

INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian situation for people in Syria remains severe, as decades of political instability and armed conflict have limited the country's economic growth. Since 2011, the gross domestic product has shrunk by more than 60%¹ due to destruction of infrastructure, loss of lives and human capital, and disruption in trade and markets. The protracted crisis and consequent displacement have impacted businesses, job creation and people's ability to access employment opportunities.

The situation has further exacerbated due to the impact of COVID-19, price inflation, and the devaluation of the Syrian pound (SYP), compounding the strain on all populations.² A United Nations (UN) inter-agency socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 found that 15% of businesses had permanently closed due to COVID-19 and its associated measures; 40% had paused trading; and 30% reduced their activity.³

According to the [REACH Humanitarian Situation Overview of Syria \(HSOS\)](#), livelihoods has consistently been reported as one of the top priority needs among all population groups across Northern Syria. An understanding of the profile of the labour force, market demand, and various sectors of employment and professional networks is necessary in order to provide support to conflict-affected populations in accessing livelihood opportunities, finding decent employment and in the long run becoming economically resilient and self-reliant.

OBJECTIVE

REACH conducted a labour market assessment in select urban cities across Northern Syria **to identify current and potential key employment sectors** for conflict-affected populations to engage in.

The assessment aimed to **understand the existing gaps in employment opportunities between the supply (workers) and demand (employers)** by highlighting the **barriers faced by workers in accessing employment, and the challenges faced by employers in hiring skilled and semi-skilled labour**. The study further **determined growth opportunities in key employment and business sectors, and any constraints faced by business enterprises**.

Ultimately, the findings aim to inform humanitarian actors in design of potential programs and strategies towards increased livelihoods and economic opportunities for vulnerable populations in the assessed locations.

METHODOLOGY

REACH pursued a mixed-methods approach for this assessment using a combination of structured and semi-structured tools to address the research objective. Taking a two-way approach to the labour market, REACH collected information on both the supply-side (workers/ labour force) and demand-side (employers/ businesses).

A secondary data and literature review (SDLR) was first conducted to evaluate and synthesize key existing research on the current state of labour market in the assessed locations, to identify key information gaps, and to inform the development of the individual interview (II), and key informant interview (KII) questionnaires.

The structured individual interviews with workers/ labour force (Labour IIs) collected information to gain understanding of the supply-side of the labour market across various themes like employment sectors that the assessed populations generally work in, access to employment, challenges and barriers to gaining employment, skillsets that the assessed populations generally have to offer, and any differences between host and internally displaced persons (IDPs) or male and female workers in their ability to access livelihood opportunities. Labour IIs included those workers who were 18 years old or above, and those who, at the time of the interview, were either working (employed) or looking for work (including those who reported being unemployed).

The structured KIIs with local business owners (Business KIIs) collected information to gain understanding of the demand-side of the labour market across various themes like key sectors that the businesses in the assessed locations operate in, and what were their organizational characteristics and profiles. Information was also collected on the types of challenges and barriers businesses faced in operating their activities, their hiring practices, and skillsets that the employers/ businesses generally looked for in their workforce.

Further, in-depth interviews utilizing semi-structured interviews, in each city, were conducted with key informants (KIs) like community leaders and local representatives/ council members (Community leader KIIs), and sector and programming experts (Sector expert KIIs). These provided a holistic view of the trends and patterns among respective communities, and helped to understand the key employment sectors, and overall barriers and potential opportunities for economic growth in the assessed locations.

All data collection and analysis activities for the assessment were conducted in accordance with IMPACT's minimum standards requirements and checklist for structured and semi-structured data processing and analysis. Every effort was taken to protect the anonymity of participants involved in this study by removing all personally identifiable information from the data.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Business and management skills: The abilities to run a business efficiently, utilising attributes such as problem-solving and decision-making, in addition to having a broad knowledge of disciplines in human resource management.⁴

Computer skills: Basic computer skills courses cover the most common usages of a computer, including a majority or all of the following: understanding the basic notions of computer manipulation; managing computer files, word processing, using spreadsheets and databases; creating presentations; and finding information and communicating using computers.⁵

Financial skills: Skills related to the understanding, evaluation and management of the financial resources needed to set up a firm and develop successful, innovative, and sustainable initiatives within it, including knowledge related to accounting and book-keeping.⁶

