



# **QAMISHLI FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS HOUSEHOLD ASSESSMENT**

**SYRIA**

**ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

### About REACH

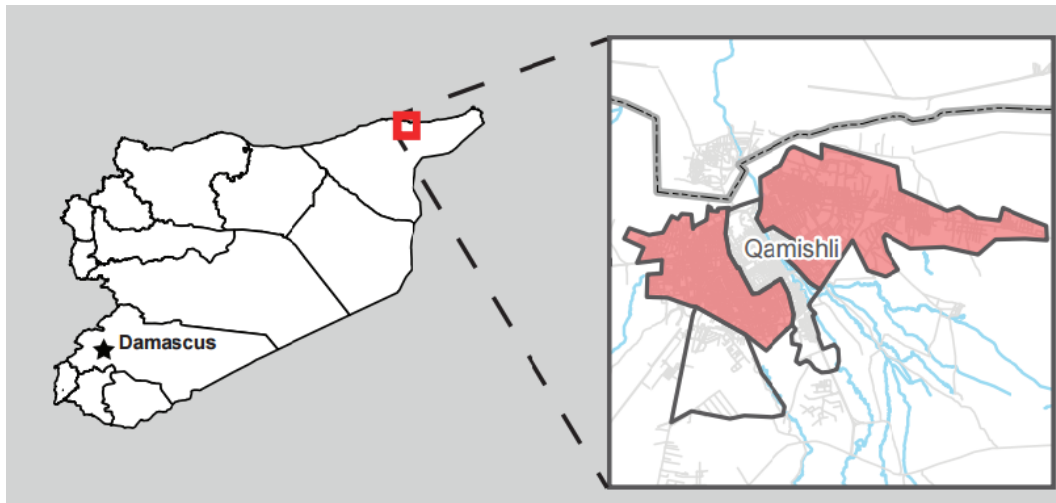
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## SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a household level assessment of humanitarian needs conducted in the city of Qamishli in north-eastern Syria. Qamishli lies within Al Hasakeh Governorate, which is situated adjacent to the border with Turkey to the north, and Iraq to the south and east. Rich in wheat, oil and cotton, the surrounding countryside is responsible for an important part of Syria's total agricultural production. Since the summer of 2012, the city of Qamishli has been controlled by two different entities: the central and southern zone controlled by the government of Syria (GoS); and remainder of the city to the East and West, controlled by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD).

Map 1: Qamishli city



Previous assessments and recent reports have shown differing access to services in these two zones,<sup>1</sup> although to date, little quantitative information exists to document these differences and the extent to which the situation has changed over time. In addition, an estimated 659 internally displaced families are estimated to be living in the non-government-controlled parts of the city<sup>2</sup> out of a reported current population size of 200,000.<sup>3</sup>

This assessment was developed to provide a comprehensive updated overview of the humanitarian situation in the city of Qamishli and surrounding rural areas, in order to inform the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance by operational aid actors in northern Syria. Building on an earlier key informant assessment in August 2014, this report also seeks to provide a baseline of quantitative information that can be used to monitor changes to the humanitarian situation in Qamishli city over the coming months. Findings are based on primary data collected from a statistically significant sample of 386 households from 29 July – 4 August 2015, and include comparisons between the situation in government and non-government controlled areas of the city, and between Qamishli's urban centre and surrounding rural areas. Findings can be generalised at city-level with a 90% confidence and a 5% margin of error for assessed areas.

This report forms part of a series of needs assessments carried out by REACH in urban centres in Syria. The tools and methodology have a multi-sector scope and were developed based on a recent assessment of Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Aleppo<sup>4</sup>, so that results from both cities are comparable at city level.<sup>5</sup> The study also builds upon previous assessments of the humanitarian situation and needs in Qamishli, conducted by REACH in

<sup>1</sup> REACH (2014) [Urban Humanitarian Profile: Qamishli, Syria](#), August 2014

<sup>2</sup> REACH (2015) [Syria Al Hasakeh Governorate, IDP families by sub-district](#), September 2015

<sup>3</sup> KI from the Democratic Union Part (PYD) statistics centre

<sup>4</sup> REACH (2015) [Assessment of Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Aleppo](#), Syria, June 2015

<sup>5</sup> Findings are comparable at city level with the same level of confidence (90%) and margin of error (max +/- 5%). It is important to note that due to the smaller sample size used in Qamishli, it is not possible to make comparisons with the same confidence and margin of error at neighbourhood level.

2014, which helped to define the approach of this assessment.<sup>6</sup> Where possible, data and findings have been triangulated with news reports and other sources of humanitarian information.

Based on the data collected, key findings are as follows:

**Displacement:** 14% of assessed households reported that they had been displaced because of the conflict and four percent of assessed households reported to be hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displaced households originated primarily from inside Al Hasekeh Governorate, with the vast majority (80%) reporting having been displaced only once. In general, IDP households reported similar needs and access to services compared to the host population.

**Livelihoods:** With a high dependency ratio, the high reported reliance on remittances, savings and gifts suggests that income generated from employment is insufficient to meet overall needs. Although income-generating employment (80%) was the primary source of income; remittances, savings and gifts together equalled 84% of responses regarding secondary sources of income. Humanitarian aid contributed to under one percent of the total income relied upon, a significantly lower proportion than observed in Aleppo city. The lower reliance on humanitarian assistance is likely to be indicative of a lower availability of assistance in the area.

**Average household monthly incomes came to around 133 USD<sup>7</sup> whilst the average expenditure was approximately 160 USD.** Almost half of all assessed households, 47%, reported having a higher monthly expenditure than income, while the vast majority (96%) reported using a livelihood related coping strategy to deal with income gaps. Reliance on savings was the most commonly reported strategy, used as a coping mechanism by 80% of all households. Households living in rural areas were found to be more likely to report the use of “crisis” strategies which can negatively affect future productivity, such as selling assets, compared to those in urban areas.

**Food Security:** Food expenditure accounted for the largest area of household spending (56%), more than five times higher than reported expenditure to meet any other need, including housing. While the vast majority of assessed households (93%) presented acceptable food consumption scores, over half reported resorting to consumption-related coping strategies to deal with a lack of food, highlighting food access as an area of concern. Almost one in five households (19%) reported reducing portion size on five or more days in the past week, while 42% reported having received help from friends and family or borrowed food in the same period. When asked about challenges related to food access, 88% of households reported that the cost of food was of primary concern, which ties in with livelihoods findings on the high expenditure on food. The second most commonly reported challenge concerned the low quality of available food, reported by 35% of households.

**Shelter:** The majority of households (74%) lived in accommodation which they owned themselves. Households living in rented accommodation accounted for a further 25%, with the remaining one percent living free of charge in private accommodation or in transitional accommodation. The majority of assessed households (70%) reported living in housing with no damage, which provided adequate living conditions. This finding is very different compared to Aleppo city, where only 64% lived in buildings that had incurred some level of conflict-related damage. Of the 30% reporting shelter damage in Qamishli, nearly all reported only light or moderate damage, with slightly higher proportions of households reporting damage in non-government controlled neighbourhoods, than in government areas of the city.<sup>8</sup>

**Access to Water, NFIs & Education:** The primary water point used by households came from private taps, 89%, followed by boreholes, 10%. Almost one in six households (15%) reported having had a problem accessing water in the 30 days prior to the survey, mainly in urban, non-government controlled areas. The largest

<sup>6</sup> These include REACH (2014) [Urban Humanitarian Profile: Qamishli, Syria](#), August 2014 and REACH (2014) [Syria Crisis Needs Overview: Food, Health, Water in Qamishli City](#), August 2014

<sup>7</sup> 1 USD = 339 SYP (according to <http://www.sp-today.com> accessed 15/10/2015)

<sup>8</sup> Households were not asked what type of damage was inflicted and focused more on the living conditions of the house.

proportion of households reported having 14 hours of access to government grid electricity and 9 hours of generator electricity. Finally only one percent of all households reported having children of school age who were not attending school.

**Health:** Overall 23% of household reported one or more members who had suffered from some sort of illness in the two weeks prior to the assessment. From the responses, it was apparent that children were more vulnerable to illness than adults and that diarrhoea was the main cause of illness, representing 69% of all those who reported to have been ill. Overall, primary health care was reported to be in higher demand than secondary healthcare. 55% of households were reported not to have needed either primary or secondary healthcare in the previous six months and 25% had been able to receive healthcare whilst six percent failed to access healthcare. This confirms the continued importance of facilitating healthcare access in the area.

Overall, few significant differences were observed between rural and urban and government and non-government controlled areas. However, households in rural areas generally had a lower food consumption scores and relied more on crisis strategies than households in urban areas. However, households in urban areas appeared to experience more problems accessing some services, with the vast majority of those reporting difficulties accessing water living in urban areas (93%), most of these in non-government controlled areas (89%).

