

Situation Overview: Menbij District

Aleppo Governorate, Northeast Syria, October 2018

CONTEXT

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, Menbij district has witnessed periods of heightened clashes and displacement.¹ While there has been a relative decrease in conflict activity over the past two years, humanitarian challenges remain and Menbij still faces a volatile security situation and conflicted control.² In addition, years of conflict and damage to key civilian infrastructure such as roads, bridges, hospitals, and education facilities as well as concern over improvised explosive device and unexploded ordnance (IED/UXO) contamination levels continue to impact the district.³ Furthermore, a lack of access to sustainable livelihoods opportunities as well as a high proportion of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have affected residents ability to afford key services (i.e. healthcare, water, education), and contextual changes and information gaps have limited humanitarian actors' capacity to effectively respond. To address these gaps, REACH conducted this assessment in order to inform humanitarian actors of the needs and conditions in Menbij district.

MAIN FINDINGS⁴

Displacement

- An estimated 96,500 IDPs reportedly resided in the 41 assessed communities in Menbij district, representing approximately 25% of the total population (382,700). The majority of IDPs (80,000) resided in Menbij city including surrounding IDP sites, accounting for 32% of the total population in the city.
- Key informants (KIs) reported an estimated 580 refugees spontaneously returned from Turkey to Menbij, Abu Qalqal, and Big Mohtaraq communities in October.⁵

Health

- In 33 (80%) assessed communities, KIs reported that there were no medical facilities functioning in the community. Furthermore, in 30 (73%) of the assessed communities KIs reported that the high cost of transportation was a barrier in accessing healthcare.

Food Security & Livelihoods

- KIs in the assessed communities reported an average income range between 50,000 to 100,000 SYP.⁶ In 34 (83%) assessed communities the most commonly reported income source was unstable daily employment.
- In 36 (88%) of the assessed communities, it was reported that a lack of financial resources to buy available food was the main barrier to accessing enough food in October.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- In 18 (44%) assessed communities, KIs reported that there was an insufficient amount of water to meet household needs. Furthermore, in 11 (27%) communities it was reported that water from their main source made people sick or tasted/smelled bad.

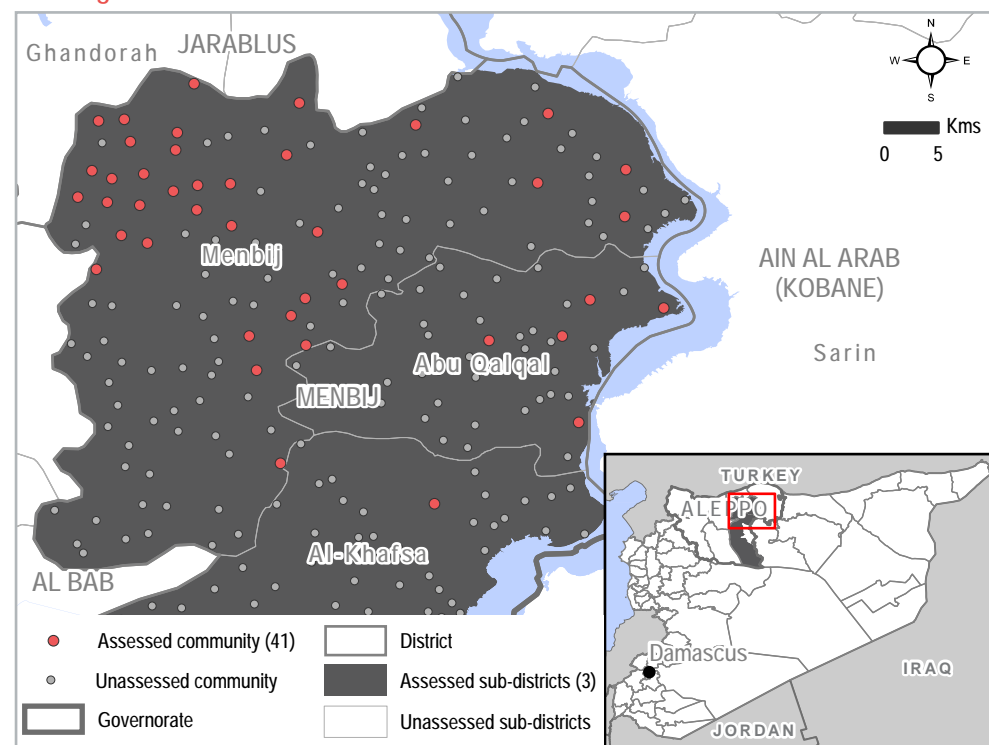
Education

- All of the assessed communities reported that there were functioning primary schools in the community, however KIs in 32 (78%) assessed communities reported that some children did not attend school due to a lack of school supplies and 30 (73%) reported that some children did not attend due to a lack of teaching staff.

