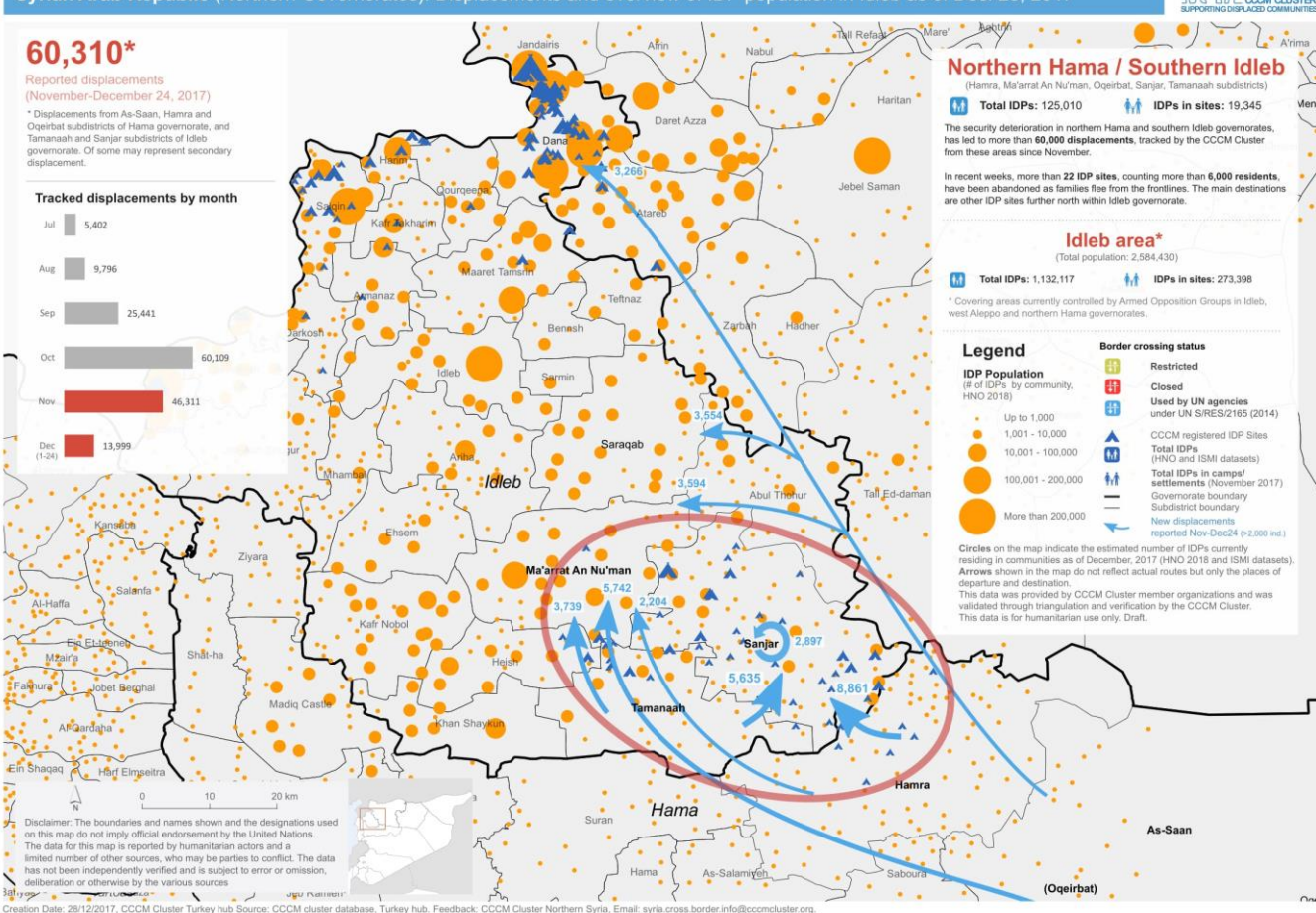


Highlights

- Since the beginning of November 2017, hostilities between Government of Syria forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) intensified considerably in the north-eastern countryside of Hama Governorate, the southern and south-eastern countryside of Idlib Governorate and the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate.
- According to the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, the intensification in hostilities brought about the displacement of 60,310 people from As-Saan, Hamra, Oqeirbat sub-districts in Hama Governorate and Tamanaah and Sanjar sub-districts in Idlib Governorate, between 1 November and 24 December 2017.
- The situation of newly displaced is said to be dire, as humanitarian organizations struggle to meet the increasing humanitarian and protection needs of the affected population in northwestern Syria.
- “Evacuation” agreements continue to bring new displacements to northwestern Syria, with 108 people from the Bait Jan enclave in Rural Damascus Governorate arriving to north-western Syria on 30 December.

Syrian Arab Republic (Northern Governorates): Displacements and overview of IDP population in Idlib as of Dec. 28, 2017



Situation Overview

Since the beginning of November, hostilities between Government of Syria (GoS) forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) increased significantly in the north-eastern countryside of Hama Governorate, the southern countryside of Idlib Governorate, and to a lesser extent in the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate. This escalation caused casualties among the affected population, damaged civilian infrastructure and caused the displacement of thousands in north-western Syria.

On 31 December, local sources reported that six people were killed by airstrikes on Kafar Sajna town. The town's municipal building was reportedly damaged. In Ma'arrat An Nu'man town, local sources reported that 18 people were wounded by airstrikes on 29 December. On 27 December, local sources reported that barrel bombs landed near an IDP settlement near Sarman village, resulting in the death of a woman and a child. On 26 December, the local council of Latmana town in northern rural Hama reported that airstrikes rendered the town's only borehole out of service, affecting 1,000 families. On the same day, the Hama Health Directorate in NSAG-held areas reported that the surgical hospital in Latmana town was temporarily rendered out of service by aerial bombardment.

