

# Sabratha Rapid Situation Overview

Libya, 14 October 2017

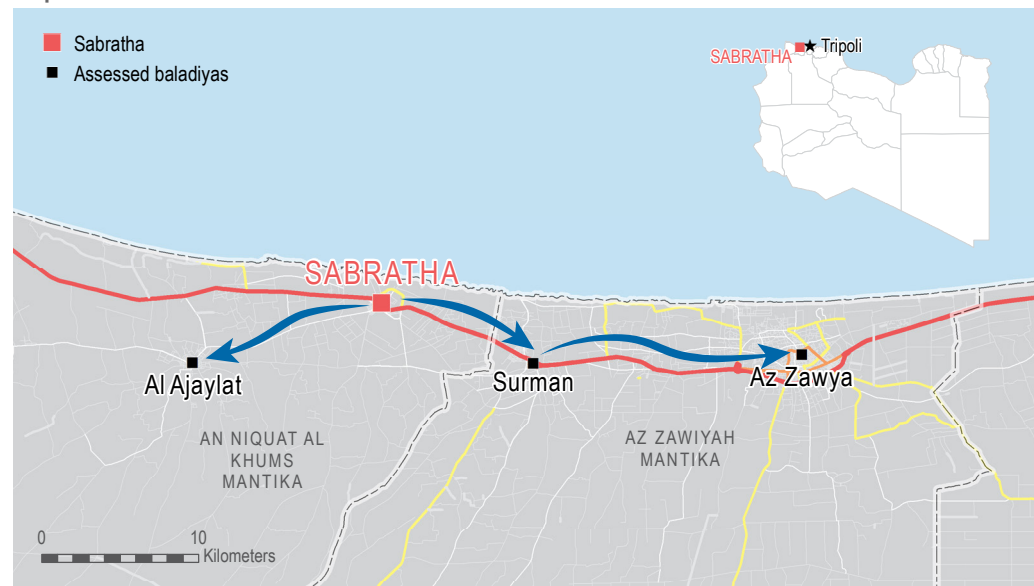
LIBYA RRM

## BACKGROUND

Between 17 September and 6 October 2017, fighting between rival armed groups in the Libyan city of Sabratha led to the rapid displacement of 2,350 host community households (11,350 individuals) to surrounding cities and towns.<sup>(1)</sup> Though active hostilities in Sabratha have subsided and many internally displaced persons (IDPs) have opted to return,<sup>(2)</sup> the atmosphere remains tense, and others have chosen to remain temporarily in their areas of displacement as they assess the situation.

To inform the humanitarian response in the cities and towns surrounding Sabratha, DRC, ACTED and REACH, under the auspices of the Rapid Response Mechanism in Libya (RRM), conducted a rapid assessment to provide a snapshot of the immediate needs of IDPs recently displaced from the city. Between 4 and 11 October, with support from the Kafa Development Foundation, the RRM collected data across 13 muhallas of Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat baladiyas, where significant numbers of IDPs from Sabratha had been displaced. Data was collected through 31 remote key informant (KI) interviews with civil society representatives, NGO staff, medical professionals and members of the IDP population. The information in this situation overview should be considered indicative only.

Map 1: Greater Sabratha



## KEY FINDINGS

- At the time of data collection, KIs estimated that **fewer than 10% of recently displaced IDPs remaining in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat were expected to return to their homes within the week.** Returns may have accelerated since the end of data collection.
- **Nearly all newly displaced IDPs were reported as either renting their own accommodation or being hosted by friends or family,** though the estimated percentages of IDP households in each occupancy situation varied across assessed baladiyas.
- **IDPs reportedly had consistent access to both food and markets,** with only a small number of KIs reporting that IDPs in their muhallas had difficulty accessing either.
- **Food items and most consumable NFIs were reported to be largely available in markets,** though around one-quarter of KIs reported that food prices were too high for some households to afford. By contrast, **non-consumable NFIs,** in particular winter items such as clothing, blankets and heaters, were often reported to be either **unavailable in markets or unaffordable** for the typical IDP household.
- According to KIs, IDP households in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat **rarely brought cash with them from Sabratha,** though those displaced to Surman were both more likely to have done so. **Access to cash in assessed baladiyas had reportedly decreased significantly** since the start of displacement from Sabratha.
- **Medical facilities remained both operational and accessible** across all assessed muhallas. Treatment for chronic diseases, emergency care and care during childbirth were cited as the top three priority medical services needed by IDPs; KIs also reported concerns about the availability and affordability of medicine.
- At the time of data collection, respondents were not aware of any form of NGO assistance received across the assessed baladiyas, though they indicated that organised neighbourhood groups had been active in providing food aid.
- The **top priority needs** for recently displaced IDPs in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat, as reported by KIs, were **1) safety and security; 2) access to healthcare,** and to medicine in particular; and **3) access to cash,** generally to purchase food. In general, KIs reported **a strong preference for cash-based interventions** over other types of aid.