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the latest available census data, Qamishli city had a population of 184,231 in 2004, making it among the ten largest cities in Syria.<sup>9</sup> More recent figures from a Key Informant (KI) in the Democratic Union Part (PYD) statistics centre, stated that the population of qamishli is currently at 200,000. Since it was founded in 1926, Qamishli has had an ethnically mixed population including Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and Syriacs. However, ongoing conflict in Syria has caused significant changes to the demographic composition of the city<sup>10</sup>, with many households having left the city, and others having arrived from elsewhere in Syria.<sup>11</sup>

Since the beginning of the crisis, the government of Syria has maintained control of the more densely populated centre of Qamishli, encompassing the Great Mosque and government administrative headquarters in the north. It also includes the area surrounding the airport in the south west of the city<sup>12</sup>, which was not covered in this assessment due to security concerns. On either side of the government controlled zone are the less densely populated east and west parts of the city, which remain under the administration of Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD). While both administrations coexist and there have been very limited reports of open conflict between the two sides, the presence of checkpoints, differing supply routes and multiple frontlines in the surrounding areas have affected the access to services in both sectors of the city.<sup>13</sup> The presence of Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) actors in nearby areas has also contributed to ongoing insecurity, with occasional episodes of violence in the city centre, such as bombings, among them two bomb blasts in July 2015, in which three civilians were reported to injured.<sup>14</sup>

During the crisis Qamishli became a destination for displaced Syrians because of its relative safety with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) coming from nearby villages and cities such as Ras Al-Ain, Tal Tamer, Tal Hamis and Tal Brak as well as from other provinces such as Aleppo, Daara, Homs, Damascus and Deir-Ez-Zor.<sup>15</sup> As of August 2015, 659 IDP families were estimated to be residing in Qamishli, predominantly in Qamishli's northern neighbourhoods.<sup>16</sup>

Access to humanitarian aid has been hindered by certain factors such as the checkpoint and frontlines mentioned above but also as a result of the political situation in Qamishli. According to a KI in order for NGOs to provide support in Qamishli they need to be officially registered and cooperate with the Syrian government. This has made it difficult for NGOs to work in the area and as such, aid has tended to be focused on the eastern side of Qamishli on the border with the KRI, such as the district of Al Malikiyah in which there is a strong humanitarian presence.

This report aimed to provide an update on the scale and severity of the humanitarian situation in Qamishli and to provide information to guide future support especially with regards to food security and livelihoods. The assessment aimed to address information gaps regarding the situation in Qamishli and as such covered areas to do with food security, livelihoods, Non Food Items (NFIs) and shelter, water access, and the status of education and healthcare facilities.

<sup>9</sup> Syria Central Bureau of Statistics, General Census of Population and Housing 2004, available: [Humanitarian Response: Syrian Arab Republic Datasets](#)

<sup>10</sup> Hermann, Rainer (2014) "Die letzten Christen von Qamishli", *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 21 November 2014.

<sup>11</sup> ARA News (2015) "Qamishli shelters hundreds of Syrian families who escaped ISIS attacks in Hasakah" 28 June 2015

<sup>12</sup> REACH (2014) *Urban Humanitarian Profile: Qamishli, Syria*, August 2014

<sup>13</sup> ARA News (2015) *ICRC delivers medical supplies to Syria's Qamishli, Hasakah amid escalating conflict*, 28 August 2015.

<sup>14</sup> The Daily Star (2015) *Twin bombs hit Syria's Kurdish Qamishli: monitor*, 27 July 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The Damascus Bureau (2013), *النازحون في القامشلي: أمان ونقص في المساعدات*, 28 June 2013

<sup>16</sup> REACH (2015) Syria Al Hasaka Governorate: IDP families by sub-district (Map) 20 September 2015.



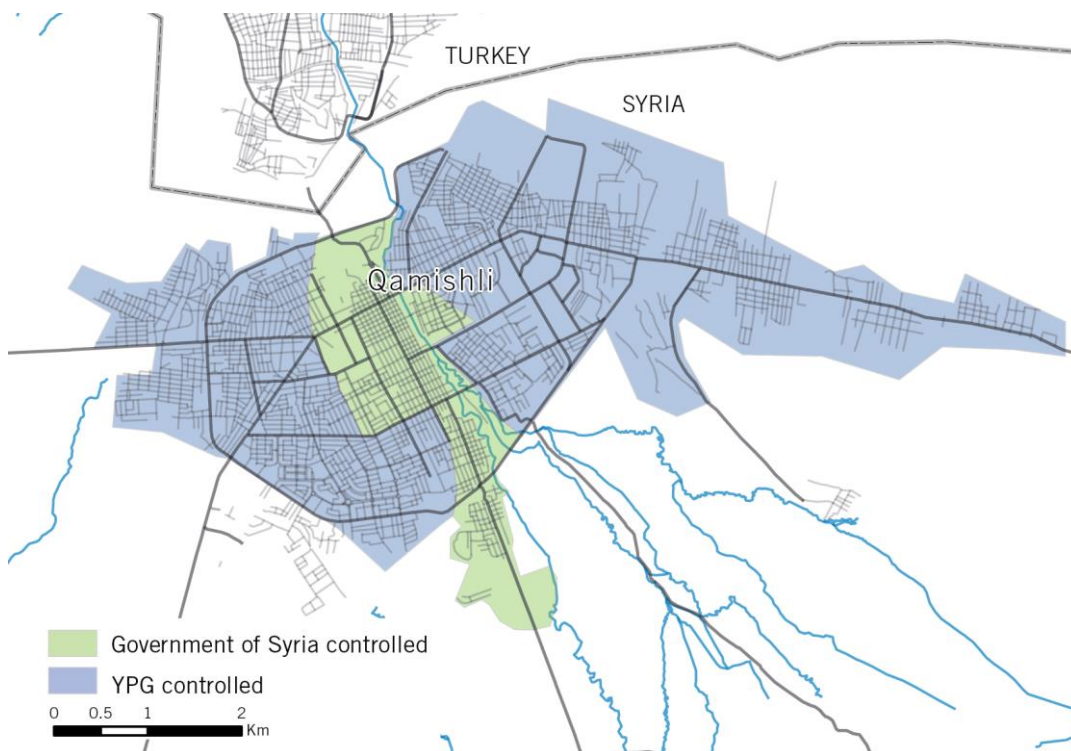
## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this assessment was to provide an update on the humanitarian situation and needs in Qamishli city in order to provide humanitarian actors operational in the area with recent, quantitative information about the situation in different parts of Qamishli city and its surrounding areas.

The objectives and indicators were developed by REACH in consultation with the Syria Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group as well as with local humanitarian partners and NGO coordination platforms. The assessment specifically aimed to fill information gaps related to food security and livelihoods, access to WASH facilities, education, health care, shelter, fuel and electricity. In order to allow for comparative analysis, the assessment methodology and tools were harmonised with a similar assessment conducted by REACH in eastern Aleppo in March 2015: *Assessment of Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Aleppo, Syria*.<sup>17</sup> City level findings for both Aleppo and Qamishli can be compared with a confidence of 90% and a margin of error of 5% in assessed areas. The information collected will also act as a baseline against which the humanitarian situation can be monitored in Qamishli city.

A quantitative methodology was employed to collect primary data on household level needs. The sample collected was based on a multi-stage approach. In the first phase, a mapping exercise was conducted with key informants to verify the extents and boundaries of the different city sectors. In the second phase, a random sample of 305 households was drawn from these neighbourhoods to gain a broad geographic spread. An additional sample of 81 households was interviewed in surrounding rural areas, in order to allow for comparative analysis between urban and rural areas.

**Map 2: Map of Qamishli city by government and non-government controlled areas (YPG)**



<sup>17</sup> REACH (2015) [Assessment of Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Aleppo](#), Syria, June 2015

Table 1: List of Neighbourhoods included in the assessment

Neighbourhood	Sample	Note
Hilaliyah	30	
Al-Hai Al-Gharbi	20	
Hai Al-Jolan	20	
Masakin Rumeilan+Hai Alqusoor	25	
Kurnish+Al=Muazafeen	25	
Masakin Halku	25	
Al-Wusta	25	
Al-Bashiriyah	20	
Al-Ashuriyah	25	
Hai-Al-Arbawiyah	45	
Qudurbik	25	
Al-Antariyah	5	
Maysaloun	25	
Qanat Al-Sways	22	
Al-Tayy	0	No access due to security concerns
Al-Zinud	0	No access due to security concerns
Allaya	0	No access due to security concerns

The selected sample provides statistically significant information at city level, with a confidence of 90% and a margin of error of +/- 5%. Due to the smaller sample collected in rural areas, comparisons can be made between Qamishli city and surrounding rural areas with a confidence of 90% and a margin of error of 10%. Comparisons can also be made between government and non-government controlled areas. However, due to security concerns, a reduced number of samples were collected in government controlled areas. As such, comparisons made between these areas have a lower confidence and margin of error, and should be considered indicative only.

Household level data was collected from 29 July - 4 August 2015 by a team of trained enumerators from Qamishli who were familiar with the city and its neighbourhoods. Mobile data collection technology was used to conduct the survey, specifically Android smartphones equipped with the data collection application KoBo Collect. The technology ensures better collection of high-quality data by reducing the scope of enumerator error, removing the need for subsequent data entry, and by recording the precise coordinates for each survey conducted.

Enumerators were trained by REACH field coordination staff on how to administer the questionnaire, explain the purpose of the survey and how to randomly select households for assessment within their assigned area. Enumerators were supervised by a field coordinator, who monitored field data collection as well as data submissions for quality, provided methodological guidance and conducted daily debriefings. GPS locations of each submitted survey were monitored to check that the sampled households were randomly distributed across the targeted neighbourhoods, while the duration of each survey was checked to ensure that sufficient time had been allowed for the questionnaire to be fully completed.

Following data collection, data was cleaned including the removal of unexplained outliers. During the analysis phase, results were triangulated with available secondary data, including previous reports by REACH, key informant interviews, news reports and other humanitarian information sources, in order to verify findings and help to explain trends.

## LIMITATIONS

Security concerns arose during the data collection process, which prevented enumerators to access several of the targeted neighbourhoods (Al-Tayy, Al-Zinud, Allaya) and reduced the number of surveys administered in the government-controlled areas, as shown in Table 1. Where possible, additional neighbourhoods were added in order to make up the required sample size for the city as a whole. In government-controlled areas, additional samples were taken from relatively safer parts of the targeted neighbourhoods, although this was not possible in all cases. As a result comparisons between the situation in government and non-government controlled areas are still possible, although the confidence and margin of error fall slightly below designed thresholds.