Shelter and non-food items (SNFIs)

- Of the 41 assessed communities, 31 (76%) reported the presence of IDPs hosted without rent. In addition, in Menbij, Big Mohtaraq, Big Hayyeh, and Kherbet Khaled, KIs reported that IDPs most commonly resided in tents.

Coverage:



Methodology

HSOS data collection was conducted through an enumerator network in accessible locations throughout Idleb, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Deir-ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa, and Al-Hasakeh governorates. For this situation overview, data was extracted from the larger HSOS dataset in order to address critical information gaps on the needs and conditions in Menbij district. Data was collected during the month of November 2018, and refers to the situation in Menbij district in October 2018.

REACH enumerators are based inside Syria and interview KIs directly in the community that they are reporting in. 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. Findings are indicative rather than representative, and should not be generalised across the region.

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DEMOGRAPHICS⁷

Menbij district witnessed prolonged conflict as a result of so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) presence in Menbij district between 2014 and 2016. In October, KIs reported that in 27 (66%) assessed communities between 76-100% of the pre-conflict population remained. Furthermore, in 36 (88%) assessment communities, the pre-conflict population reportedly remained due to access to employment, income, and shelter.

382,700 Estimated number of residents in assessed communities in Menbij district. **96,500** Estimated number of IDPs in assessed communities in Menbij district.

Communities with largest total populations reported (estimated no. of individuals):

Menbij	250,000
Abu Qalqal	14,000
Hamran	10,800
Talhuthan	10,100
Big Hayyeh	9,600

Menbij city had the highest total population (resident and IDP) of the assessed communities in Menbij district. In addition, there were reportedly two large IDP camps within Menbij city and a growing informal IDP camp in Abu Qalqal.

Communities with largest IDP populations reported (estimated no. of individuals):¹⁰

Menbij	80,000
Abu Qalqal	4,000
Kherbet Khaled	2,160
Big Hayyeh	2,000
Hamran	1,800

Over a quarter of the reported total population in Menbij city were IDPs. In addition, KIs in Menbij, Big Mohtaraq, Kherbet Khaled, and Big Hayyeh reported that IDPs most commonly resided in tents. In Abu Qalqal, IDPs most commonly resided in unfinished apartments or homes and in Hamran, IDPs most commonly resided in collective public spaces not meant for shelter.

Estimated range of spontaneous refugee returns in October.^{5,*}

- 250 - 300 Menbij (Menbij subdistrict)
- 175 - 200 Abu Qalqal (Abu Qalqal subdistrict)
- 100 - 125 Big Mohtaraq (Menbij subdistrict)

Top three reasons why refugees spontaneously returned to the community:^{5,8,9}

Family reunification	100%
Protecting assets	100%
Lack of economic opportunity in host country	66%

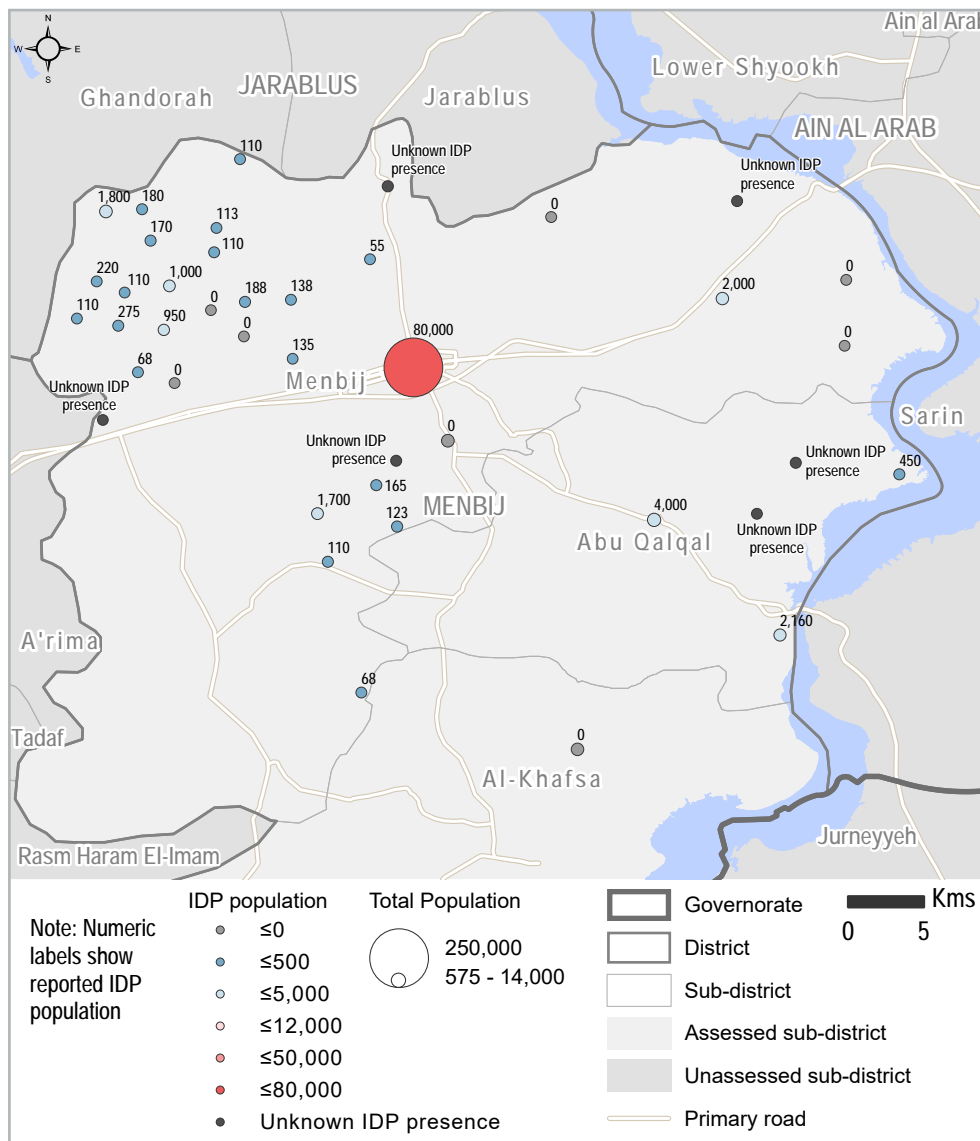
No IDP arrivals or returns were reported in the assessed communities in October. Additionally, no pre-conflict population reportedly left the community in October.