On 28 December, local media sources reported that a compound containing several schools in Babuline village in southern rural Idlib was hit by airstrikes on 28 December, which resulted in medium damage to the buildings. On the same day, a power station in rural Hama reportedly became out of service due to the shelling. As a result, the power rationing hours will likely increase in the northern and coastal regions of the country. On 31 December, local sources reported that a rocket landed in the yard of a school in Tal Silmo village in southeastern rural Idlib, causing minor damage to the building and no casualties. Due to the general insecurity in the southern part of Idlib Governorate, the education assemblies in Ma'arrat An N'uman, Kafar Nobol, Khan Shaykun and Abul Thohur sub-districts suspended education activities temporarily pending further assessment of the security situation.

The Health Cluster reported that a hospital supported by a local NGO in Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub district was reportedly impacted by an airstrike on 31 December, which resulted in minor structural damages. The facility remains fully operational. The Cluster also reported that a medical warehouse belonging to an INGO in Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, was impacted by barrel bombs on 30 December. This reportedly resulted in structural damage, as well as, the destruction of medical and nutrition supplies, medicines and medical equipment. The facility is out of service.

In the meanwhile, "evacuation" agreements continue to bring more IDPs to north-western Syria. As per an agreement reached between Government of Syria forces and NSAGs in the Bait Jan enclave of Rural Damascus Governorate on 25 December, 108 people (40 armed men, 18 civilian males, 21 women, and 29 children) arrived in Al-Madiq Castle town (entry point into NSAG-held areas in north-western Syria) in northern rural Hama on 30 December. Under the same agreement, evacuations from the Bait Jan enclave to Dar'a were carried out.

Humanitarian Response and Challenges

The HNO 2018 data shows that of the 2.65 million people residing in north-western Syria, 1.16 million people are IDPs, and 1.73 million people are classified as people in need. In addition to the large number of IDPs already present in north-western Syria, the continuous influx of IDPs to the Idlib Governorate is overloading humanitarian organizations that are already stretched to capacity. For example, the CCCM and Shelter/NFI Clusters report difficulties in finding new safe IDP hosting space anywhere in Idlib Governorate; a WASH Cluster partner had to suspend operational support to water stations that currently support 13 communities, due to a lack of funding.