Since security concerns meant that access to some areas was impossible, not every household in Qamishli city had an equal chance of being selected for interview, affecting the overall representativeness of the survey. This means that while findings can be generalised across the city as a whole, conditions in the three non-sampled neighbourhoods may be different to those presented here.

Due to the relatively small sample size collected in each neighbourhood, it is not possible to make comparisons between neighbourhoods. However, findings can be generalised at the following levels: overall assessment (Qamishli and immediate surroundings); city level (urban); immediate surroundings (rural); as well as government controlled areas and non-government controlled areas, with the confidence intervals and margins of error described above.

It is also important to note that information based on a sub-set of answers will invariably have a lower confidence and margin of error than for the entire sample. For example, “accommodation type” includes the entire sample, while any query about households living in rented accommodation (a subset of all accommodation types) will have a lower confidence level. Where information has been disaggregated from a small subset, findings can only be considered indicative.

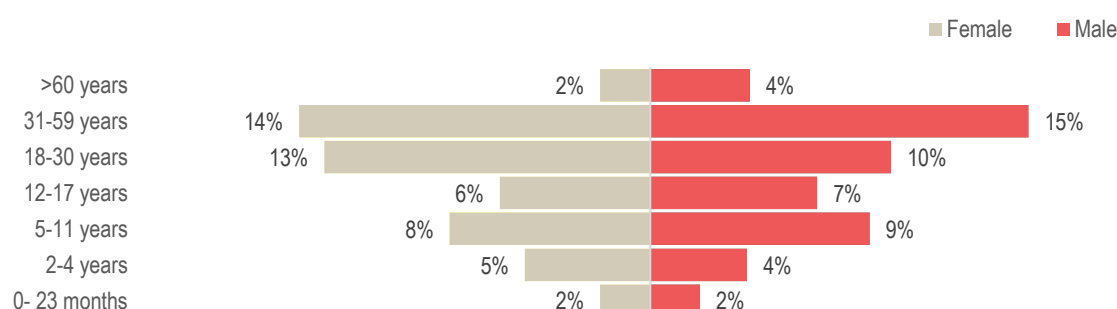
## FINDINGS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

This section of the report outlines findings related to the assessed population profile, including demographics and key vulnerabilities.

Where possible, interviews were conducted with non-minor age head of households. In the 84% of all cases where the head of household was interviewed, 54% of these were male and 46% female. Of the women interviewed, 87% were married, with the remaining 12% being either single or widowed. As for the men, 93% were married, with the remaining seven percent divided almost equally between those who were single or widowed. The average age of the interviewee was 46 years old with the age range being between 20 and 80 years old.

Figure 1: Population pyramid by age and gender



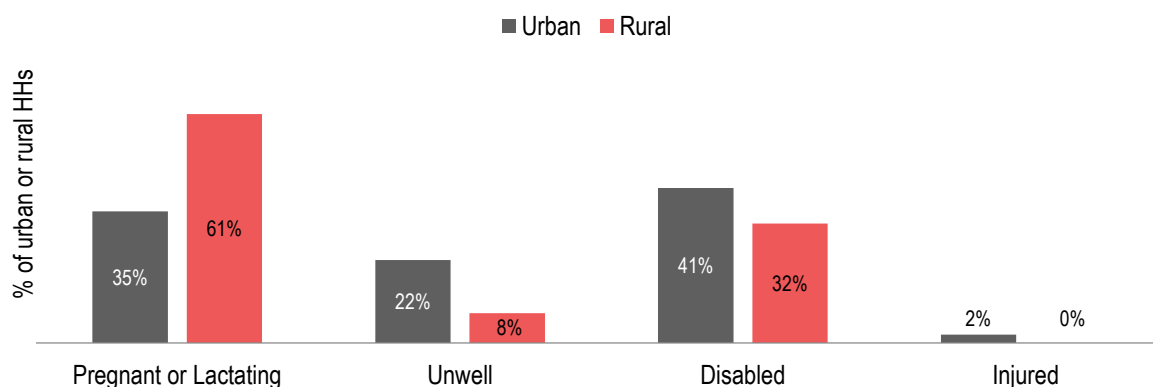
As shown in the graph the gender divide of those covered by the survey was almost 50% male and 50% female. The majority of people in households were of working age between the ages of 18 and 59 (52%) with a similar representation of male and females with 17% and 15% respectively. Overall there were not significant differences when comparing female and male demographics other than the fact that there were twice the number of males aged over 60 years (4%) old, than females (2%).

The average size of families was 4.8, with an average of two children, aged 0-17, per family. Only six percent of households included adults over the age of 60. Households featured a high dependency ratio of 0.9 implying that for every ten people of working age nine are of non-working age. This ratio is slightly higher than the 2014 average dependency ratio in Syria of 0.7.<sup>18</sup> A high dependency ratio can indicate a vulnerable household situation in which the percentage of those of working age is almost equal to the proportion of children under 17 and those ages over 60. As such, it can be difficult for those employed to generate an income that matches the needs of all household members.

Households were asked whether any individuals with special needs or other vulnerabilities were present in their household. According to respondents, 12% of the members of all assessed households had specific vulnerabilities or special needs. Of those individuals with specific needs, pregnant or lactating women, or persons with disabilities were most the commonly reported.

<sup>18</sup> The World Bank (2015), [The World Bank Data, Syrian Arab Republic](#), accessed 15/10/2015

Figure 2: Main types of vulnerabilities or special needs, in households with vulnerable individuals



## DISPLACEMENT

This section gives a brief description of the reported number of IDPs in the assessed population, how often they had been displaced, and where they had been displaced from. In addition, this section also covers host families and the average number of IDPs they host.

According to the latest available census data, Qamishli city had a population of 184,231 in 2004, making it among the ten largest cities in Syria<sup>19</sup>, however according to estimates from the Democratic Union Party (PYD) statistics centre, the population size is currently stands at 200,000.<sup>20</sup> With ongoing conflict in Syria many households have left the city, whilst others have arrived from elsewhere in Syria.<sup>21</sup> According to the Damascus Bureau in 2013 Qamishli was chosen by many as a relatively safer option with some IDPs coming from nearby villages and cities, and a larger proportion from other provinces including Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Daraa, Damascus and Deir ez-Ror.<sup>22</sup> As of August 2015, 600 IDP families were estimated to be residing in Qamishli, predominantly in Qamishli's northern neighbourhoods.<sup>23</sup>

**Overall 16% of the total population assessed (representing 306 out of the total 1863 persons living in the households assessed), reported that they had been displaced from their area of origin in Syria because of the conflict.**

Of IDPs mentioned above, **65% of households had been displaced from another location within the district of Qamishli itself whilst 24% came from other district within Syria.** When disaggregated between those currently living in rural and urban and government and non-government controlled areas similar trends were observed: the majority of those who had been displaced, moved to urban, non-government controlled area.

**Of all IDP households, most had only been displaced once (80%) and 15% had been displaced twice.** Of the small proportion of households (4%) that reported being displaced more than twice, some had been displaced five or seven times. Only one household out of the 10 households, who reported being displaced more than once, lived in a rural area whilst the rest were in urban areas. As only 12 out of the 55 households, reporting to be IDPs, reported whether they lived in a government or non-government controlled area it is difficult to analyse significant

<sup>19</sup> Syria Central Bureau of Statistics, General Census of Population and Housing 2004, available: Humanitarian Response: Syrian Arab Republic Datasets

<sup>20</sup> Information provided by a key informant (KI) in the PYD Statistics Centre.

<sup>21</sup> ARA News (2015) "[Qamishli shelters hundreds of Syrian families who escaped ISIS attacks in Hasakah](#)" 28 June 2015

<sup>22</sup> The Damascus Bureau (2013), [النزوحون في القامشلي: أمان ونقص في المساعدات](#), 28, June 2013

<sup>23</sup> REACH (2015) Syria Al Hasaka Governorate: IDP families by sub-district (Map) 20 September 2015.

trends. Nevertheless, it can be noted that the majority (80%) lived in non-government controlled areas and had only been displaced once before.

**Furthermore, only four percent, 14 out of 386 assessed households, reported to be hosting any individuals who had moved because of the conflict.** For these households, the average number of IDPs per hosting family was five, mainly from the governorates of Al-Hasakeh and Aleppo. The large majority of these households lived in urban non-government controlled areas.

The proportion of displaced households is considerably lower than that in Eastern Aleppo in June 2015, where 55% of households had reportedly been displaced.<sup>24</sup> In addition, over half of IDPs in Aleppo had been displaced two or three times, 53%. 37% of IDPs in Aleppo had been displaced once, compared to 80% in Qamishli. However, the proportion of non-IDP households hosting individuals is more comparable with 6% reported in Aleppo compared to 4% in Qamishli.

Given the relatively small proportion of IDPs included in this assessment this report will not focus on a comparison between IDP and non-IDP populations as in the Aleppo report, but rather on a comparison of other differences such as those living in rural versus urban, or government versus non-government controlled areas.

## LIVELIHOODS

This section looks at households primary sources of income and the percentage of overall employment in relation to a breakdown of households' expenditure in the 30 days prior to the assessment as well as household expenditure.

**Overall, even though income-generating employment (80%), was the primary source of income, it must be noted that, remittances, savings and gifts together equalled 84% of responses regarding secondary sources of income.** This could be a strong indication that income generated from employment is insufficient to meet overall needs, especially in the context of a high dependency ratio where many members in a household rely on the salary of a much smaller number of working-age adults.

## SOURCES OF INCOME

The high proportion of households reporting Income-generating employment (80%) as a primary source of income suggests that the economy is continuing to function with a relatively stable climate for employment in Qamishli. **When broken down further, nearly two-thirds (66%) of all households reported relying on salaried work, 12% daily skilled labour, with two percent reporting an income from business ownership.** The remaining 20% of households, who did not rely on income-generating employment, instead relied on remittances, gifts, loans, humanitarian aid and other productive activity.