Reasons why pre-conflict population remain in the community:^{8,9,10}

Family ties	93%
Protecting assets	90%
Access to employment/income/shelter	87%

In addition, KIs in Minilla Asaad reported that some pre-conflict population could not physically leave due to illness, disabilities, and/or injuries.

Population demographics in assessed communities:



*Returns were only seen in these three communities and as such spontaneous refugee returns data is only indicative of these three assessed communities.

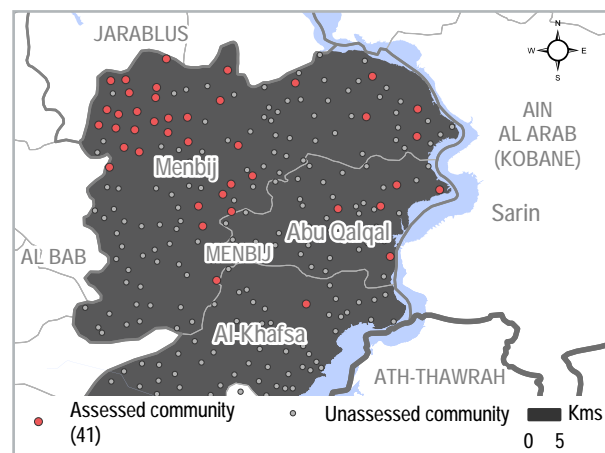
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PRIORITY NEEDS

Top reported priority needs, by number of assessed communities:⁸

PRIORITY NEEDS	#	%
1. Healthcare	37	90%
2. Livelihoods	24	59%
3. Water access	23	56%
4. Education	23	56%
5. Food security	5	12%
6. NFI	5	12%
7. Hygiene and sanitation	4	10%
8. Nutrition	2	5%
9. Early recovery and reconstruction	2	5%

Menbij district:



Top four reported priority needs, by number of assessed communities:



1. HEALTHCARE

100%

of assessed communities reported barriers to accessing healthcare.



2. LIVELIHOODS



Healthcare was reported as the first priority need in 37 (90%) of the assessed communities. KIs reported that while healthcare facilities were available in Menbij district, residents experienced difficulties in affording the cost of healthcare services. Additionally, in 7 (17%) assessed communities, all located in Menbij sub-district, women reportedly faced more barriers to accessing healthcare than men, primarily due to the high cost of transportation to facilities and the high cost of services.

In 24 (59%) assessed communities, livelihoods was reported as a top priority need. Furthermore, only 11 (27%) assessed communities reported that income was sufficient to cover household needs, with the remaining 30 (73%) using coping strategies in order to deal with the lack of income. Unstable daily employment was the main source of income reported throughout 34 (83%) assessed communities. These livelihood challenges were further compounded by issues facing healthcare, water access, and education, which included the cost of services, transportation, and a lack of school supplies and/or teachers.