<sup>(1)</sup> Displacement figures from IOM DTM (Displacement Tracking Matrix), as reported in IOM's [Sabratha Flash Report No. 1](#) of 12 October 2017.

<sup>(2)</sup> As of 13 October 2017, UNHCR estimates that roughly two-thirds of IDP households have been able to return, though this relies on estimated displacement figures different from IOM's. See [UNHCR Flash Update: Libya, 2–13 October 2017](#).

## About the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)

This rapid assessment is a product of the RRM, an inter-agency response mechanism funded by ECHO, implemented by ACTED and DRC, and facilitated by REACH that aims to inform the rapid delivery of cash-based interventions in response to internal displacement in Libya. For further information, contact [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org).



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## About REACH

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## FINDINGS BY SECTOR

### Displacement

- In Surman, Az-Zawya, and Al-Ajaylat, **the great majority of IDP households** arriving within the last 3 weeks were **full families consisting of men, women and children**, some of whom were displaced together with **elderly relatives**. Displaced households began to arrive in all assessed muhallas shortly after the outbreak of hostilities in Sabratha.
- Nearly all key informants (KIs) reported that **widespread insecurity was the main push factor** that led IDPs to leave Sabratha. KIs from the displaced population also frequently reported that they or others in their muhalla had left due to conflict-related damage to their shelters.
- Reportedly, households who chose to remain in Sabratha most often based this decision on **a lack of money to move**, followed by **a lack of family or relatives elsewhere** with whom they could stay. This suggests that access to safety was often constrained by a household's economic situation, and that some of the most economically vulnerable households may have been unable to leave. Additionally, KIs in Surman, in particular, reported that some households had chosen not to leave because they believed that Sabratha was safer than other potential destinations.
- In general, **IDPs who fled to Surman, the closest town to Sabratha, tended to have fewer family ties or assets in their destination of displacement**, and thus had to rely more heavily on the assets they carried with them. **IDPs who fled to Al-Ajaylat were most likely to be hosted by family and friends**, which gave them access to greater social and financial support.

### Intentions

- At the time of data collection, KIs estimated that **fewer than 10% of recently displaced IDPs from Sabratha who still remained in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat were expected to return to their homes within the week**, suggesting that many continued to believe they were safest staying where they were. This percentage did not include IDPs who had already returned.

- Of those IDPs who were **temporarily transiting** through Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat on their way to other destinations, **nearly all were expected to head to Tripoli**, roughly 70 kilometres east.
- Among IDPs who intended to remain in their areas of displacement, the most commonly reported reasons for doing so were **lack of a safe route elsewhere and lack of money to move a second time**. Many also intended to stay put due to the presence of family or relatives in their areas of displacement, particularly in Al-Ajaylat and Az-Zawya, and due to a greater relative sense of safety and security in these areas.
- According to KIs in all assessed baladiyas, IDPs would be **most likely to leave their areas of displacement** if localised hostilities were to begin; if healthcare facilities were to cease operating; or if food, water or other essential items became inaccessible.

### Shelter

- **Nearly all recently displaced IDPs were reported as either renting their own accommodation or being hosted by friends or family.** The estimated proportions of IDPs living in these two occupancy arrangements varied across assessed baladiyas. In Al-Ajaylat, for instance, KIs estimated that 40% of IDPs were renting and 60% were being hosted by relatives, whereas in Surman, an estimated 63% and 36% were renting and being hosted respectively.
- Very small numbers of IDPs in Surman (<1%) were reported to be living in informal settlements or collective centres, a situation not reported by KIs in Az-Zawya or Al-Ajaylat.
- All KIs reported that **overcrowding only affected a few households** in each of their respective muhallas.
- **Nearly every KI reported that residents of their muhalla faced difficulty accessing electricity.** In nearly all cases, this was attributed to the general disrepair of the power grid, though KIs in Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat also cited conflict-related damage to the grid and the unavailability of generators.