When asked about secondary sources income, savings and gifts were reported by more than two thirds of households, 40% and 29% respectively. Gifts also accounted for 40% of the third source of income.

<sup>24</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), June 2015, p. 23

Figure 3: First, second and tertiary means of meeting basic needs

	Salary	Skilled daily labour	Remittances	Savings	Gifts	Loans	Other	No response
Primary choice	66%	12%	5%	8%	2%	1%	7%	0%
Secondary choice	1%	3%	15%	40%	29%	3%	7%	1%
Tertiary choice	0%	4%	18%	8%	40%	16%	10%	4%

Humanitarian aid was found to make only a small contribution to household income, equalling under one percent of the average monthly household income. Only four percent of the total population survey reported receiving humanitarian aid in the past month, with the vast majority of those receiving aid living in urban areas (97%). This suggests a limited availability of humanitarian assistance, confirmed by the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) update from OCHA as of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015, which reports that the government of Al Hasakeh is an area of low ERF activity.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore due to the fact that NGOs need to cooperate with the Syrian government and be registered to work in order to provide support, NGOs tend not to work in government controlled areas and are mainly present in certain non-government controlled areas such as the east side of Qamishli near the border with the KRI.

Findings from Eastern Aleppo in June reported a significantly higher reliance on humanitarian assistance with 13% of the population citing aid as a primary source of income.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned above this is likely due to the lower availability of assistance in Qamishli in comparison to that in Aleppo. In addition, while 80% of the assessed population in Qamishli relied on income-generating employment as a primary source of income, only 66% relied on income-generating employment in Aleppo<sup>27</sup>.

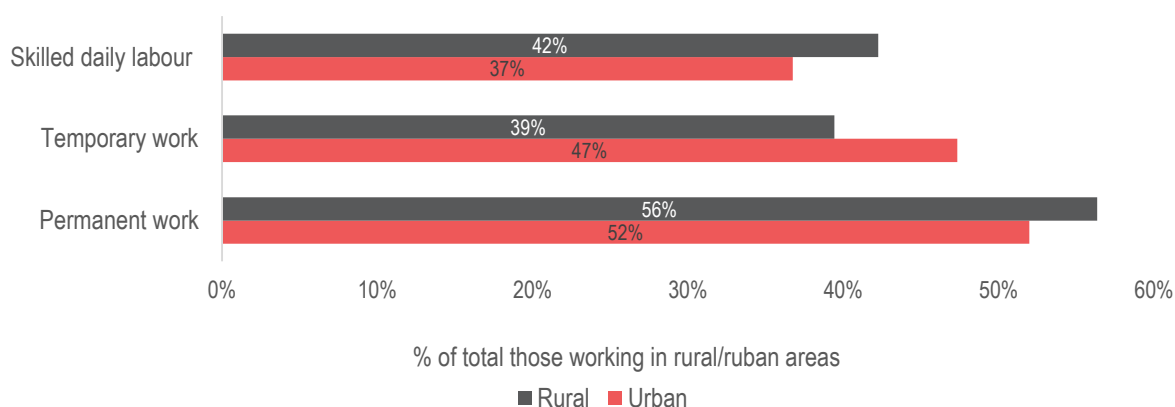
When asked to report the number of adults who had worked in the preceding months **It was found that 38% of household members of working age, between 18-59, had had worked at some point in the 30 days prior to the assessment.** According to the survey, most people working, or who had worked in the past month, had permanent jobs (53%), followed by temporary work (46%) and lastly skilled daily labour 38%.

<sup>25</sup> OCHA (2015), [Syria Arab Republic : Emergency Response Fund Update as of \(31 August-2015\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), June 2015, p. 24



Figure 4: Percentage of those with permanent, temporary or skilled daily labour jobs in rural and urban areas<sup>28</sup>

Overall, figures differed little when comparing government and non-government controlled areas or rural and urban areas. Predictably, households in rural areas were more likely to report reliance on agriculture, reported by 10%, compared to only 2% in urban areas. With regards to employment, households in urban areas most commonly reported permanent or temporary work (52% and 47% of this group, respectively), while households in rural areas were more likely to report permanent work or skilled daily labour (56 and 42% respectively).

## LEVEL OF INCOME

**The average household income in the past month was lower than the average expenditure further explaining the needs to resort to savings as shown in previous sections.**

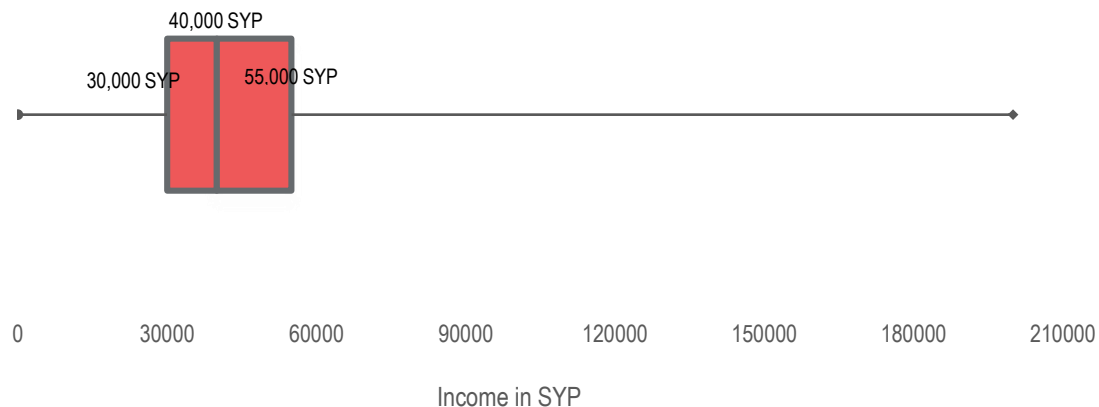
In this assessment, income was defined as earnings from employment, as well as the sum of money, gifts, humanitarian and other items that a household had obtained in the previous month. As such, an income can include bartering, begging and loans, but not savings. In addition, income brackets were made based on responses given in the assessment. As such throughout the report, the following monthly income brackets are used:

- No income (0 USD)<sup>29</sup>
- 10,000 to 30,000 Syrian Pounds (SYP) (30 – 89 USD)
- 30,001 to 50,000 SYP (89-148 USD)
- 50,001 to 90,000 SYP (148-266 USD)
- 90,001 to 200,000 SYP (266 to 590 USD)

<sup>28</sup> Some members had had more than one type of job in the 30 days prior to the survey

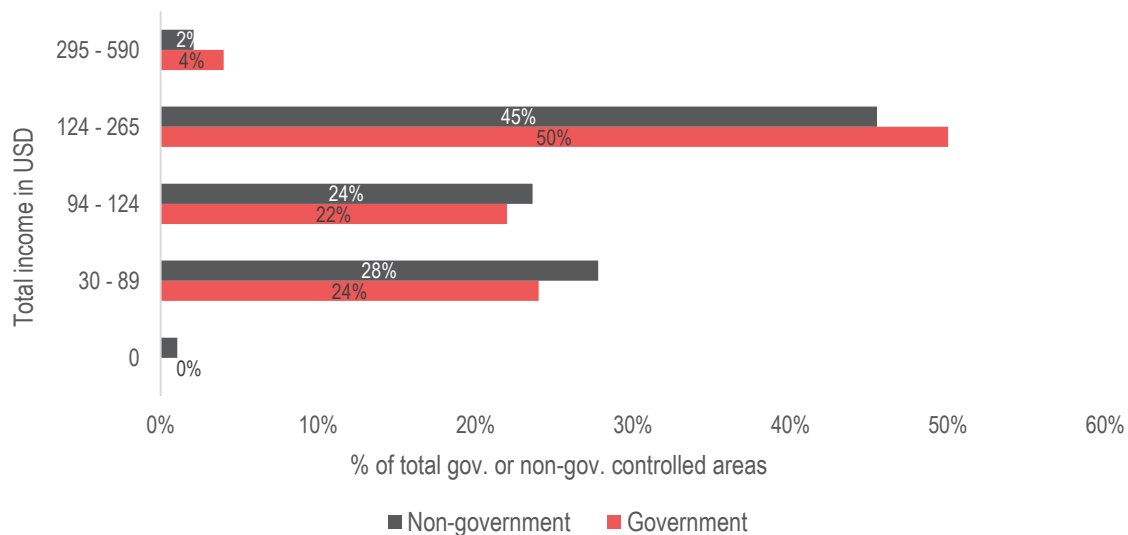
<sup>29</sup> No households reported as income between 1 and 10,000 SYP as such it was deemed more accurate not to create an income bracket of 0-10,000 but rather only of 0.

Figure 5: Minimum, maximum and lower and upper quartiles of household income



The average household income in the previous month was 133 USD<sup>30</sup> (45,000 SYP). The majority of households had an income of between 89 USD (30,001 SYP) and 148 USD (50,000 SYP). The box plot above shows the range and distribution of reported household incomes. The figures below show the reported income for government and non-government controlled areas. No significant differences between rural and urban areas were observed. The average household income in Qamishli is more than double that of households included in the Aleppo assessment, where the reported average income was 18,989 SYP (56 USD).<sup>31</sup> This again suggests a continuing economy in Qamishli however as shown in the next section this does not necessarily reflect that people are better off in Qamishli as expenditure is also more than double that of Aleppo.