3. WATER ACCESS

Primary drinking water source reported:⁵



29% Closed well
61% Water trucking
4% Network

Of the assessed communities, 23 (56%) 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 18 (44%) assessed communities were: spend money usually spent on other things to buy water in 17 (41%), and modify hygiene practices in 8 (20%). Additionally, in Big Sandaliyeh and Sakawiyeh, KIs reported that individuals were drinking water that is usually used for other purposes (i.e. cleaning) and in Little Kaber - Little Kaberjeh, KIs reported that residents received water on credit/borrowed water or money for water.



4. EDUCATION¹¹

	Functioning		Not functioning		Not available	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Primary school (4-10)	41	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Secondary school (11-15)	23	56%	10	24%	5	12%
High school (15-17)	7	17%	3	7%	30	73%
University (18+)	0	0%	1	2%	40	98%

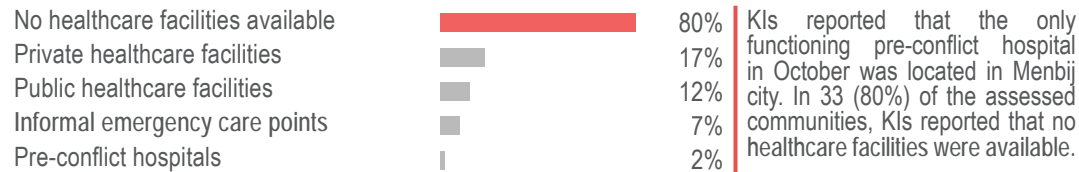
Only 7 (17%) assessed communities reported that all children were able to access education in their communities in October. The main barriers to access were a lack of school supplies in 32 (78%) assessed communities and a lack of teaching staff in 30 (73%). Furthermore, in 9 (22%) assessed communities KIs reported that some children were not attending school during the previous month due to destruction of facilities and in 8 (20%) some children were not attending due to the long distance to available services.

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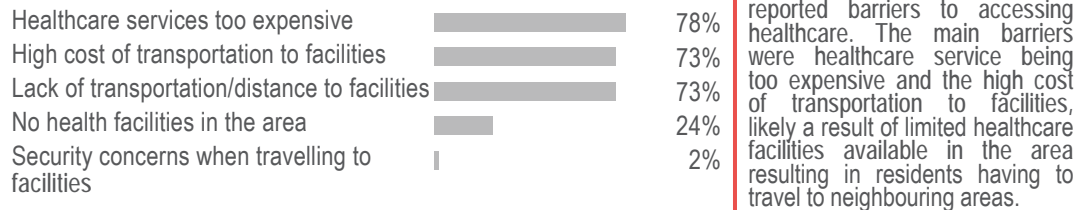
1. HEALTH

Healthcare was reportedly the top priority need in 37 (90%) assessed communities in Menbij district. KIs reported that in 33 (80%) assessed communities, no healthcare facilities were available. Furthermore, with an estimated population of 382,700 that resided in the assessed communities, only KIs in Menbij city reported the presence of a pre-conflict hospital. Furthermore, the high cost of healthcare services and the high cost of transportation were reportedly barriers to accessing healthcare in October.

Most common health facilities available in assessed communities in October:



Most commonly reported barriers to accessing healthcare in assessed communities in October:^{8,9}



Available medical items	#	%
1.No medical items were available	33	80%
2.Antibiotics	8	20%
3.Blood pressure medicine	8	20%
4.Diabetes medicine	7	17%
5.Contraception	7	17%
6.Burn treatment	6	15%
7.Heart medicine	6	15%
8.Clean bandages	5	12%
9.Anti-anxiety medication	5	12%
10.Blood transfusion bags	2	5%
11.Anaesthesia	1	2%