The congestion in many communities is creating increased pressure on the host population and the service infrastructure, causing tensions between local communities and the IDPs. Between January and November 2017, the IDP taskforce tracked 509,852 IDP movements within/to Idlib Governorate from Hama, Deir Ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqa Governorates. This figure accounts for almost 20 per cent of the total displacement in Syria within that timeframe.

According to the CCCM Cluster, between 1 November – 24 December, the ongoing hostilities coupled with the heavy bombardment on several communities in southern rural Idlib and north-eastern rural Hama caused the displacement of 60,310 people from As-Saan, Hamra and Oqeirbat sub-districts in north-eastern rural Hama, as well as, from the Tamanaah and Sanjar sub-districts in southern rural Idlib. The majority of displaced people moved to the sub-districts of Sanjar (19,273), Ma'arrat An Nu'man (15,394), Saraqab (5,667) and Dana (4,623), with the rest fleeing to other areas in the governorate. Hostilities forced 6,000 IDPs who were residing in 19 informal IDP settlements in southern rural Idlib to vacate.

IDP sites are congested and as a result, common facilities, such as toilets, showers, laundry areas etc., are overwhelmed. Some of these common facility services in IDP sites are operating at 400% above their planned capacity to serve the affected people's needs. The CCCM Cluster formed a taskforce consisting of nine NGOs that have access to the Sanjar sub-district, a sub-district receiving the highest number of IDPs in the last months, to coordinate the response to the IDPs there.

Four Nutrition Cluster partners mobilized their rapid response teams to accelerate the curative and preventative nutrition response through 11 mobile clinics and 36 teams of community health workers to IDP camps, reception centers and districts that received IDPs. A total of 2,433 children 6-59 months were screened for malnutrition, using MUAC, 154 children were found to be moderately malnourished (MAM cases) and 39 had severe acute malnourished (SAM). Treatment for the children with MAM and SAM is ongoing. In addition, 300 pregnant and lactating women

(PLW) were screened for malnutrition. 19 women were identified as moderately malnourished and referred to the health facility for treatment. The proportion of malnourished PLW is 6.5 % and the proportion of malnourished children between 6-59 months is 6.5%. The rapid response teams provided preventative nutrition services to a total of 2,807 children between 6-59 months. This includes high energy biscuits for 2079 children, Plumpy DOZ for 460 and multiple micronutrient powder for 268 children. In addition, 793 PLW received micronutrients. Moreover, 50 infants under six months were assessed for the effectiveness of their capacity to breastfeed and supported as per the cluster standard operating procedures, with breast milk substitute. 105 PLW received counselling on infant and young child.

The Shelter/Non-food items Cluster is in communication with its partners in the areas to which displacement is happening to coordinate the response. One partner transshipped 1,200 emergency NFI kits to be prepositioned in two warehouses in Syria to facilitate flexible distribution capacity. 212 IDPs in Sanjar sub-district are in the process of being assisted with commodities for winter. Some of the partner stock in Syria include limited supplies of: fuel, winter clothing kits, plastic sheets, winter NFI kits, mattresses, blankets, tents, solar lamps, single clothes, NFI kits and jerry cans.

With communities and IDP settlements being congested in north-western Syria, the ongoing hostilities in southern rural Idleb and north-eastern rural Hama is cause for concern. Reports of humanitarian organizations suspending their activities for security reasons in some parts of the southern countryside of Idleb Governorate have emerged. For example, one NGO operating in the south-eastern part of Idleb governorate suspended its primary health care centers and community health teams in Ma'arrat An Nu'man, Khan Elsobol and Al-Tah towns due to insecurity; and changed modality by activating several mobile clinics to respond to the recent displacements. These approaches are only a temporary solution. The Nutrition Cluster reported the suspension of NGO-run mobile clinics in Sanjar and Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-districts on 25 December 2017, due to insecurity. The reactivation of these services is contingent on the security situation in the area.

With regards to the IDPs arriving by means of "evacuation" from Bait Jan enclave in Rural Damascus Governorate, basic food and NFI assistance was provided to civilians at the Al-Madiq Castle town in northern rural Hama. Furthermore, around 30 IDPs were hosted at the NGO-run reception center in Meznaz village in western rural Aleppo, where they received multi-sectoral assistance.

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