Figure 6: Reported income in the previous month by government and non-government controlled areas



## EXPENDITURE

The average expenditure per household in the past month in Qamishli totalled approximately 152 USD (51,691 SYP) and the majority of expenditure in Qamishli was reported to go towards buying food (56%)

<sup>30</sup> 1 USD = 339 SYP (15/10/2015)

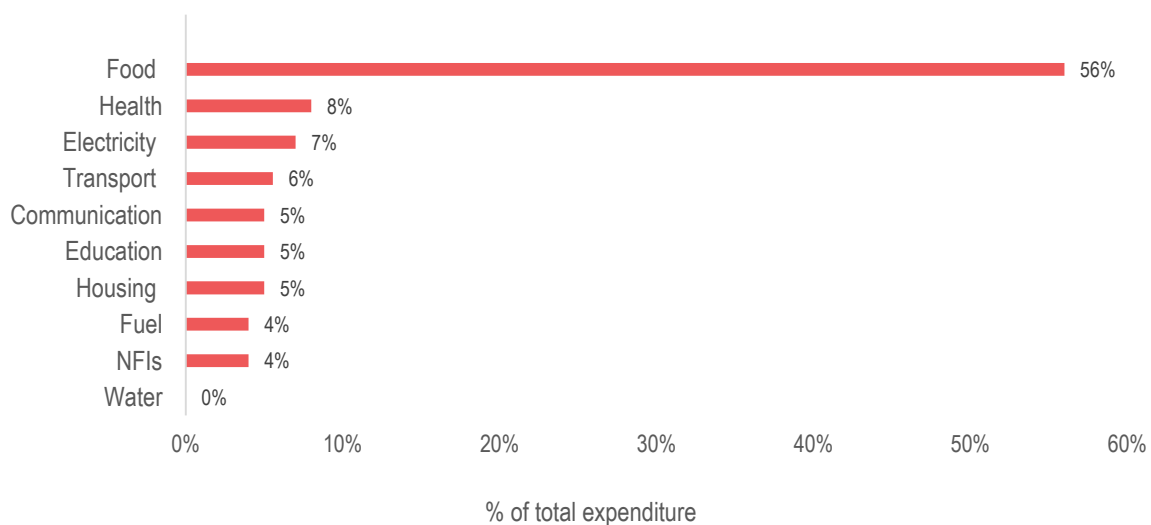
<sup>31</sup> At the time of the Aleppo assessment 18,989 SYP represented 76.57 USD, however with has changed with currency exchange rate fluctuations.

with the remaining 44% divided relatively equally between other goods and services, with the exception of water as seen in the graph below. The high proportion of income dedicated to food can be a sign of vulnerability where a household may have less to spend on other needs due to the priority given to food.

There were no significant differences when comparing urban and rural areas other than rural areas tended to spend twice as much on transport (10%) than urban areas (5%) and slightly more on electricity (10% rather than 7% in urban areas).

This assessment asked households to estimate how much they spent in ten different categories during the 30 days prior to the survey. Spending areas included in the survey were food, electricity, fuel, NFIs, water, transportation, education, communication, health, and rent as shown below.

**Figure 7: Average breakdown of household expenditure in Qamishli over 30 days preceding the assessment**



**47% of the total number of households reported having a higher expenditure than income and as shown above the average of households' total expenditure was higher than the average of income.** This raises the concern of a need to rely on other methods especially savings in order to meet household needs. Overall, the percentages of those with a higher expenditure than income, were about equal between rural and urban areas as well as government and non-government controlled areas. 52% of households residing in rural areas reported having an expenditure which exceeded income, in comparison to 45% in urban areas. As for government and non-government controlled areas, 42% and 48% respectively reported exceeding their income.

**Even though the average Qamishli expenditure was more than double that of Aleppo, 18,004 SYP (53 USD),<sup>32</sup> the average income in Aleppo was higher than the average expenditure which is not the case for Qamishli.** In fact after calculating the difference between average income and expenditure in both Qamishli and Aleppo it was found that Qamishli households on average spent 27 USD more than their income whereas Aleppo households had three USD remaining from their income after expenditure. Whereas it was concluded that humanitarian assistance was enabling households in Aleppo to continue to access food, Qamishli households were having to rely of gifts, remittances to supplement income generated from employment and in the case of this not

<sup>32</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), June 2015, p 30. In the original report 18,004 SYP equalled 72.60 USD however with changing exchange rates this now comes to 53 USD.

being enough, on savings. This highlights a key reoccurring theme in this paper where households in Qamishli resort to relying on depleting resources increasing their chances of future vulnerability.

## LIVELIHOODS AND COPING MECHANISMS

This section looks at household coping mechanisms encompassed in three categories: stress strategies, crisis strategies, and emergency strategies. **The majority of households reporting relying on at least one coping strategy more specifically that of spending savings confirming what has been said in previous sections. It was also noted that households in rural areas reported to rely on more extreme coping mechanisms than other areas.**

Households were asked if they had used any livelihood coping strategies related to food security in the 30 days prior to the survey. These strategies are separate to food security coping mechanisms (detailed in the section below on food security). The survey enquired about eight specific livelihoods coping strategies, which can be put into three categories: stress strategies, crisis strategies, and emergency strategies.<sup>33</sup>

Table 2: Reported livelihood coping strategies by households in government, non-government, rural and urban areas

		Government areas	Non-gov. areas	Rural areas	Urban areas
Stress strategies	Spent savings	82%	78%	86%	79%
	Bought food on credit or borrowed money for food	54%	60%	57%	58%
	Spend less money on other needs	18%	17%	41%	14%
Crisis strategies	Sold assets	4%	8%	20%	6%
	Sold productive goods or assets	0%	2%	7%	1%
Emergency strategies	High risk and/or socially degrading work taken	4%	2%	5%	2%
	Adult household member to beg	0%	1%	1%	0%
	Travelling long distances and/or via insecure areas to get food	2%	1%	0%	1%
	Children sent to beg	0%	0%	0%	0%

**96% of all households in Qamishli reported using at least one livelihood related coping strategy in the 30 days prior to the survey**, with 79% of households reported using one or two coping strategies, and 17% reporting using three coping strategies or more.

The majority of households reported the use of coping mechanisms which fall into the 'stress' category. This can indicate an increase in household vulnerability through the reduced availability of resources, an increase in debt, and the prioritisation of essential needs over secondary needs. **80% of all households reported spending savings to cope with a lack of income, followed by 58%, who reported borrowing money for food, or purchasing on credit.** Almost one in five households, 19%, reported spending less of other needs such as health or education in order to buy food. These findings triangulate previous implications of findings on expenditure and

<sup>33</sup> **Stress:** Those that decrease a household's ability to weather future shock due to reduction of resources or increase of debt.

**Crisis:** Negatively affect future productivity such as sale of household assets

**Emergency:** are a measure of last resort including taking jobs that are high risk or socially degrading

food security further clarifying households reliance on measures, which could lead to further vulnerability especially in the case of a protracted crisis. Without further assistance and a lack of improvement in income to meet expenditure, households may not have the means to survive further shocks or meet their basic needs.

While only a small proportion of all households reported coping strategies which fall in the 'crisis' or 'emergency' category, households in rural areas were more likely to report using crisis strategies. **20% of those living in rural areas reported selling household assets, 7% selling productive assets and 5% resorting to dangerous or degrading work. Those in rural areas are more likely to resort to crisis related strategies and as such may have a limited capacity to cope in the longer term as finite resources, savings and assets become increasingly depleted.** Finally though both have considerably high levels of resorting to spending savings as a coping strategy, rural and government controlled areas, with 86% and 82%, relied more heavily on savings than those in urban and government controlled areas (79 and 78%).

86% of eastern Aleppo households reported using a livelihoods coping mechanism in the month prior to the assessment in comparisons to 96% in Qamishli.<sup>34</sup> However when comparing the type of strategies used, those in eastern Aleppo reported much higher proportions of those resorting to more severe, crisis or emergency, strategies.

## FOOD SECURITY

**Despite the fact that 93% of households had acceptable food consumption scores (FCS), Qamishli households spent the majority of their income of food which made up 56% of total household expenditure.** It is not surprising therefore that 63% of the assessed population had engaged in some sort of consumption-based coping strategy at least once in the 30 days preceding the assessment. Given the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis households are unlikely to have the continued capacity to deal with the high price of food on depleting resources.

**The average total of food expenditure for the prior month was 85 USD (28,692 SYP) ranging from between 29 and 1,032 USD (10,000- 350,000 SYP).** In fact it was found that 14% of households reported a total food expense that was higher than their total household income and as such rely on other means such as savings, further highlighting food expenditure as an area of particular concern. This issue is also highlighted in a recent market monitoring exercise which stated that Qamishli had the highest recorded food prices of all assessed sub-districts in Al Hasekeh Governorate.<sup>35</sup>

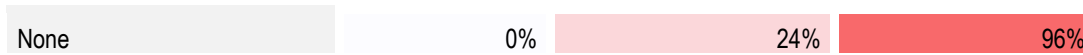
Respondents were asked to rank, in order of priority, the top three sources of food for the household. Households reported relying main on their primary and secondary sources of food with very few relying on a tertiary source, which may be indicative of a lack of other possible food sources such as the previously mentioned low humanitarian assistance. **95% reported that their primary source was food bought from a store and 67% cited their secondary source to be food received as a gift, or as a result of gifted money.**

Figure 8: First, second and third food sources reported by households in Qamishli

	Primary source	Secondary source	Tertiary source
Gifts	3%	68%	2%
Humanitarian Assistance	2%	2%	0.26%
Purchased in store	95%	4%	0%
Traded or Begging	0%	3%	1%