Top 4 most needed healthcare services reported:^{8,9}

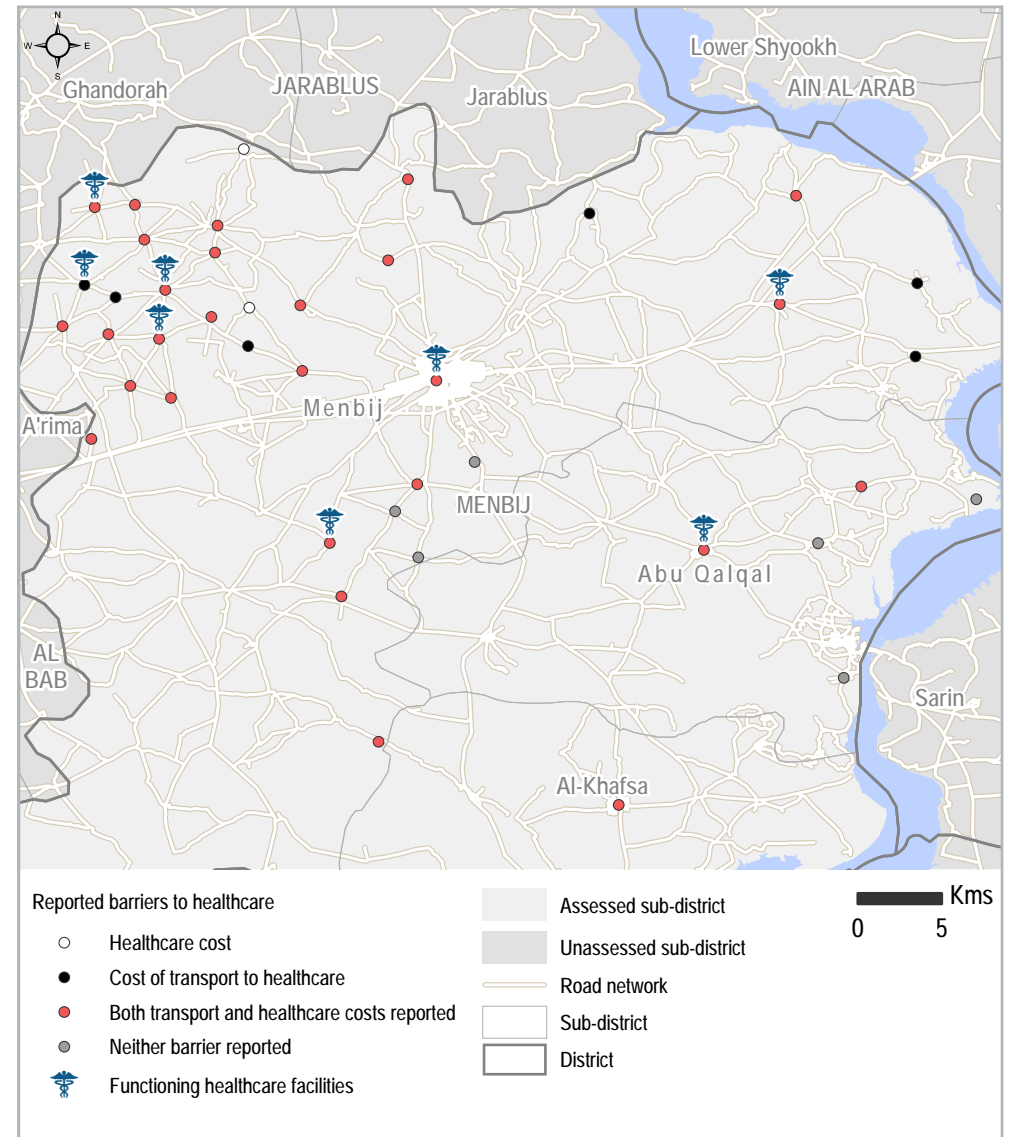
Antenatal care	73%
Surgical care	68%
Medicine	66%
Chronic disease support	59%

Top 3 most common health problems reported:^{8,9}

Chronic disease	80%
Pregnancy related illness	56%
Diarrhoea	41%
Severe diseases affecting those younger than 5	32%

KIs reported that in 90% of assessed communities, women delivered babies in facilities in a nearby community, and in 7% of assessed communities women reportedly delivered babies at home with a midwife. Only women in Menbij city reportedly delivered babies in a hospital in the assessed community.

Presence of health facilities in assessed communities:



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2. LIVELIHOODS

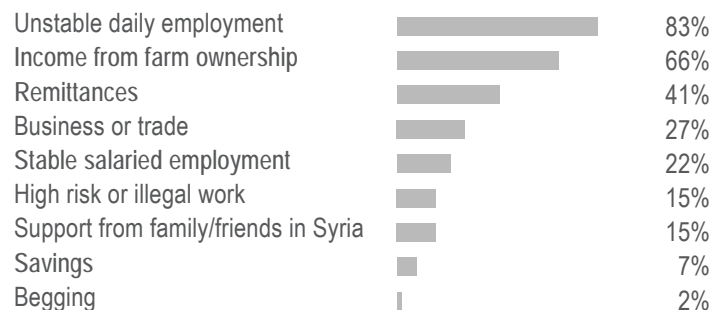
Of the assessed communities in Menbij district, KIs in 25 (61%) reported that households earned monthly incomes between 50,000 - 100,000 SYP in October.⁶ In contrast to the rest of Aleppo governorate, out of 552 assessed communities, 287 (52%) reported an average monthly income of less than 50,000 SYP, 221 (40%) reported an average income between 50,000 - 100,000 SYP, and 42 (8%) between 100,000 - 150,000 SYP. Unstable daily employment was the main source of income reported throughout 34 (83%) of the assessed communities in Menbij district. Additionally, in 36 (88%) of the assessed communities, KIs reported that there were a lack of resources to buy available food and in 29 (71%) some types of food were reportedly too expensive in October. KIs reported that in 31 (76%) assessed communities, residents were using negative coping strategies to deal with the lack of income. The most commonly reported coping strategy in 31 (76%) assessed communities was borrowing money from family/friends.

