

Research Terms of Reference

Ar-Raqqa offensive: Rapid needs assessments Syria

June 2017
v.1

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

1. Background & Rationale

On 6th November 2016, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the start of an operation to retake Ar-Raqqa city from ISIL. Following this, conflict around the city led to complex displacement across Northern Syria and a high concentration of people in need within Ar-Raqqa governorate. On 6th June, following four phases of conflict to isolate the city, the battle for Ar-Raqqa city officially commenced, comprising a ground incursion supported by airstrikes.

Humanitarian access to Ar-Raqqa governorate is limited and actors face multiple challenges. It is not possible to reach ISIL-held areas such as Ar-Raqqa city, and security and access constraints also hinder access to populations in areas under SDF control. Currently, response planning is organised from two main hubs in Turkey and North-East Syria/Iraq. The response in the North-East has previously been led primarily by NGOs on the ground in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa governorates, with increasing involvement of UN agencies, whilst across the north-west there are multiple actors in northern Syria and operating cross-border from Turkey.

Given the limited humanitarian access to parts of the affected areas, there are currently large information gaps relating to movement of people, primary needs and the humanitarian situation in conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, given the fragmented nature of the response managed from multiple different hubs, there is a lack of consolidation of various information sources and actors often have different levels of information.

Within Ar-Raqqa city, there are an estimated 200,000 people remaining though recent conflict and movement has rendered exact population numbers unclear. Further, there has been a severe lack of information on the humanitarian situation due to access issues and restrictions imposed on information sharing by ISIL. To fill this information gap and provide information for actors planning to respond in Ar-Raqqa city in the near future, REACH is currently mobilising networks in North-East Syria to provide up-to-date information on the humanitarian situation within the city. Through this network, an initial rapid assessment would be conducted to provide a baseline of information, followed by bi-weekly updates, with regularity of outputs to be re-evaluated as the offensive develops.

2. Research Objectives

- Provide an overview of the humanitarian situation and primary needs of people remaining in Ar-Raqqa city.
- [Enable] ongoing monitoring and comparison of how the humanitarian situation is affected as the conflict develops to allow provision of bi-weekly updates.
- Mapping of Ar-Raqqa city to detail access to food and markets, access to WASH and health services, and damage to shelter in order to identify disparities across the city.

3. Research Questions

- 1) What is the current humanitarian situation in terms of: food and markets, livelihoods, shelter, NFIs, WASH, health and health, and how severe is the situation for each sector?

- 2) Are there disparities across Ar-Raqqa city in terms of access to food and markets, damage to shelter, access to WASH services and access to health services?
- 3) What are the sector-specific needs of populations currently in Ar-Raqqa city?

4. Methodology

Secondary data review

Available secondary data sources will be used to triangulate primary data collection. Sources are limited due to the lack of information coming out of Raqqa city, but include an SRN assessment of Ar-Raqqa governorate from March 2017, NPM updates (though these primarily focus on displacement and not the situation inside the city), Urban Community Profiling data from May 2016, and Flash Updates on the governorate.

Multiple secondary data sources will be used to create an initial detailed reference map of Ar-Raqqa city, including Open Street Map, Wikimapia and UNOSAT damage assessments before triangulating through primary data collection.

Primary data collection

Primary data collection will be preceded by initial coverage mapping exercises to determine the exact neighbourhoods across Ar-Raqqa governorate that can be assessed. Data collection will be through the 'Area of Origin' (AoO) methodology, through which people who have recently left Ar-Raqqa city (ideally within the past week, but up to one month ago) are interviewed about the situation across the city and within the neighbourhood they were living in by REACH enumerators. REACH will collaborate with a local NGO operating across Ar-Raqqa governorate to locate and access Key Informants (KIs).

Once coverage has been established, data collection will be conducted by enumerators based in northern Ar-Raqqa governorate (Tell Abiad) able to travel around the area through:

- 20-30 semi-structured closed and open question KI interviews at the city level with people either currently residing in Ar-Raqqa city (if network and coverage permits) or who have left the city in the month prior to data collection (ideally within the last week), to gather detailed qualitative information on the situation in the city.
- Participatory mapping with 20-30 KIs who have left Ar-Raqqa city in the month (ideally within the last week) prior to data collection, using printed maps and a separate paper form.

Indicators and tools

Indicators will be based on the primary information gaps identified during the secondary data review, covering the following topics: demographics and intentions, food and markets, cash, shelter, NFIs, WASH, health and protection.

Indicators and tools will be designed to gather priority sector-specific information. Indicators and tools will be reviewed internally within REACH, based on the following key indicators:

- **Food:** Food quality, food quantity (availability and affordability), reported coping mechanisms, market functionality, challenges to accessing markets, aid availability
- **Health:** access to healthcare facilities, access to services, staff and equipment availability, availability of vaccinations
- **Shelter:** availability of safe shelter (presence of people in vulnerable shelter types), overcrowding, price and affordability of shelter, damage to shelter
- **NFIs:** access to electricity, accessibility of core NFIs
- **WASH:** public water availability, sufficiency of water supply, drinking water quality / safety, reported coping mechanisms, sanitation issues
- **Protection:** protection situations, women-specific issues, IDP / host community tensions

After the first round of data collection and the first output production, indicators and tools will be amended depending on further information gaps identified and to ensure ongoing monitoring of key indicators. This includes adding in additional topics as well as adjusting existing indicators.