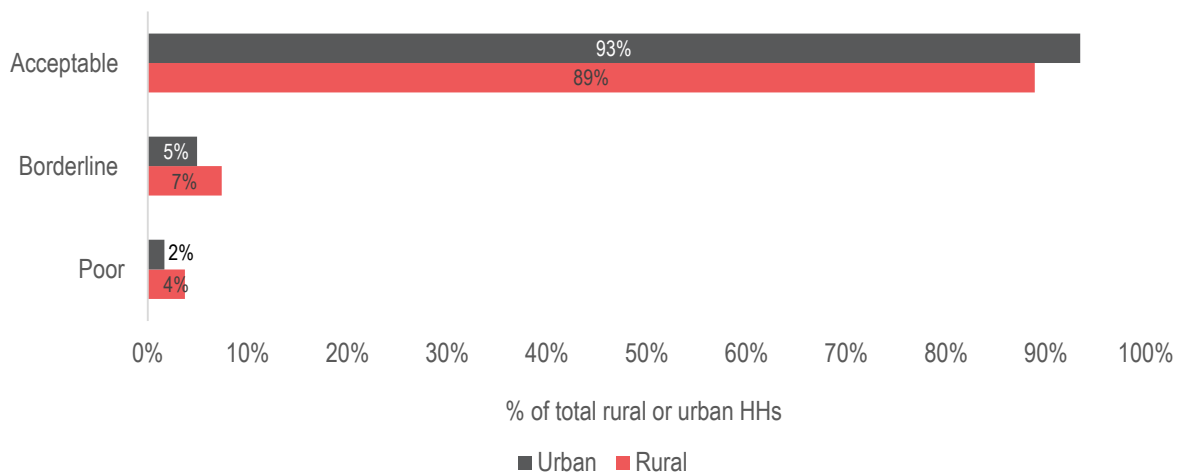
<sup>34</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), p 38

<sup>35</sup> REACH, [Syria Monthly Market Monitoring Exercise](#), September 2015



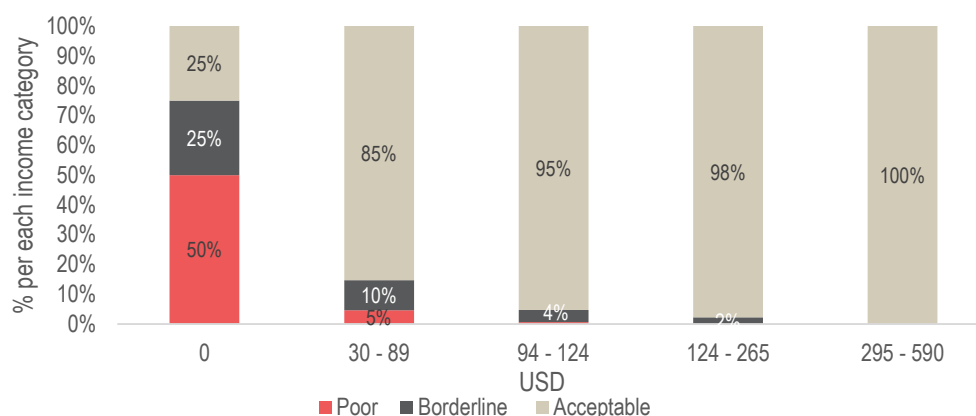
**Overall 93% of the assessed population were rated as acceptable with only 2% found to have a poor food consumption score, and 5% a borderline score.** The food consumption score (FCS), is a measure of the frequency of consumption and the nutritional value of food consumed developed by WFP.<sup>36</sup> For the MENA region, where consumption of sugar and oil is high, WFP interprets an FCS score of 28 or under to indicate a poor food consumption profile; a score from 28.1 through 42 to be borderline; and an FCS score above 42 to indicate an acceptable food consumption profile of food security.

**Figure 9: Food Consumption Score, by rural and urban area**



Households with a higher income generally had higher food consumption scores. Households with an income of over 89 USD per month almost all had acceptable food consumption scores, whilst those with no monthly income represented the majority of those who had a poor FCS, as shown in Figure 10 below.

**Figure 10: Food consumption score, by monthly household income (SYP)**



<sup>36</sup> More information about the Food Consumption Score and its calculation can be found in [Technical guidance for WFP's Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\)](#), (World Food Program, ND)

As seen above, those most vulnerable to food insecurity are in rural areas or those who have no income, while there was almost no difference between food consumption scores in government and non-government controlled areas. When compared to the findings of eastern Aleppo, a higher percentage of households in Aleppo, 26%, were found to be below the acceptable threshold than in Qamishli 7%.<sup>37</sup>

## CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING FOOD

When asked to cite the top three challenges their household faces with regards to accessing food, **88% of households reported that the cost of food was the primary challenge to food access.** This is unsurprising considering the high proportion of monthly household expenditure used to purchase food, and the overall higher average of expenditure than income. 35% of households cited low quality of food available as the second challenge, and 71% of households reported no third challenge to food access.

Table 3: Top three reported challenges to accessing food

	1st most important Challenge	2nd most important Challenge	3rd most important Challenge
Cost of food	88%	4%	0.3%
Not enough	2%	5%	2%
Low quality	3%	35%	6%
Low nutrition	1%	16%	6%
Too far	4%	14%	0.3%
No variety	1%	12%	15%
Insecure access	1%	1%	1%
Too few Distributions	0.3%	3%	0%
None	0.0%	10%	70%

Bread is a staple food for many in Syria and the inability to access bread can be an important component of overall food security however this was not an area of concern for Qamishli. When asked if they were able to access bread of a daily basis, 98% of households reported having daily access to bread, the majority reporting that bakeries (75%) and markets (60%) were among their primary sources of bread.

## FOOD SECURITY COPING MECHANISMS

Households were asked for the number of days during the previous seven days that they had to rely on consumption-related coping strategies. **Overall 63% of households had used a food security coping mechanism in the 7 days prior to the assessment.** Eating cheaper less preferred food, reported by more than 50% of households, and borrowing food or receiving help from friends or relatives, resorted to by 42%, were the main coping strategies used by households. Eating less meals a day than normal, eating smaller amounts of food than usual, and adults eating less so younger children could eat were used by a much smaller percentage of household, as noted in the table below.

**An area of particular concern is the proportion of households borrowing food or receiving help from friends and family.** As highlighted in the table below there is a large proportion of households, 20%, who are relying on

<sup>37</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), p33



this coping mechanism five or more times during a week. This again highlights the trend already seen in this report where households have had to rely on external financial support from friends and family to cover basic needs.

**Table 4: Proportion of households using consumption-related coping strategies, by number of days used**

	Number of days per week HHS used coping strategy					Total
	1	2	3	4	5+	
Eat cheaper/less preferred food	7%	9%	13%	5%	19%	54%
Borrowed food or received help from friends or relatives	9%	6%	4%	2%	20%	42%
Eaten less meals a day than normal	4%	7%	4%	2%	4%	21%
Eaten smaller amounts of food than normal at meals	2%	4%	4%	2%	4%	16%
Adults eat less so younger children can eat	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	11%
Women eat less so men and small children can eat	0%	2%	2%	2%	3%	8%
Men eat less so women and small children can eat	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	8%
Sent household members to eat elsewhere	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Sent adult household members to beg	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sent children household members to beg	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Household members gathered food that was thrown away	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

When disaggregating between rural and urban or government and non-government controlled areas, as concerns consumption based coping strategies, differences included: a higher proportion of households in rural areas (25%) resorted to eating cheaper less preferred food five or more times a week, than in urban areas (18%); and more households in government controlled (28%) areas resorted to borrowing food or receiving help from friends and family five or more times a week, than non-government controlled areas (22%).

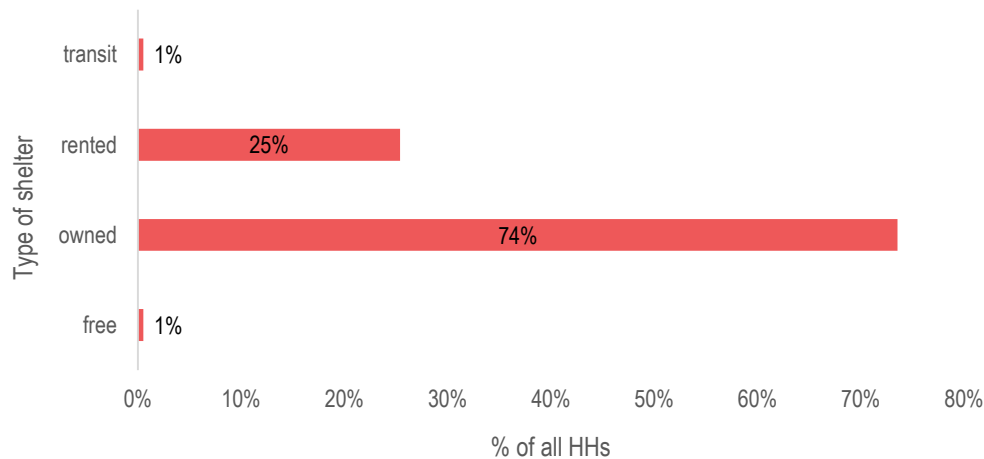
Comparisons with Aleppo also show that Qamishli has a lower proportion of households using coping strategies. 75% compared to 63% of households in Aleppo had used a coping strategy in the preceding week and of these the top three were, eating less preferred food (72%), borrowed food (47%) and eating fewer meals (52%).<sup>38</sup>

## SHELTER AND NON FOOD ITEMS

**The majority of households, 74%, lived in accommodation which they owned themselves, followed by those who lived in rented accommodation, accounting for 25%.** The majority of IDPs (76%), lived in rented accommodation, 20% in accommodation they owned, and the remaining 4% divided between free and transit accommodation. As for host families, 78% lived in owned property and 22% in rented accommodation.

