locations (e.g. included/excluded nearby camps and sites); differences in KI types interviewed; and differences in average household sizes used to calculate individual numbers, among others.

The definition of IDPs used by enumerators for this assessment was 'Individuals or groups of people who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border'.

⁵ Spontaneous returns refers to IDPs or refugees who return to their community of origin that they left due to conflict but not necessarily to their places of habitual residence (their former homes); who intend to remain in the community for an undetermined period; and who do not meet the IASC framework on durable solutions (IASC framework includes "not necessarily voluntary, safe or sustainable" elements).

⁶ Assessed using select multiple questions.

⁷ By percentage of communities reporting.

⁸ The definition of resident (pre-conflict) population (PCP), was 'Individuals or groups of people who currently reside in their communities of origin, or communities of permanent residence prior to the Syrian conflict. This includes populations that were never displaced as well as previously displaced populations that have returned to their communities of origin'.

⁹ Not all surveys have answers for every question, in these scenarios the KI or participant will input no answer. When the dataset has no answer for a particular question the reported number of assessed communities will not add up to the total number of communities assessed and percentages will be calculated based on submitted responses.

¹⁰ Extreme food-based strategies: eating food waste; eating non-edible plants and spending days without eating.

¹¹ Based on KI perception of sufficiency.

¹² Bread, rice, lentils, sugar, and cooking oil are considered core food items used in food baskets across Syria. For further information on all SMEB items please see the [Syria Market Monitoring Northwest Syria March 2019](#).

¹³ Reported numbers indicate the number of communities with functioning primary and secondary education facilities during the data collection period. It is important to note that simply having a functioning facility is not indicative of students being able to attend said facility. In addition, in some cases KIs reported that children attend schools in a neighbouring community.

¹⁴ Assessed HSOS medical items; anti-anxiety medication, contraception, clean bandages, blood transfusion bags, diabetes medicine, anaesthetics, blood pressure medicine, antibiotics, burn treatment.

¹⁵ This information was derived from medical professionals (KIs). The number of total communities refers to all communities that had a KI as medical professional available.

¹⁶ Includes HSOS data for Idleb, Aleppo, northern Hama, Deir-ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh governorates.