Key employment sectors: Key employment sector or key sectors of the economy represent areas of the economy in which groups of businesses share the same or related business activity, product, or service. These sectors represent a large grouping of companies with similar business activities and provide livelihood opportunities for the work force. These sectors may include agriculture, manufacturing, construction, finance and related services, retail and commerce, etc.⁷

Labour force: The labour force comprises all persons of working age who furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services during a specified time-reference period. It refers to the sum of all persons of working age who are employed (already working) and those who are unemployed (but seeking employment).⁸

Literacy skills: The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.⁹

Sector specific skills: Sector specific skills are technical, job-specific abilities and special attributes that are needed for performing an occupation in practice. Learners often acquire these as a result of their participation in post-basic education, including through highly-specialised professional trainings or extra-school courses. These skills could relate to a specific job, task, or academic discipline (e.g. teacher, geographer, medical doctor or journalist).^{10,11}

Vocational skills: The knowledge, practical competencies, knowhow and attitudes necessary to perform certain trades or occupation in the labour market which relate to fulfilling the requirements of daily basic needs of maintaining habitation. These include carpentry, plumbing, electrical and wire-works, tinsmithing, etc.^{12,13}

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

1. Only the findings from the labour IIs are representative at 95% level of confidence and a 10% margin of error at the city-level. All other findings from the business KIIs, community leader KIIs, and sector expert KIIs should be considered indicative only.
2. Due to security constraints and UXO contamination in some areas, the random sample for the labour IIs was drawn excluding the neighbourhoods of Ad Dari'yeh, Amin, and Tas-heeh to ensure enumerator safety.
3. Presence of female enumerators in the team conducting data collection for the individual-level labour surveys was ensured so that female respondents in the labour IIs would feel more comfortable to speak and give consent to being interviewed. However, despite the presence of female enumerators conducting the randomly-selected interviews, male respondents are still overrepresented in this assessment. Field teams further reported low number of female workers being found through the random selection of interviews. This further underscores the limited participation of women in the local labour market in Ar-Raqqa city, and a more targeted approach in the future to select female respondents, and assess their circumstances is highly recommended.
4. Owing to the social context, operational capacities, and time constraints, it was not possible for REACH field networks to identify and interview IDP- and/or female-owned businesses as originally planned. As such, IDP- and gender-based perceptions on challenges and issues faced by businesses in conducting their activities are missing. This further contributes to the indicative nature of the findings within this report.
5. All the findings presented are based on self-reporting. Due to inherent biases in self-reporting, there may be under-or over-reporting of certain indicators. This could be particularly likely for indicators which are considered sensitive, such as those relating to the reporting of discrimination and challenges in engagement with local stakeholders.

CONTEXT

The city of Ar-Raqqa is located on the northern bank of the Euphrates River, in the northeast governorate of Ar-Raqqa, in Syria. The city's population is currently estimated to be around 364, 438.¹⁴ Livelihood opportunities, along with access to services like healthcare, education, sanitation, and electricity, have overall reportedly remained very low.¹⁵ Pre-conflict, the city and the countryside around it had been one of the country's main breadbaskets, producing large amounts and varieties of crops.¹⁶ But, conflict-driven disruptions, compounded by the impact of climate-change, and resulting drought and depletion of river water-levels,¹⁷ have played an important role in the loss of agricultural activities in and around the city. Further, widespread infrastructural damage and a complex security environment in the city has stunted the overall economic growth and contributed to the absence of medium- and large-scale industries.

KEY FINDINGS

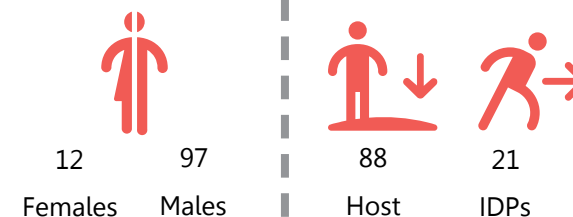
- The main sectors in which workers from the labour IIs reported to be mostly working in were found to be construction and manufacture of construction related material (23%), education (11%), transportation (10%), wholesale and retail trade (8%), and sewing and tailoring (6%).
- Industrial manufacturing and processing of food items and beverages was noted by the business KIs (9) as the sector high in demand, and thus likely to be the most profitable.
- Alternate source of energy, specifically solar power was noted by the sector expert KI and more than half of the business KIs as an emerging sector in Ar-Raqqa city.
- The vast majority of workers in the labour IIs reported that they relied on their relationships and personal connections like friends (78%) and relatives (62%), to find work. Similarly, business KIs also noted that they mostly hired new staff through their own networks (12).
- Communication skills (12), vocational skills (9), and literacy skills (7) were the skills deemed as most desirable in new staff while making hiring decisions, according to business KIs.
- More than half of the business KIs (9) reported that their business income or profitability had decreased compared to one year ago. This was followed by three business KIs who reported that their incomes had remained same, while two KIs reported that their income had increased.
- Vocational (60%) and computer/ information and communication technology/ digital skills (44%) were reported as the main skills that workers would be most interested in learning.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