Most commonly reported average monthly household income range.⁶



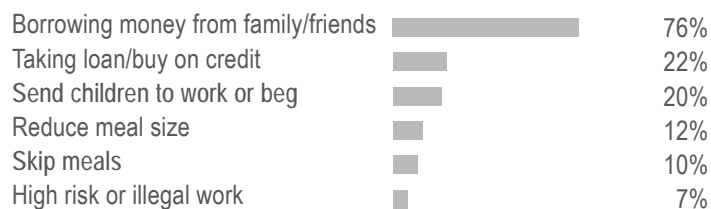
29% Less than 50,000 SYP
61% From 50,000 to 100,000 SYP
4% From 100,000 to 150,000 SYP

Most commonly reported main sources of income in October:^{8,9}



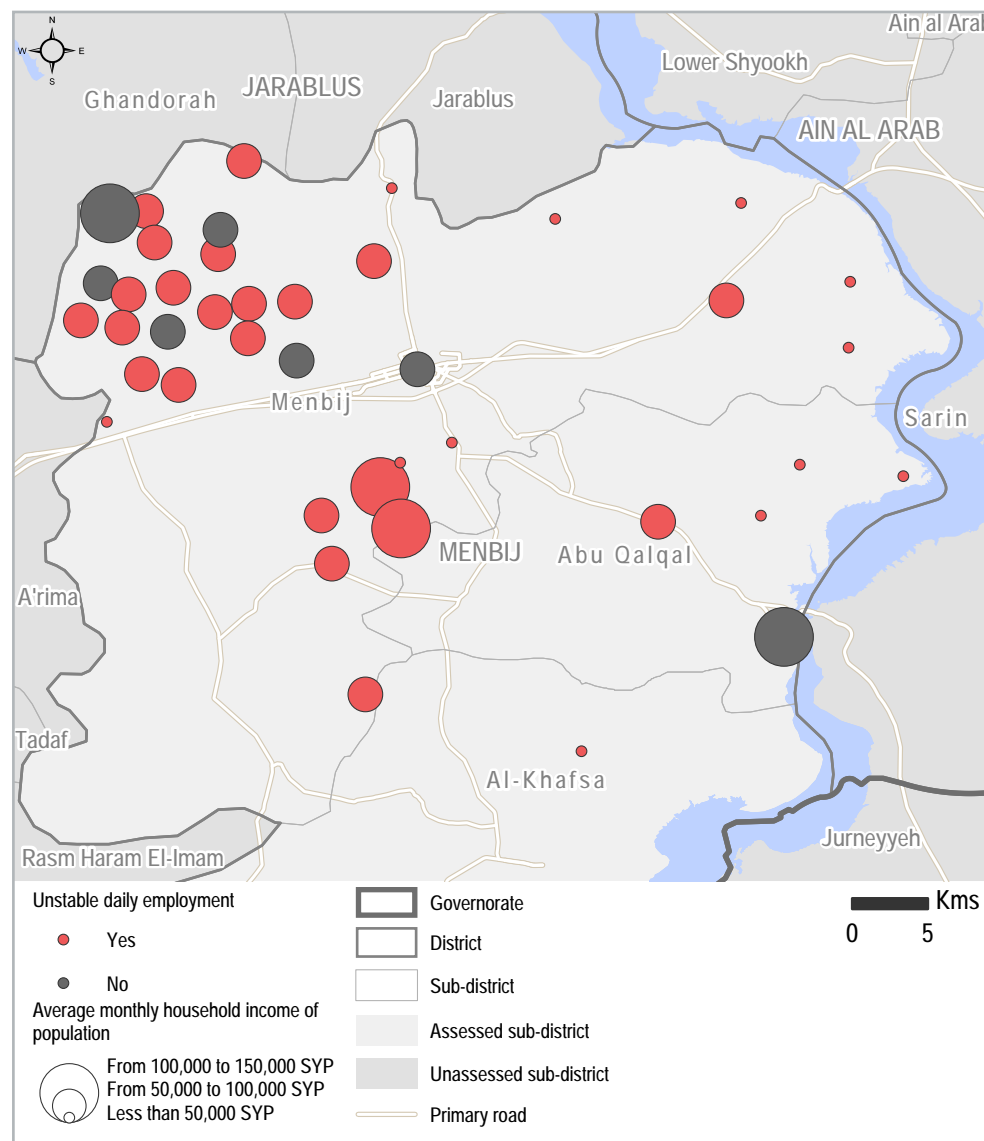
Unstable daily employment was the main source of income reported in assessed communities. KIs also reported a high prevalence of farm ownership or receiving remittances from family/friends outside of Syria. In Big Jeb Elkalb, begging, as well as unstable employment and high risk/illegal work were reported as the main sources of income in October.