## Food Security

- **IDPs in nearly all assessed areas could reportedly access food consistently.** Access issues were reported only in small pockets of the baladiya of Al-Ajaylat.
- By far **the most commonly reported way for IDPs to access food** in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat was **to purchase it in local markets**, though KIs also frequently reported that organised neighbourhood groups were providing food assistance. Though they reportedly had full access to these options, IDPs in Az-Zawya tended to rely more strongly on borrowing food from family, friends and neighbours.

## Cash and Markets

- Throughout the assessed areas, **markets were reported to be fully functional and accessible to all groups**, with nearly all traders continuing to operate. Though a majority of KIs reported that IDPs faced no barriers to accessing markets, those in Surman were more likely to cite safety and security concerns, as well as physical constraints such as damaged or blocked roads.
- **All nine assessed food items** (chicken, chickpeas, cooking oil, eggs, flour, pasta, rice, sugar and tomato paste) **were reported to be available in markets across all assessed muhallas.** However, in Surman and Az-Zawya, around one-quarter of KIs reported that food prices were too high for some households to afford.
- A large majority of KIs reported that **non-consumable NFIs** (non-food items), particularly winter clothing, blankets and heaters, **were widely needed but either unaffordable or unavailable in markets.** Consumable NFIs were more easily accessible, with the exception of sanitary pads and baby diapers. Cooking fuel and batteries were reported as unavailable or unaffordable by over half of KIs in Al-Ajaylat, but rarely in other assessed baladiyas.
- **Only an estimated 3% of IDPs in Al-Ajaylat had reportedly carried cash with them from Sabratha**, as compared with **11% of IDPs in Az-Zawya** and **24% of those in Surman.** IDPs in Surman were also reported to carry larger amounts of cash, most often between 300 and 600 LYD per family, as opposed to IDPs in Al-Ajaylat or Az-Zawya, who frequently carried less than 100 LYD per family.
- Nearly all KIs reported that **access to cash had been significantly reduced** since the start of displacement from Sabratha. However, **only one-quarter of KIs, all in Surman and Az-Zawya, reported that coping mechanisms were being used to compensate for a lack of cash.** The most commonly reported coping mechanisms were purchasing food on credit and selling non-productive assets.

## Health

- **Medical facilities, in particular hospitals and private clinics, were reportedly both operational and accessible** across all muhallas assessed.
- Access to **treatments for chronic diseases** (diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, kidney problems, etc.) was consistently reported as a priority need for recently displaced IDPs in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat. **Emergency care for accidents and injuries** was reported as the second most pressing need, followed by the provision of **skilled medical care during childbirth.** KIs also reported concerns about **the availability and affordability of medicine.**

## WASH

- During the last two weeks, IDPs and host communities most commonly accessed drinking water via **boreholes in their neighbourhoods**, which they sometimes had to pay to access. **Water trucking and the public network** were also important sources of drinking water; however, a majority of KIs in Surman, particularly in the muhalla of Al-Haj Abid, indicated that the public network was not as widely used.
- KIs raised **no specific concerns about the quality of water** from any source.

## Protection

- KIs across the three assessed baladiyas reported **no significant tensions between IDPs and host community members.**

## Priority Needs and Preferences

- **Safety and security were reported as the top priority need** for recently displaced IDPs in Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat.
- **Access to healthcare and cash** were reported as, respectively, the second and third priority needs. Access to healthcare was generally linked to the **availability and affordability of medicine**, and access to cash was generally linked to the need to **purchase food items.**
- At the time of data collection, **KIs were not aware of any form of NGO assistance received** in the three assessed baladiyas, nor were they aware of any planned aid distributions. They did, however, report that organized neighbourhood groups had been active in providing food aid.
- Across all assessed muhallas, respondents indicated **a strong preference for cash-based interventions** over in-kind aid.

## CONCLUSION

Based on KI reports, among IDPs displaced within the last three weeks from Sabratha to Surman, Az-Zawya and Al-Ajaylat, the most acute needs revolve around access to cash. The high prices of market items, in particular non-consumable NFIs; the high proportion of IDPs reported to be living in rented accommodations; the increased difficulty of accessing hard cash; and the continued functionality of markets in assessed areas all suggest fertile ground for cash-based programming. Other frequently reported needs include access to medicine, to electricity and, in some areas, to the public water network; in addition, reports of destroyed shelters in Sabratha itself constitute an important unmet need. In their roles as members of the RRM inter-agency response mechanism, DRC, ACTED and REACH will monitor the situation as it evolves to further inform humanitarian planning.