<sup>38</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), p38

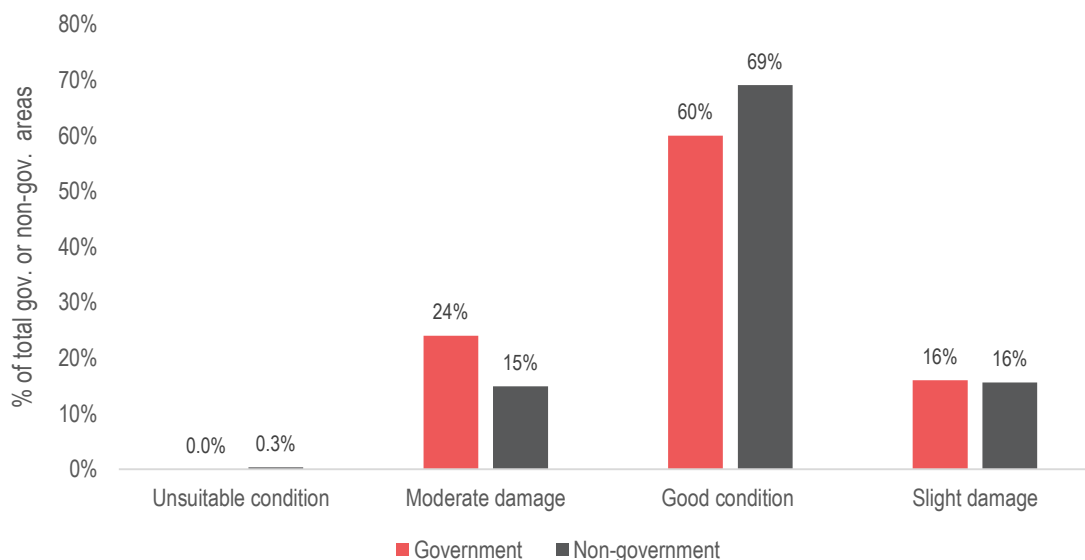
Figure 11: Percentage of households living in different shelter types



The largest proportion of households, 70%, reported living in housing which was of a good standard to be lived in. This was followed by 15% of households reporting to live in accommodation that had moderate damage and moderately unsuitable to be lived in and 14% in accommodation with slight damage. A very small percentage, under one percent, reported to live in homes that were unsuitable to be lived in.

When disaggregating between rural and urban and government and non-government controlled areas there were only minor differences. All four groups of households reporting to be in transit or to be living in free accommodation lived in urban areas. In addition, more households in rural (20%) and government controlled areas (24%) reported living in shelter with moderate damage than those in urban areas (13%) or non-government controlled areas (15%). Higher proportions of households in Aleppo reported to be living in dwellings which had incurred some damage, (64%), and fewer households reported living in their own homes (42%).

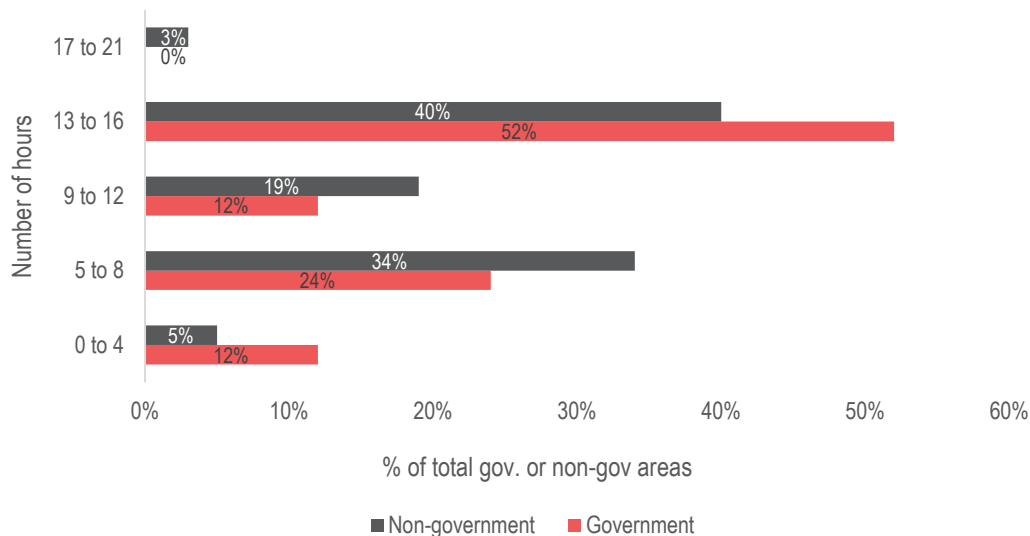
Figure 12: Reported shelter damage in government or non-government controlled areas



According to findings, electricity access is not an area of primary concern. Households were asked how many hours of government grid electricity and generator electricity they had access to in the past week. **The largest proportion of households (41%) reported having access to 14 hours of government grid electricity each day followed by 20% who had access for seven hours access.** Results for urban and rural government grid electricity are

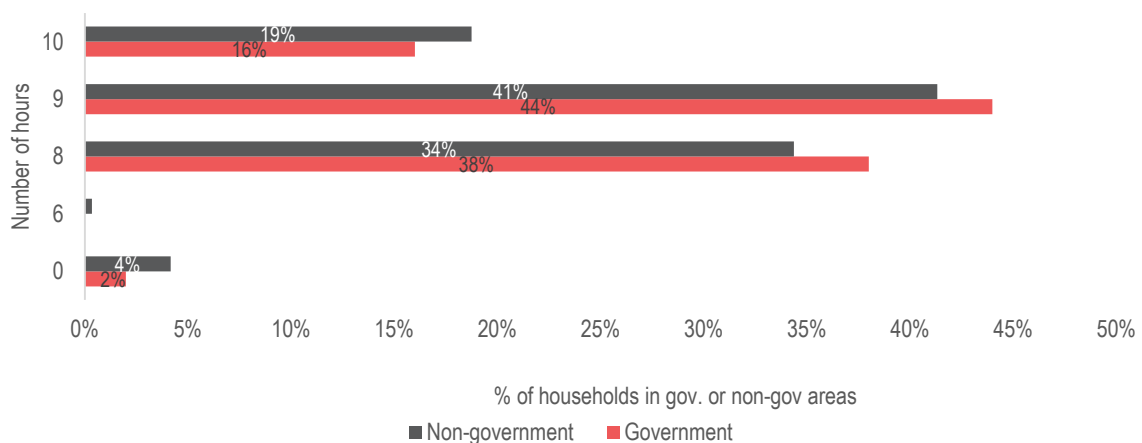
similar to government and non-government areas shown below. According to these result those with access to the lowest amount of government grid electricity access of 0-4 hours were those living in rural (11%) and government controlled areas (12%), whilst the 3% with the most access live in urban, non-government controlled areas. Interestingly one of our KI reported that access in non-government controlled areas was significantly lower in non-government controlled area (2-3 hours) than government controlled areas (12 hours), however our findings did not show such significant differences. These may be due to a change in circumstances since data collection or because differences in electricity access were a lot more localised and as such were not revealed in this assessment.

**Figure 13: Number of hours of government grid electricity availability, by households in government and non-government controlled areas**



With several hours of mains electricity available to the vast majority of households assessed, generators were used as a source of electricity for fewer hours by most households, as shown in Figure 14. Three percent of households in rural areas used generators to produce 12 hours of electricity per week and seven percent did not use a generator at all. Since the ability to access electricity can affect cooking; heating; water-purification; productive capacity, such as the ability to operate a business; education, including the ability to study in the evenings; and personal safety, households with limited access electricity, either from the grid or generators may be particularly vulnerable.

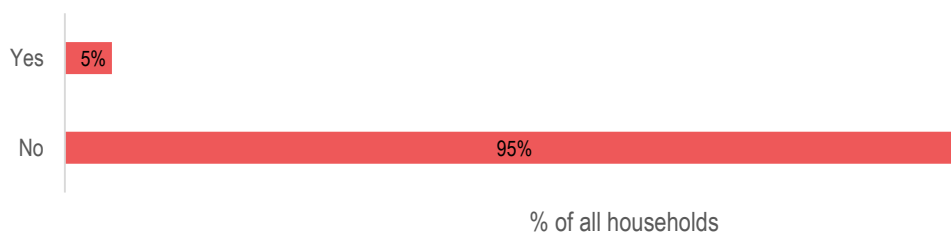
**Figure 14: Number of hours of electricity produced by a generator, available to households in government and non-government controlled areas**



Figures presented above for electricity access differ from finding for Aleppo where electricity access was more a concern. Even though approximately two-thirds of households (67%) received some electricity from the government each week, supplies were severely limited with households generally not receiving more than four hours per week, whereas as in Qamishli 41% of households reported having 14 hours of government grid electricity. As such it is not surprising that generator electricity were relied on to produce on average 8 hours of electricity a day in Aleppo.<sup>39</sup>

**Only five percent of assessed households reported having a problem with accessing cooking fuel in the 30 days prior to the assessment, compared to 47% in Aleppo.** Households were asked if they had had any problems accessing cooking fuel, what type of fuel they used and how they paid for fuel.<sup>40</sup> When asked for the primary means of payment for fuel, all but one household reported using their own money. Natural gas was the primary reported fuel type by all households.

Figure 15: Household reporting problems accessing cooking fuel in the previous 30 days



## WATER

**15% of households reported having had an issue with accessing water in the 30 days prior to the survey mainly in urban and non-government controlled areas.** 93% of those with access difficulties came from urban areas and seven percent from rural areas. In addition, it was found that only 11% of those with reported problems came from government-controlled areas, meaning the majority of households reporting water access issues came from non-government controlled areas of the city. As such this should be an area of targeted concern with regards to water access.