The most commonly reported coping strategies to deal with a lack of income:^{8,9}



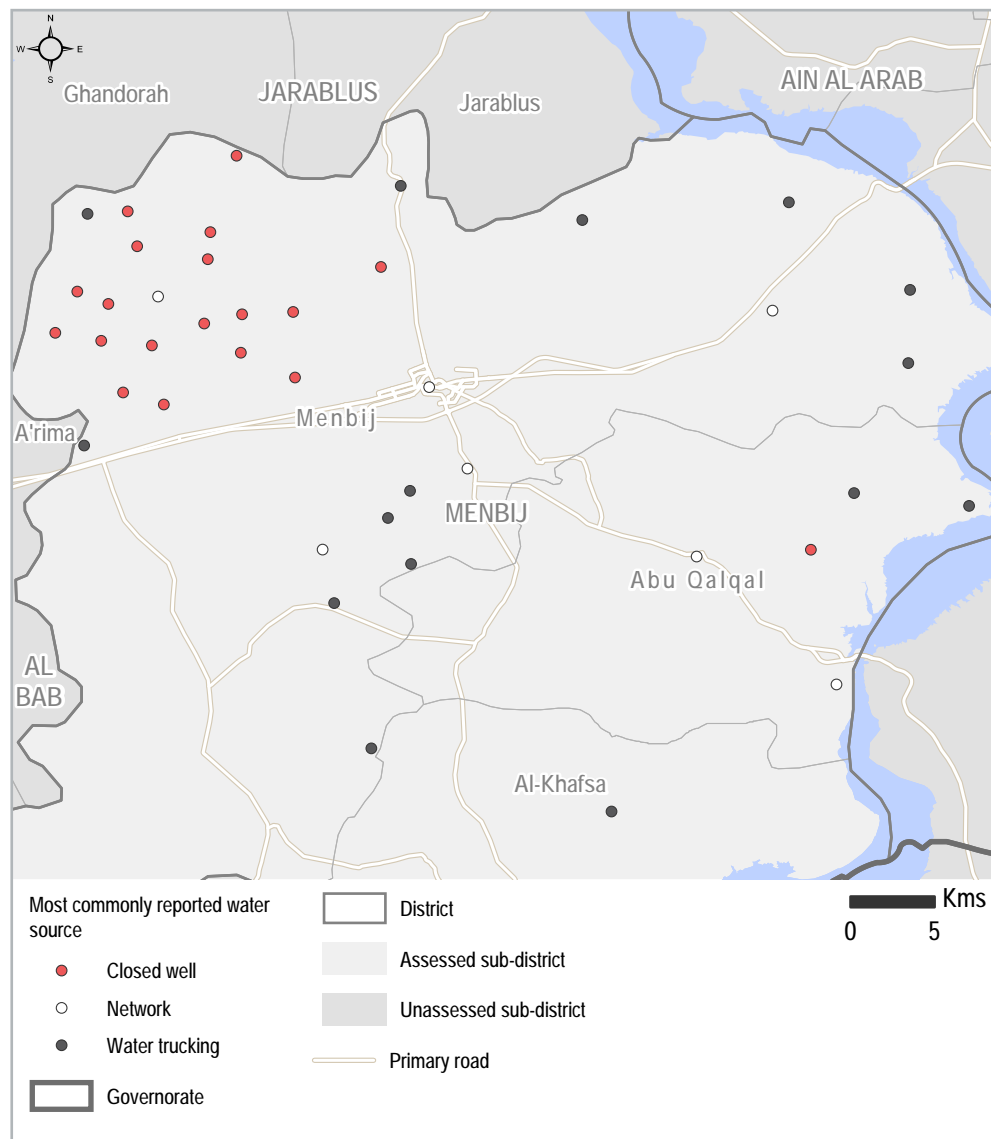
In 10 (27%) of the assessed communities, KIs reported that residents had sufficient income to cover household needs. In the remaining 31 (76%) assessed communities, KIs reported borrowing money from family/friends.