Data analysis

Data will be analysed and reported on at the city level, to give an overview of the situation within Ar-Raqqa city in general. Data will be collected from multiple KIs reporting on the city and aggregated and reported as follows:

- Continuous variables (e.g. #, %): average across all entries.
- Categorical variables (select one): most commonly selected option reported or proportion of KIs reporting each option.
- Categorical variables (select multiple): top 3 or top 5 most commonly selected options with proportion of KIs reporting each option.
- Open text questions: translated and reported on qualitatively.

Maps will be created at the neighbourhood level from the results of neighbourhood-level participatory mapping to identify disparities between different areas of the city. Following the first output, if KIs are deemed to have sufficient neighbourhood-level knowledge, data will be analysed and reported on at the neighbourhood level in following updates.

5. Product Typology

Ar-Raqqa city

Type of Product	Number of Product(s)	Additional information
Situation Overview	1, to be updated bi-weekly	Regularity of output to be assessed as the conflict develops
Maps	1 detailed map of Raqqa city + relevant indicator maps	

6. Management arrangements and work plan

Roles and responsibilities

- REACH Syria Regional Coordinator
 - Overall oversight
 - Review of tools, methodology, plans and outputs
- REACH Assessment Officers x 2
 - Coordinate data collection processes
 - Develop research design, methodology, workplans, assessment implementation plans
 - Create data collection tools and training materials
 - Create Situation Overview reports
- REACH GIS Officer – 1 Turkey
 - Mapping and analysis support for information products
 - Lead mapping component
- REACH Senior Field Coordinator – North-East Syria
 - Obtain approvals for conducting assessment
 - Translations of tools and training materials
 - Conduct training for enumerators
 - Management of enumerators, communication point between enumerators and assessment teams
- Enumerators
 - Locate Key Informants

- Conduct data collection in the field

Work plan

First round

		June															
		8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
Raqqa AoO / RNA																	
Approvals	Submit approvals request (Tell Abiad, Kobane)																
	Formal confirmation from authorities																
FLATS and HR	Scoping for enumerator / teams																
	Staff recruitment: CVs																
	Staff recruitment: interviews																
	Staff recruitment: finalise contracts with ACTED																
	Finalise details with LNGO																
Assessment planning	Assessment methodology / ToR																
	Tools: KI questionnaire																
	Tools: Participatory mapping questionnaire																
	Tools: share with partners																
	Tools: Arabic translations																
	Tools: Kobo form																
	Training materials: create																
	Training materials: translations																
Data collection	Mapping: create initial reference map																
	Train enumerators																
	Field data collection																
Outputs: first round	Ongoing data checking / cleaning																
	Outputs - situation overview																
	Outputs - maps																
	Finalise outputs after Geneva feedback																

Updates: weekly or bi-weekly basis as deemed necessary

		July						
		29	30	1	2	3	4	5
Following rounds (one week turnaround; to be conducted when necessary)	Approvals: renew							
	Staffing: renew contracts / hire additional							
	Update tools / approach							
	Data collection							
	Outputs							

7. Risks & Assumptions

Risk

Enumerators on the ground in North-East Syria are not able to contact people from Ar-Raqqa city due to security and access issues (particularly if the security situation escalates)

It will not be possible to find KIs from all neighbourhoods in Ar-Raqqa city to conduct participatory mapping.

Mitigation Measure

Alternative networks will be mobilised: remote networks from REACH staff based in Turkey, and through the existing REACH partnership with Syria Relief Network (SRN).

The KI questionnaire will be conducted at the city level initially (rather than the neighbourhood level) in

KIs do not have relevant information across all sectors to answer the entire questionnaire accurately.

order to ensure there is usable information about the entire city.

Contact multiple KIs where necessary to gather the required information, include the option to state when not sure, and continue to build networks as the assessment is ongoing.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Objective	Indicator	Target	Data collection methodology
Humanitarian stakeholders use the output	Number of organisations accessing the output Number of individuals accessing the output	75+ organisations, 500 individuals	# of downloads of output from Resource Center # of people on the mailing list that the output is sent to # of downloads of output from Relief Web # of page clicks on output from country newsletter, sendingBlue, bit.ly
Contributing to better programme implementation and coordination of the humanitarian response	Number of humanitarian organisations utilizing IMPACT services/products	20+ organisations	# references in single agency documents # requests for additional information or future outputs
Humanitarian stakeholders are using the outputs	Actors use the output as a basis for decision making, aid planning and delivery	Qualitative feedback	Perceived relevance and usefulness of the output, gathered by obtaining feedback from NGOs (e.g. if they are using them in proposals) Recommendations to include other indicators in the output Perceived quality of the output, gathered by obtaining feedback from NGOs

9. Documentation Plan

- Terms of reference
- Indicator list
- Data collection tools – KI questionnaire, participatory mapping survey
- Raw dataset and cleaning log
- Clean datasets
- Situation overview / profile
- Maps