In total, 126 in-person interviews were conducted in Ar-Raqqa city between 21 and 30 November 2021. The breakdown of these interviews according to the different methods of interview and the demographics of the interviewees are given as follows:

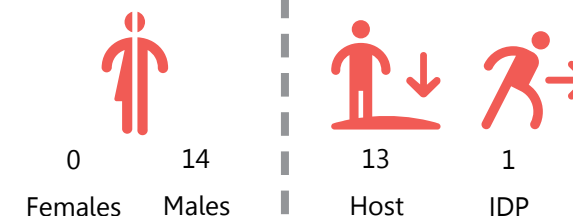
109

Labour IIs



14

Business KIs



2

Community leader IIs



- Both informal community leaders/ representatives of host and IDP communities

1

Sector expert II



- Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) working on livelihood programming in Ar-Raqqa city






KEY EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

The income-generating activities that people mostly engaged in Ar-Raqqa city, according to the community leader KIs, included construction, wholesale and retail of grocery items and clothes, bakeries, industrial manufacturing and processing of food and non-food items, labour intensive daily-wage work related to lifting heavy weights, education, and other vocational trades such as carpentry and woodwork, tinsmithing and metal work, and maintenance and repair of cars and vehicles.

As per the sector expert KI and business KIs, there also existed local businesses that operated in sectors such as agriculture and livestock rearing, restaurant and hospitality services, money exchange and remittance services, healthcare, and real estate trade.

However, due to unavailability and unaffordability of fertilizers, insecticides and fuel, and proper irrigation and drainage systems, the sector expert KI highlighted that the agriculture sector in the city was declining. Because of these issues, farmers had reportedly resorted to cultivating crops which were less labour intensive and required lesser resources. This practice had resulted in a shortage of staple crops such as wheat and cotton, and also reduced work opportunities for people who often worked on these farms as daily-wage labourers.

Top five sectors of work in which workers from labour IIs reported mostly working in

	Construction and manufacture of construction material	23%
	Education	11%
	Transportation	10%
	Wholesale and retail trade	8%
	Sewing/ tailoring/ embroidery/ knitting	6%

All respondents from the labour IIs who reported working in the construction, transportation and plumbing sector were men.¹⁸ This corresponds with SDLR findings which suggested that female participation in labour-intensive jobs was generally absent and these industries have traditionally been male-dominated.



Levels of informality in work in Ar-Raqqa city found to be very high with 89% workers reporting engagement in some form of informal work¹⁹

50% workers reported to be employed with verbal or no contract²⁰

39% workers reported engaging in informal daily-wage work

11% workers reported having a written contract with their employer

While the informality in contracts was in line with the information provided by business KIs, where all KIs reported that they had verbal contract with their employees, the sector expert KI also noted that formal businesses in the city were present as well. However, according to the community leader KIs, formal jobs existed only in the public sector affiliated with the local authorities.



Most businesses in the city were micro- (1-9 employees) or small-sized (10-49 employees), according to the sector expert KI

The size and scale of businesses, on the basis of the number of employees, corresponded with the information provided by the business KIs, where the number of workers employed by them varied between approximately 4 to 50 employees.

The sector expert KI also noted that some businesses like production of processed food products like cheese, pickles, and bread, were home-based, i.e. families worked from their homes to produce and sell these items. These business were generally run by female entrepreneurs and were preferred by women as they could be run in or close to their homes.

CHANNELS TO FIND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES






The vast majority of workers in the labour IIs reported that they relied on their relationships and personal connections like friends (78%) and relatives (62%), to find work.* Some respondents also reported that they found work through social media like WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages (17%). There were no specific trends in sectors among the respondents who noted that they found jobs through social media, however, the community leader KIs noted that advertisements on social media were mostly for jobs related to NGOs and humanitarian work.

