Methodological note

Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria Joint Needs Assessment (JNA)

January 2024

IMPACT Shaping practices Influencing policies Impacting lives

1. Rationale

Following the significant shift in Syria's conflict in late 2024, with rapid territorial changes and mass displacement, IMPACT is rolling out a more agile **Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) based on the HSOS approach**. The JNA acts as a reference point for the upcoming HSOS light research cycle by establishing an initial framework for data collection and monitoring in newly accessible areas of Syria (previously GoS-held areas). The assessment will provide key baseline data, gathered through organizations with prior (and therefore current) authorization to work in South-Central Syria. Currently, IMPACT does not have access to areas beyond its previous operations and is therefore providing only technical support to partners who are collecting data on the ground. Once foundational data and data collection frameworks are in place, and IMPACT gains broader access to additional areas, HSOS light can continue to fill this gap by taking over the process, with an increased focus on monitoring.

The tool allows to provide timely indicative data to identify critical areas of concern, enabling rapid response and more granular follow-up where needed. By addressing information gaps in such a rapidly evolving context, it supports more effective, data-driven humanitarian decision-making, ensuring emergency response is prioritized based on the most urgent needs.

2. Objectives

The JNA aims to support emergency planning and response (re-)prioritisation by producing **frequent updates on humanitarian conditions and access to key services** in assessed communities in all the Governorates where participating partners have presence and capacity. The JNA will help to:

- Provide **comprehensive multi-sectoral information** and analysis in areas directly and indirectly impacted by the escalations in Northern Syria in late 2024;
- Identify and evaluate **sector-specific priority needs** of affected populations at the community level throughout Syria;
- **Monitor** and pinpoint regions with critical needs, while tracking and analyzing the evolving **drivers of humanitarian needs.**

3. Methodology

Methodological overview

The assessment will use **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) methodology** to rapidly gather data from affected **communities**, leveraging the knowledge of individuals who are well-acquainted with local conditions of the community. This approach will allow for a swift data collection despite logistical challenges and time constraints.

- **Community Key Informant interviews** are conducted in areas where direct access is possible;
- The **Area of Knowledge (AoK) method** is employed in areas with limited or no direct access, relying on individuals who have recently left those regions to provide information about those communities.

Additionally, both **in-person and phone interviews** will be utilized.

For now, IMPACT and its existing partners will collect data in previously-NWS and -NES, while a network of (new) partners will be mobilized for data collection in formerly GoS-held areas.

Data analysis process

JNA data will be indicative and aggregated and analysed at two levels: i) KIIs and ii) Admin 1 for the geographic level. This will yields an output that provides actors with an update on the humanitarian situation as it relates to the assessed sectors, providing the generalised perspectives of KIs. The unit of observation and analysis is the respective community. Hence, any **reporting is based on the percentage of assessed communities, rather than on an individual or household level**.

Since the unit of analysis for AoK is the community rather than the KI, when there is a single KI per community, the results are clear and easy to interpret. Nonetheless, **when interviewing multiple KIs per community AoK results cannot be reported without first aggregating them at the community level to retain a single response per indicator for each community**. This is primarily because KIs can disagree when responding to the same question, and a method must be used to decide on which answers should be considered valid, and which should be discarded, to strengthen data quality through inter-KI triangulation. In addition, taking multiple KIs for the same community into account, would arbitrarily provide more weight to KI responses in communities where more KIs were interviewed in a way which does not adequately relate to or account for community population size – and thus bias overall results at the level of analysis.

To ensures that no single perspective dominates the overall assessment, and the final response represents a collective community outlook, each indicator included in the assessment was analysed and assigned a method of aggregation according to the nature of the indicator. In the DAP, the type

of aggregation method applied, can be found in the column “aggregation”. Moreover a summary of each aggregation method is presented below:

Type of aggregation	Process	Justification
N/A	No aggregation required for this indicator	Two cases: 1. Is not an indicator that is going to be reported, is for follow-ups. 2. Is an indicator that can be reported the total number.
Interval response questions	The mean (or median) of all scores recoded as the final aggregated response. For example, if response options include 0-25%; 26-50%; 51;75% and 76-100%, these can be recoded as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. If two KIs respond 0-25%, and 1 KI responds 51-75%, the aggregated response would then be 1+1+3/3=1.7 – rounded up to 2 and thus recoded as “26-50%”	Using the mean or median allows for a balanced representation of the responses, reducing the impact of outliers. Recoding intervals into numeric scores standardizes the responses for mathematical operations, making the aggregation process transparent and consistent. Rounding to the nearest category ensures that the final result remains within the original response framework.
Acknowledgment response	Takes the value that acknowledges the occurrence of an event	This method is suitable when the indicator is designed to measure the presence or occurrence of an outcome. Aggregating based solely on responses that confirm a situation and/or event in the community are captured and emphasized. For example: when asked multiple KIs about people leaving or arriving the community, the answer option chosen will be those that said “yes” since it captures a dynamic we are trying to analyze and that might be specific in certain neighborhoods of a community

		and not all of them. Therefore, the result of the aggregation focuses on those KIs that are acknowledging the departures or arrivals of people.
Multiple response questions	All answers are considered except None or don't know when other answer choices are selected	Considering all selected answers except "None" or "Don't know" ensures that the aggregation process captures the diversity of opinions while filtering out non-informative responses. This approach recognizes the complexity of multiple-choice questions where multiple answers may reflect a comprehensive understanding of the issue.
Single nominal response questions	Mode. In this aggregation method, when there is no answer choice selected that is the mode, the classification assigned to that indicator for the community will be "N/C" which means there was no consensus. For example, 2 KIs report “yes” and 2 KIs report “no”, the response is coded as “No consensus”	Using the mode identifies the most reported response, which reflects the majority opinion within the community. When no single answer predominates, assigning "No consensus" is a fair way to indicate a lack of agreement among key informants, maintaining the integrity of the data.

Output

The output of this data collection will be a dashboard in PowerBI that displays all collected indicators for each sector, along with the relevant information of this assessment.