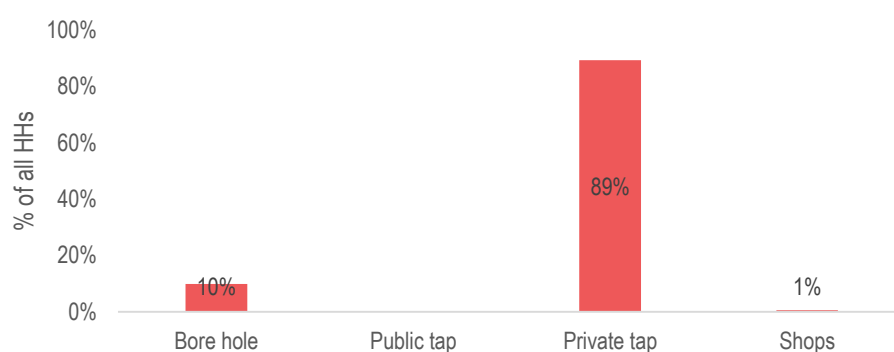
**The primary source of water came from private taps, 89%, followed by boreholes, 10%.** There was no significant difference between reported water sources in government and non-government controlled areas, nor between rural and urban areas. Findings differ considerably from eastern Aleppo where 65% of households had faced difficulties in accessing water and water was accessed mainly through boreholes (31%), and private water trucks (21%)<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), June 2015, p 50

<sup>40</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), June 2015, p 51

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p53

Figure 16: Primary reported water source



## HEALTH

This section will look at number of reported illnesses or symptoms of illness in relation to water source and comparison of child and adult illness according to areas lived in be that urban/rural or government/non-government. This section also looks at the availability of healthcare facilities.

During household interviews, respondents were asked whether adults or children in their household had suffered from specific illnesses or the symptoms of illness in the two weeks prior to the survey. **Overall 23% of household reported one or more members who had suffered from some sort of illness.** From the responses, it was apparent that children were more vulnerable to illness than adults. In addition, diarrhoea was the main cause of illness, representing 69% of all those who reported to had been ill.

Table 5: % of households reporting health concerns, by water source

		No reported illness	Adults with diarrhoea	Children with diarrhoea	Adults with skin disease	Children with skin disease	Adults with respiratory infection	Children with respiratory infection
Water source	Borehole	79%	5%	13%	0%	3%	0%	0%
	Private tap	68%	8%	12%	3%	2%	3%	4%

When examined by water source, a slightly higher proportion of households relying on water from private taps reported to be suffering from illness at the time of assessment, compared to those reliant on water from boreholes; however, a larger sample size would be required to draw more meaningful comparisons.

Respondents were also asked whether anyone in their households had required health assistance during the previous six months and, if so, what type of health care was needed, and whether those in need were able access health services. **55% of households were reported not to have needed either primary or secondary healthcare in the previous six months and 25% had been able to receive healthcare whilst six percent failed to access healthcare.** Overall, primary health care was reported to be in higher demand than secondary healthcare.<sup>42</sup> This portrays a relatively good access to healthcare facilities with the majority of people knowing where to access healthcare (8% reported not knowing where to access healthcare). Since the assessment there

<sup>42</sup> Primary healthcare refers to the professional care given by a GP or doctor as the first point of contact, secondary healthcare refers to the diagnosis and treatment in a hospital generally with specialised equipment.

have been signs of continued support from certain humanitarian organisations providing aid to the city of Qamishli by supplying medical supplies. In August 2015 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) visited Qamishli (amongst other cities in the region) in order to ascertain the health needs after which medical supplies were delivered from Damascus<sup>43</sup>. Continued efforts such as these are important as almost half of the population assessed reported needing either secondary or primary healthcare in the six months prior to the assessment.

When disaggregating between rural and urban and government, and non-government controlled areas, more diseases were reported in urban (34%) and non-government controlled areas (31%) than rural (19%) and government controlled areas (20%). Infectious diseases were also more prevalent in Aleppo than Qamishli with 25% children reporting Diarrhoea and 19% skin disease in comparison to 12% and 2% in Qamishli.<sup>44</sup>

Table 6: % of total households reporting health concerns by rural/urban and government/non-government

		Rural	Urban	Government	Non-Government
Adult	Diarrhoea	5%	9%	6%	8%
	Skin disease	0%	3%	0%	3%
	Respiratory disease	0%	4%	4%	2%
Child	Diarrhoea	10%	13%	10%	13%
	Skin disease	1%	2%	0%	2%
	Respiratory disease	2%	4%	0%	4%
Total		19%	34%	20%	31%

## EDUCATION

This section looks at the number of school-aged children reporting to no longer attend school and the reasons behind non-attendance.

**Only one percent of all children in assessed households reported not to have attended school in the previous month.** Households with school-aged children (aged 5-17 years old) were asked how many boys and girls in the household had not attended formal schooling in the previous month. From the responses, it appears that the vast majority of children were attending a school.

When asked about the reasons for a lack of school attendance, the six families concerned gave varying responses. These include that school was considered unnecessary, a lack of security, moving, the need to work, and the cost of education.

Due to the minimal number of school-aged children not attending school no comparisons have been made between rural and urban or government and non-government controlled areas. However there is a remarkable difference with the findings from eastern Aleppo which had seen a collapse in the educational system due to a number of factors including that schools had become targets of attack and recruitment sites for armed forces.<sup>45</sup> Overall results had shown that as many as 44% of eastern Aleppo households had at least one boy and 37% had at least one girl out of school.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ara News (2015), [ICRC delivers medical supplies to Syria's Qamishli, Hasakah amid escalating conflict](#) (28, August 2015)

<sup>44</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), p58

<sup>45</sup> The Atlantic (2015), [Children Are Not Children Anymore](#), (23 October 2014)

<sup>46</sup> REACH (2015), [Eastern Aleppo Food Security and Livelihoods Household Assessment](#), p 56

## CONCLUSION

The assessment sought to provide an overview of the humanitarian needs in Qamishli, Syria, focusing primarily on food security and livelihoods but also covering sectors such as water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and NFIs, health, and education.

Among the assessed households, a relatively small proportion (16%) reported having been displaced due to the conflict, with only four percent hosting IDPs. As a result, this report focused less on the situation of IDPs versus non-IDPs, but rather uses comparison between rural/urban and government/non-government controlled areas whilst also comparing findings with a previous report on eastern Aleppo from July 2015.

Paid employment accounted for the primary income source of 80 per cent of households, demonstrating that businesses and services largely continue to function. **However, income savings and gifts made up more than two thirds of households secondary income source underlining that within a context of a high dependency ratio and high cost of food, families are not able to survive off generated income alone and thus revert to income sources which worsen a households long-term ability to recover.** In addition, almost all households included in the survey reported relying on coping strategies in order to make ends meet, with the majority of households reporting spending savings, and over half reporting having borrowed food or money to buy food in the month prior to assessment.

With income insufficient to cover basic needs, households risk becoming increasingly vulnerable as they deplete available resources or become increasingly in debt. Furthermore, protracted use of coping mechanisms could have a negative impact on other areas such as health and could result in the adoption of more extreme negative strategies, such as selling productive assets, as current strategies become exhausted. This in turn could undermine people's ability to re-establish livelihoods and weather future shocks.

Meanwhile, humanitarian aid is contributing to less than one percent of household incomes, suggesting a lack of available aid in the area. Designated by OCHA as an area of low Emergency Response Fund activity 2015, this suggests that opportunities exist for humanitarian actors to provide assistance to households in Qamishli in surrounding areas. In particular, **the provision of livelihoods and food assistance could help to prevent households from depleting all available resources, and increase their resilience in the face of future shocks.**

**Food security is an area of particular concern, as food expenditure totalled on average 56% of households' total expenditure with cases when the reported total food expense was higher than the total household income, reported by 14% of households.** Accordingly, concerns about the high cost of food were commonly reported, an issue also highlighted in a recent market monitoring exercise, which showed that Qamishli had the highest recorded food prices of all assessed sub-districts in Al Hasekeh Governorate.<sup>47</sup> This is only exacerbating the situation mentioned above where households are depleting resources in order to cover basic needs of which food is a high priority. As such the percentage of those struggling to cover food costs on current income levels, and with other coping strategies exhausted after protracted use, is likely to increase over time.

Though comparisons between rural and urban areas and government and non-government controlled areas showed few significant differences, **household coping mechanisms reveal that the situation of households in rural areas was of higher concern than others.** Along with a high proportion of stress related coping strategies, one in five households reported selling productive assets, which could have a negative effect on future productivity, and leave households with little to fall back on in the case of future shocks. In addition, households in rural areas had a lower overall food consumption scores. **Though the similarity between areas show that all areas are in**

<sup>47</sup> REACH, [Syria Monthly Market Monitoring Exercise](#), September 2015



**need of especially livelihood-related support, those most vulnerable seem to live in rural areas whilst health related assistance should be targeted primarily in urban and non-government controlled areas.**

**Despite the fact that Qamishli findings generally appear more favourable than those of Eastern Aleppo in June, they also underline the high levels of expenditure which in the case of Qamishli exceeds income, and a high dependency on coping strategies.** Respondents in Qamishli reported significantly lower levels of reported damage to housing, higher levels of access to income-generating employment, higher food consumption scores and better access to water and electricity. Interestingly, despite considerable differences in average monthly expenditure, households in Aleppo and Qamishli reported spending similar proportions of available resources on food.

Overall the status of services such as health facilities, NFIs, Shelter and education were relatively favourable in Qamishli. **There were certain areas of concerns however such as water access in urban, non-government controlled areas** where most of the issues with regards to access were reported. In addition, almost half of the population assessed reported having needed a healthcare facility in the 6 months prior to the assessment, highlighting the importance of a continued focus on facilitating healthcare access.

Given the likely protracted nature of the crisis in Syria and the difficulties related to access due to the conflict, new methods need to be found to help support households in Qamishli to meet their basic needs. This report has highlighted areas of particular concern, especially with regards to household income versus expenditure and the impact on family livelihoods. **As humanitarian actors intervene to address the needs identified in this report, regularly updated information on humanitarian needs in Qamishli will facilitate response monitoring and the identification of changing priorities.**