Additionally, the community leader KIs noted that those seeking employment could also go to the Social Affairs and Labour Office (Employment Office) of the local authorities where they could register themselves and wait for a job opening. The employment/ labour office was the only placement service available for job seekers in the city, according to one of the community leader KI. However, using the Employment Office as an avenue to find job opportunities was not mentioned by any workers in the labour IIs, perhaps indicating either a lack of awareness of this medium as a resource for job searches or it not being an effective or preferred channel for job seekers to look for employment opportunities.

Some respondents working in informal daily-wage type of work, also reported that they gathered daily at a designated spot, and contractors came to take them in numbers as per that day's requirement of manpower for the required job (11).

While both the community leader KIs noted that everyone was able to access the local labour market, they noted that lack of job opportunities was a major challenge that job seekers in the city generally faced in finding work.

Top five most commonly reported barriers in finding employment, according to workers from the labour IIs*

	Not enough job opportunities	68%
	High competition for available jobs	44%
	Want to start own business but lack resources to do so	38%
	Do not have the necessary skills or education	14%
	Do not have enough work experience	14%

*Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

RECRUITMENT PRACTICES OF BUSINESSES






Most business KIs reported that they hired new staff through their own friends, relatives, or through relatives of workers who were already employed with them (12)

Personal attributes such as honesty (13) and punctuality (7), in addition to work experience (9) were the top three qualities reported by business KIs when asked which were the most important factors they looked for while selecting potential employees to work in their business.* Trust was also mentioned by community leader KIs as well as sector expert KI as a quality that business owners looked for. In practice, business owners generally associate these interpersonal qualities with people they already know, ideally relatives, close friends, or people within their own communities. As such, while work experience and skills were highly ranked by all interviewees, the final hiring may often be limited to those having personal connections with the employer or those within a specific network.

Less than half of the business KIs noted that it was difficult for them to find workers in the city who possessed the technical skills required by their company/ business. However, all business KIs (14/14) reported some challenges when trying to hire employees.

Top three obstacles reported by business KIs in finding/ hiring new employees*

	Workers demanding high salaries	10
	Lack of workers with the right technical skills or experience	7
	Workers mostly unaware of vacancies/ difficult to advertise jobs	5

While, more than half of the business KIs reported that they would be willing to hire vocational training attendees (8) after course completion, 6 KIs reported that they would not hire the trainees.

Two of these business KIs reported that they would not be willing to hire the trainees because they did not deem training courses as practical experience and knowledge. Whereas, the other four KIs noted that they do not anticipate any vacancies in their businesses to hire more people.

FEATURES OF THE LOCAL LABOUR FORCE






Education levels

While education does not always guarantee access to formal and more productive employment, it is an important asset. Globally, when the level of education increases, informality decreases.²¹ Supporting this, five out of the six respondents who reported having higher education (completed undergraduate or post-graduate), also reported working in formal jobs: four respondents worked in the education sector, while one worked with an NGO in the humanitarian sector. Conversely, out of those workers who reported having attended school only at the primary-level, or not having attended school at all, including those who could read or write and those who did not have any literacy (unable to read or write), almost all worked in informal jobs (48 out of 50).

In fact, the vast majority of workers reported that their highest level of education was at school-level (83%) only. Out of these respondents, 41% workers reported receiving only primary-level education, 32% reported receiving secondary-level education, and 10% reported receiving education at the high-school level.

Factors affecting employability

Top five reasons reported by workers as to why they were more successful in finding employment in comparison to others^{*22}









- | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|-----|
|  | 1 | I have sufficient work experience | 66% |
|  | 2 | I have the necessary skills | 35% |
|  | 3 | I am willing to work for lower wages | 29% |
|  | 4 | I have connections at workplace | 21% |
|  | 5 | Employers hire me due to my young age | 15% |

Overall, both the community leader KIs noted that connections at workplace was one of the most important factor that enabled some workers to be more successful in finding work than others.

*Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF SKILLS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Top four skills that workers reported having*

Top four skills that workers reported having*	Top four skills that employers look for when hiring new employees, according to business KIs*
 Literacy skills (57%)	Communication skills (12) 
 Vocational skills (42%)	Vocational skills (9) 
 Skills specific to my sector (23%)	Literacy skills (7) 
 Communication skills (13%)	Business management skills (2) 

Less than one-fourth of the workers reported having sector specific skills highlighting an under-supply of workers with appropriate technical skills

According to the community leader KIs, most workers had experience related to unskilled or semi-skilled work in construction, farming and agricultural work, and in running small businesses and trades such as tailoring, barbershops, and grocery stores, and thus, there was a need for specialized trainings to develop the skills of the labour force. There is a recognition of this issue among workers as well. Out of those workers who acknowledged that there were skills which they lacked or needed to have which could increase their chances of finding employment (75%), 55% of respondents reported that they needed to hone their vocational skills, followed by 38% of respondents who reported that they lacked computer and digital skills.* Further, 16% of respondents also reported that they lacked business and management skills, in addition to financial and administrative skills, which were reported by 13% of the respondents.*

BUSINESS CONDITIONS AND INSIGHTS INTO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Business KIs were fairly optimistic when asked what they anticipated would happen in their sector in the next two years. A majority of the KIs noted that their sector would grow (10). Only one KI whose business activities were related to carpentry and woodwork noted that their sector would see a contraction in the next two years, whereas, another KI with a business in the healthcare sector noted that it would remain same.²³

However, when the business owners were asked whether they had plans to expand their existing business in the next two years, the responses were divided: eight KIs noted that they planned to expand their business, while six KIs noted that they did not plan to do so. All six KIs who noted that they did not have any expansion plans cited political instability in the area and overall poor economic conditions as their main reason for not expanding in the near future.

When asked about the perceived reasons as to why some businesses fail to be successful in their respective sectors or the local area, the vast majority of business KI noted that lack of good business management (13) and lack of knowledge of the market and market prices were the main reasons.* This was followed by lack of adequate initial capital (6) and lack of marketing of products and services (4).

Number of business KIs reporting that they hired new employees in the past one year



Number of business KIs reporting that they were planning to hire new employees in the next one year



Why businesses did not hire new employees in the past one year*

- Did not have any vacancies (5)
- Insufficient profit to hire extra staff (1)

Why businesses do not plan to hire new employees in the next one year*

- Do not have any vacancies (5)

Level of market competition had increased across all business sectors²⁴

Number of business KIs reporting change in business income in comparison to the income one year prior to the interview



Business KIs who noted that their income/ profitability had decreased compared to one year ago from the time of interview (9), noted that this was due to high competition from other similar businesses in the city (5), currency fluctuation and rise in price of US dollar (USD) (4), inability to source supplies and raw material for trade due to access restrictions and border closures (3), high customs fee (3), and COVID-19 and its related impact on overall trade in the city (3).*

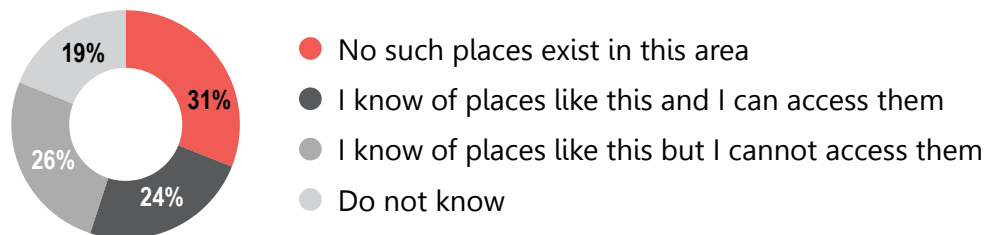
These issues were reflected in the interview with the sector expert KI as well. The sector expert KI highlighted that financial and border-related issues such as high customs fees, instability of the exchange rate, high rental prices for real estate, and issues with border closure acted as challenges for businesses in running their activities. Lack of raw materials, and skilled and experienced labour were also noted as challenges by the KI that businesses faced in their operations.