Prevalence of unstable daily employment and average monthly household income:



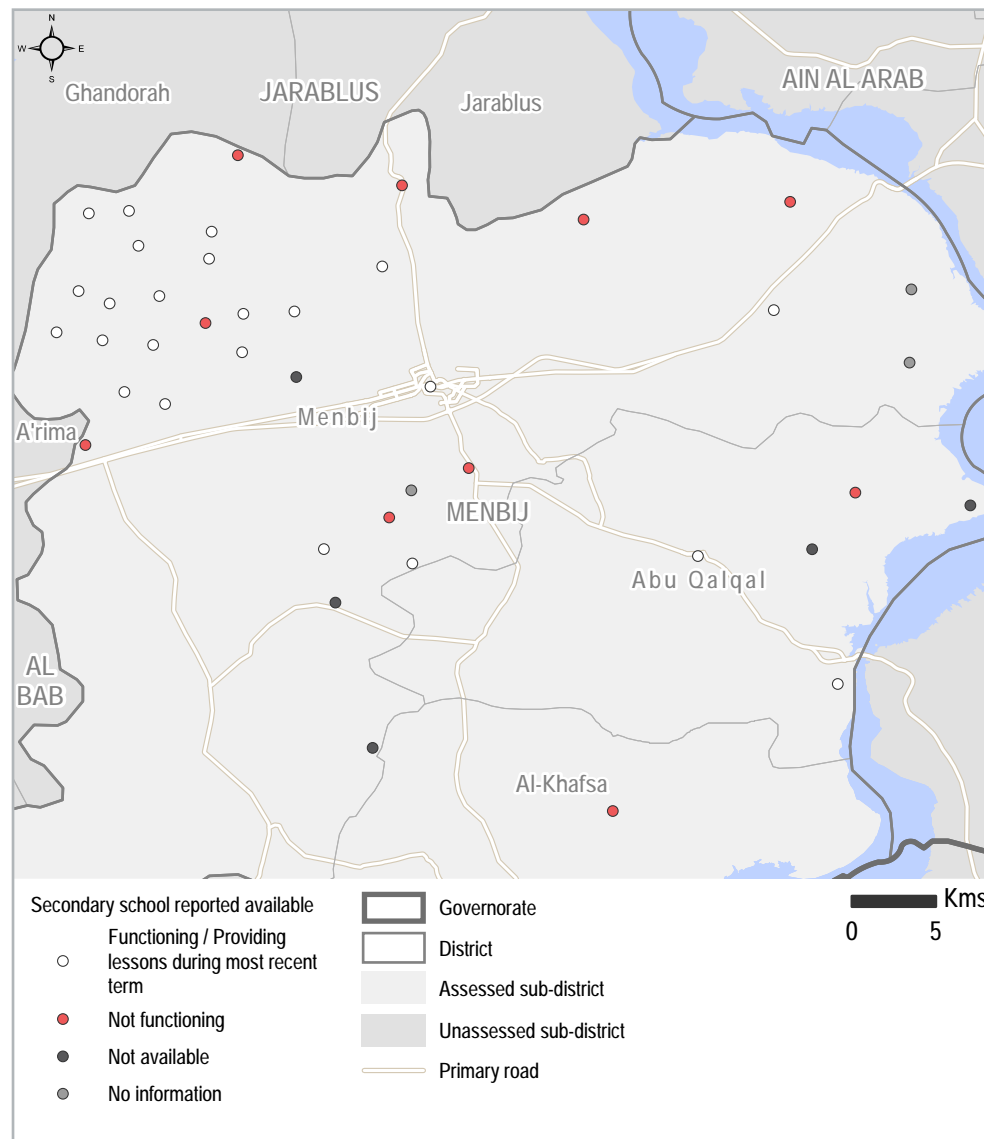
3. WATER ACCESS

Most commonly reported water source in October:



4. Education

Prevalence of functioning secondary schools in October:



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ENDNOTES

¹Syria Deeply. (15.08.2018). Thousands Return To Manbij After Islamic State Militants Flee City. Retrieved from <https://www.newsdeeply.com>

²Kanta, K. B. & Hannon, J. (2018): The Manbij Roadmap and the Future of the U.S.-Turkish Relations. Retrieved from <https://www.mepc.org>

³Human Rights Watch. (26.10.2018). Syria: Improvised Mines Kill, Injure Hundreds in Manbij. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org>

⁴All information and figures reported in HSOS factsheets refer to the situation in assessed communities and cannot be generalised to other non-assessed communities of the district.

⁵Spontaneous 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".

⁶1 USD = 434 SYP (UN operational rates of exchange as of 1 October 2018)

⁷For population numbers, KIs were asked to provide the number of resident and IDPs present in the community as of 31 October 2018. 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. Population data was reported for all 41 assessed communities.

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'. The definition of resident (pre-conflict) population 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'.

⁸Assessed using select multiple questions

⁹By percentage of communities reporting

¹⁰Pre-Conflict Population (PCP), individuals who have not been displaced since the beginning of the conflict.

¹¹'Children' includes all persons below the age of 18.