On the other hand, of the two business KIs who noted that their income/ profitability had increased compared to one year ago, one KI noted that it was because they had been able to hire skilled workers, whereas, the other KI noted that the increase in income was because the sector of their business was growing in demand, they had been able to procure supplies and raw materials required for trade, and were able to buy necessary equipment and machinery for their operations.*

*Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

AVAILABILITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOB SEEKERS

Proportion of workers reporting on availability of opportunities where they could go to learn new skills or receive any trainings

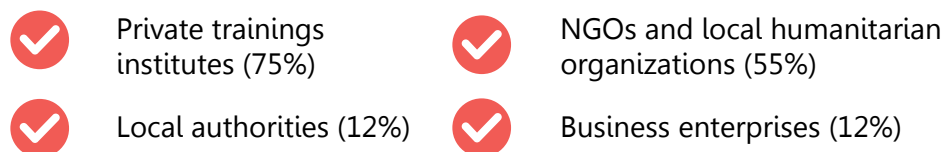


While training opportunities were available in the city, 26% of workers noted that they were unable to access them. Financial barrier due to trainings being too expensive was cited by a vast majority of these respondents as the main reason why they were unable to access the training opportunities (93%). This was followed by 71% of respondents who reported that places that provided such training were too far. Some respondents also reported that they could not attend these trainings because they had to take care of family obligations (31%).*



People with disabilities and special needs had lesser access to available training opportunities due to transportation-related challenges, according to the sector expert KI

Proportion of workers reporting on the actors who provide trainings in the city*

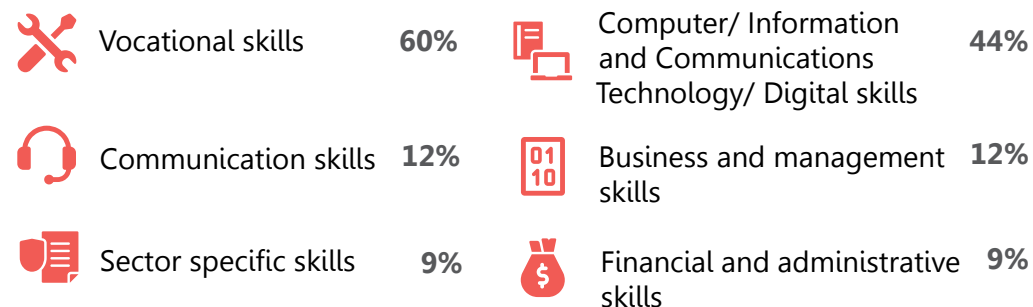


The community leader KIs reported that training on vocational trades such as hairdressing and grooming, sewing and stitching, and repair and maintenance of electrical appliances, phones, computers and other electronic devices were available for people who wanted to learn new skills. More specialized training programs on the use of Microsoft Office, data collection programs like KoBo, and first aid and nursing courses were also available.

*Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

However, community leader KIs noted that most training programs had limited availability and allowed very few participants to attend. Moreover, the KIs highlighted that because of the short duration of these training courses, it was difficult for participants to actually incorporate any learning and apply the teachings in the real world. Despite this, a vast majority of workers (90%) still reported an interest in attending trainings programs if there was an entity that helped them learn new skills or provided trainings without the prohibitive factors.

Types of skills reported by workers which they would be most interested in learning*



78% respondents in the labour IIs reported being interested in starting their own business

100% respondents who reported being interested in starting their own business also reported facing barriers in doing so



Lack of capital (88%) and lack of access to financial services (41%) were the main barriers reported

Workers in the labour IIs also reported lacking resources, and necessary equipment (9% each) to start a business in which they were interested. Depending on the type of business, tools and equipments like drills, sewing machine and lathe, machinery like generator, refrigerator, oven and tractor, and raw material like metal, fabric, seeds and fertilizers were noted as specific items needed in order to open own business and perform related activities.

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

In order to start a small business in the same sectors as theirs, the business owners reported that people, on average, would need an estimated 130,714,285 Syrian Pound (SYP).

In fact, unavailability of formal banks and financial institutions in the city was highlighted by all 14 business KIs as a barrier when asked if they would be able to get a loan, if they needed one, to expand their business. In the absence of accessibility to business loans, people have to resort to taking debt through informal channels and/ or turn to their personal relations like family, friends or relatives, based in or outside Syria. As such, those who do not have family members or connections with sufficient funds to grant loans are unlikely to gain access to sufficient capital to start a business.

 **There is a need for provision of micro-loans and credit, and cash grants for new and existing small and medium-scale businesses**

All business KIs also noted that there were no specific business-support programs currently available in the city that they were aware of. However, the sector expert KI noted that there were some support programs being implemented by local organizations that included supporting farmers in their registration with agricultural associations related to the local authorities, and providing them with inputs required for farming like seeds, fertilizers, and fuel. Additionally, the sector expert KI noted that the local authorities in Ar-Raqqa city supported some sectors by providing raw material to them at subsidized prices. The local authorities provided seeds and fertilizers to farmers, and flour to bakeries at reduced prices. However, the KI noted that the quantities in which these items were provided were generally insufficient and the support needed to be expanded to fulfill the actual demand.

To further understand the non-financial needs of business enterprises to support them in their overall activities, business KI who noted that they planned to expand their business in the next two years (8) were asked if they required any special trainings, new skills, and/or resources. Three business KIs noted that they would need resources, while two business KIs noted that they would need both resources and trainings.*²⁵ The types of resources that the businesses would need included financial input (5), new equipment and machinery (4), and raw materials (3) like seeds, cloth material, livestock, and lumber.* Similarly, trainings related to management (2), marketing and advertising (2), and finance and book-keeping (1) were noted by business KIs as a requirement to be able to expand their businesses.*

*Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

POTENTIAL SECTORS WITH GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



Industrial manufacturing and processing of food items and beverages was noted by the business KIs (9) as the sector high in demand, and thus likely to be the most profitable



Alternate source of energy, specifically solar power was noted by the sector expert KI and more than half of the business KIs (9) as an emerging sector

The sector expert KI registered some positive indications of economic development in the city: investments were being made by local and regional private investors in sectors such as telecommunications, energy, and construction-related raw materials procurement (sand quarries). The sector expert KI also noted that infrastructure rehabilitation activities were being contracted out to private companies who were responsible for working on maintenance of public buildings, water pumping stations, and electricity generators and transfer stations through tenders with the local authorities. This infrastructure rehabilitation work was, thus, contributing to an increase in demand for construction companies as well as generating employment opportunities for unskilled workers.

KEY INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

According to the sector expert KI, there are three main agencies related to the local authorities that businesses in Ar-Raqqa city engaged with and those that supported economic activities in the city: (i) Department for Commerce - Give licenses to private companies and traders, and regulate prices, (ii) Department of Customs - Determine customs fee, and prices of goods as part of the import and export activities, and (iii) Sadcop Petroleum Committee - Distribute fuel to licensed farmers and vehicle owners at subsidized prices.

Besides agencies affiliated with the local authorities, the KI noted that there also exist local associations and unions that organize and negotiate with businesses and other entities on the behalf of union members for better regulations and rights of labourers. These include: the Federation of Contractors and Engineers and Municipal which organizes construction work, the Labour union which negotiates regulation of employment, labour rights, and working hours, and the Farmers' union which provides support to farmers in obtaining their agricultural licenses, claiming subsidies for seeds, fertilizers, and fuel, and demanding local authorities for the provision of irrigation water.






DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDERS AND POPULATION GROUPS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Gender-based differences in the local labour market were generally noted across all types of interviews and corresponding responses.²⁶ These differences were based on the nature of available jobs and on the socially constructed ideas of sectors which are traditionally considered suitable for men and women.

80% respondents in the labour IIs reported a difference between the types of work that men and women engage in




92% respondents who reported a difference between men and women also reported that that women work in some specific sectors only²⁷

Top five sectors of work in which workers reported that women mostly worked in^{*28}

	Sewing/ tailoring/ embroidery/ knitting	95%
	Education	76%
	Beauty salon and parlours	65%
	Healthcare	59%
	Agriculture and livestock rearing	6%

The community leader KIs noted that women generally worked in the public sector affiliated with the local authorities in sectors relating to education, healthcare and nursing, and other administrative and official departments or preferred self-employment so they could work from or closer to home.

Reported reasons why differences in work between men and women exist^{*30}

	Women are expected to take care of family obligations and responsibilities	72%
	Women are expected to work from home	49%
	It is unsafe for women to work in certain areas and sectors	39%

Lack of literacy (basic reading and writing skills) and absence of higher academic qualifications were also noted by a community leader KI as challenges that women faced in finding work.

The challenges and issues in operating business were same for everyone, according to the sector expert KI. However, some differences between workers from the host community and IDPs were observed.

Almost all the IDP respondents who were interviewed in the labour IIs reported that they worked in some form of informal employment (20 out of 21). However, the sectors in which the IDP respondents reported working in were similar to responses of the workers from the host community who also reported engaging in informal employment.

IDPs often worked in unskilled or semi-skilled daily-wage jobs and were willing to work for lower wages in comparison to workers from the host community

The community leader KIs noted that there were no differences in how people from different population groups found work, however, they noted that since people from the host community had more established networks, on account of being based in the same location since the beginning, it was easier for them to find work through their friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and have greater knowledge of available vacancies through their connections. This was reflected in the HSOS (January 2022) as well, where 54% of the community KIs interviewed reported that lack of information about possible opportunities for accessing livelihoods was one of the main barriers for IDP households to accessing livelihoods.²⁹

*Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

ENDNOTES

1. World Bank (2021). [Data: Syrian Arab Republic](#).
2. Cash Working Group and REACH Syria (2021). [Syria Market Monitoring Exercises: Northeast and Northwest Syria](#).
3. Syrian Arab Republic United Nations Country Team (August 2020). [Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19](#).
4. International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2015). [Start and Improve Your Business: Manual](#).
5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2022). [Institute for Statistics: Glossary](#).
6. ILO (2021). [Social Finance](#).
7. World Bank (July 2016). [Sector Taxonomy and Definitions](#).
8. ILO. [Glossary of Statistical Terms](#).
9. UNESCO (2005). [Understanding and Defining Literacy](#).
10. UNESCO (November 2014). [Education Policy Brief: Skills for holistic human development](#).
11. European Union Commission (2011). [Transferability of Skills across Economic Sectors](#).
12. ILO (1986). [Vocational Training: Glossary of Selected Terms](#).
13. Inter-Agency Group (June 2020). [Technical and Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\)](#).
14. Humanitarian Needs Assessment programme (HNAP) (2021). [Population Baseline Assessment 2021](#).
15. REACH (June 2019). [Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City](#).
16. International Crisis Group (November 2021). [Syria: Shoring Up Raqqa's Shaky Recovery](#).
17. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (December 2021). [Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic](#).
18. Female respondents in the labour IIs constituted 11% of the total respondents interviewed. As such, it is possible that due to their under-representation and due to random selection, female workers working in some sectors were not captured through the labour IIs. As such, disaggregations and findings on the basis of gender and population groups should be considered indicative only as the findings from the labour IIs are representative at the city-level but not by gender or population groups.
19. Out of 109 total respondents, 49% reported engaging in informal employment with a verbal or no contract, 39% reported working in daily-wage work considered to be informal, 11% reported having a formal written contract with their employers, and remaining 4% reported working in their own/ family business. On further probing, it was found that these 4% respondents did not have a formal contract on account of working with family and thus have been merged with those respondents who reported having

a verbal or no contract for reporting purposes. As such level of informality was assessed by combining the number of respondents engaging in employment with verbal or no contract (including those who originally reported working in own/ family business) and those reporting to engage in daily-wage work.

20. Ibid.

21. ILO (2018). [Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture](#).

22. Out of those 100 workers who were employed and/ or had been able to find employment in the 7-14 days before the interview was conducted (91%).

23. The remaining two KIs noted that they did not know what would happen in their business sector in the next two years in terms of growth.

24. Out of 14, 13 business KIs noted that the level of competition in their business sector was higher at the time of the interview in comparison to one year ago. Only one business KI noted that the competition was same. However, another KI in the same business sector noted that the competition had increased.

25. Three KIs out of the eight business KIs who had noted that they had expansion plans for their business in the next two years noted that they did not need any resources or trainings.

26. Female respondents in the labour IIs constituted 11% of the total respondents interviewed. Due to this uneven gender split among the respondents in the labour IIs, it is possible that perceptions of female workers are missing through the labour IIs. As such, disaggregations and findings on the basis of gender and population groups should be considered indicative only as the findings from the labour IIs are representative at the whole city-level but not by gender or population groups.

27. Out of those respondents who reported that there were differences between men and women in the type of work they did (80%), 92% reported that this difference existed as women worked only in some specific sectors. This was followed by 39% respondents who noted that women worked only in own family-run businesses, and 20% reported that women worked in only those jobs that had been suggested to them by their friends and relatives. Multiple options could be selected, so findings may exceed 100%.

28. Out of those respondents who reported that there were differences between men and women in the type of work they did (80%) and that the difference that existed was that women work only in specific sectors (92%).

29. REACH (January 2022). [HSOS: Northeast Syria](#).

30. Out of those respondents who reported that there were differences between men and women in the type of work they did (80%).