Key findings (as of July 2021)

Consolidating access severity scores across all humanitarian partner groups—UN Agencies, International NGOs and National NGOs—reveals that from among the 13.4M people in need (PIN) of assistance living in 270 sub-districts across Syria, the level of access constraints were found to be:

- **High in 20 sub-districts (representing 3 per cent of PIN – 402k)**
- **Moderate in 80 sub-districts (35 per cent of PIN – 4.69M)**
- **Lower in 170 sub-districts (62 per cent of PIN – 8.308M)**

Conflict-related dynamics are the most common constraint faced by all humanitarian partners and all response modalities in the ‘moderate’ or ‘high’ ranked sub-districts—notably those in proximity to frontlines in the Northwest and Northeast, or in areas where ISIL remains active. Another common feature in these sub-districts is the targeting or occupation of critical infrastructure, including hospitals, health facilities and water stations in violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Background and methodology

Up until 2019 consolidated access reporting across Syria was based on Besieged/Hard-to-Reach access classifications, which was subsequently revised to a system of multi-indicator incident reporting and a three-tier ‘quality of access’ presentation. Further to feedback received from humanitarian partners across the response, and drawing on global best practice, the methodology has now been updated to combine quantitative and qualitative aspects. Focus group discussions are convened (separately) with UN Agencies, INGOs and National NGO partner organizations from each response modality to collect and distil an agreed understanding by the humanitarian community of the access environment in Syria. Once consolidated, the findings are cross-checked by field-based experts, including to avoid discrepancies with other quantitative data or reporting. The findings for all organisation types, and for all sub-districts, are applied to a three-point severity scale—generally the average score per sub-district in relation to the impact on programs and people’s ability to access services. To note: the information presented for much of the Northeast includes a combined severity scoring based on the expert and collective understanding of the NES Forum coordinated partners and HCT-coordinated partners operating cross-line.

Data was collected through 45 focus group discussions and 15 bilateral discussions covering 270 sub-districts during the months of July, prior to the recent escalation in violence around Dar’a and prior to the recent successful cross-line delivery to North-west Syria.

Legend

- **Lower access constraints (Level 1):** Relatively few access constraints. Armed actors, checkpoints, or other impediments such as administrative obstacles may be present and may impede humanitarian activities. However, with adequate resources and clearances, humanitarian organisations can still operate and reach all or nearly all targeted people in need.
- **Moderate access constraints (Level 2):** Armed actors, checkpoints, lack of security, administrative impediments, or other impediments may be present, and often result in restrictions on humanitarian movements and operations. Operations continue in these areas with regular restrictions.
- **High access constraints (Level 3):** Armed actors, checkpoints, high levels of insecurity, administrative obstacles, as well as other impediments are present and very often result in restrictions on humanitarian movements and operations. Operations in these areas face high difficulties and sometimes are impossible.
- **Areas with no or limited population**
- **No data**
Analysis

- For UN Agencies, there have been recent improvements in regular and sustained interagency access to communities previously perceived as challenging – including East Ghouta, Rural Damascus. The UN has been able to further expand physical presence in the Northeast – to hire and deploy staff – with several UN Agencies granting new approvals to establish sub-offices in Deir-Ez-Zor city, and to conduct missions to sub-districts such as Al Mayadeen and Al Bukamal. In Northwest Syria, UN Agencies have been able to conduct a growing number of assessment missions close to frontlines, notably in areas to the south of Idlib that shifted control in 2019-2020.
- Humanitarian partners have been unable to reach the residents of Rukban since September 2019; there has been no access for camp residents to the UN clinic on the Jordanian side of the border since March 2020.
- The security situation across Northern Aleppo remains volatile. Asymmetric attacks, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and armed disputes between groups have been notable features in larger city/town centers and populated areas, including Al Bab, A’zaz and Afrin.
- In Idlib Governorate NGO staff members continue to be at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention by Non-state Armed Groups (NSAG) security forces and face risks related to dynamics of NSAG-initiated arrest and security operations. Humanitarian partners have also reported specific requirements such as gender-segregation regulations enacted in the Idlib region, hampering access and implementation of humanitarian activities, particularly at gender-segregated IDP camps.
- All UN assistance bound for the Eastern areas of Northern Aleppo must cross between areas under the control of different armed groups; it is vulnerable to disruptions due to security developments, requiring increased negotiation for passage for humanitarian actors, including to mitigate bureaucratic impediments and other interference in the form of movement restrictions, questioning by local authorities, and fees at checkpoints.
- The Ras Al-Ain-Tell Abiad area (RAATA) – is currently only accessible via Turkey by a few International and National NGOs (those granted permissions report relatively low access constraints). In Menbij and Ain-Arab UN Agencies continue to face a range of access challenges; INGOs and national NGOs report relatively lower access constraints, with the limited partner presence attributed to funding constraints.
- The security situation at Al-Hol Camp in eastern Al-Hasakeh Governorate remains a major concern for all humanitarian partners, with high levels of violence, criminality, and social tensions. At Al-Hol camp, while humanitarian partners continue to provide regular assistance, high levels of access constraints continue to be reported including violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, interference by the authorities, and restrictions on humanitarian workers accessing areas such as the Annex. Focus group discussions revealed significant access constraints in other IDP camps and informal settlements across Northeast Syria, where all humanitarian partners face regular challenges; the UN particularly impacted access to informal settlements, where the scale of International and National NGO response is also limited.
- NGOs operating in Northeast Syria report facing relatively lower access constraints in northern Al-Hasakeh, the majority of Ar-Raqqa, Menbij and Ain al Arab, and parts of western Deir-ez-Zor. Higher levels of access constraints are reported close to frontline areas of RAATA including Darbasiyah, Tal Tamer, and Ein Issa sub-districts; higher access constraints are also faced in southern Deir-ez-Zor and sub-districts Al-Hasakeh and Qamishi.
- In Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, access to the majority of the sub-districts, including Basira, Hajin and Thiban sub-districts, are perceived as challenging due to the frequency of security incidents, such as ongoing hostilities between armed groups and social unrest. National NGOs face a generally more permissive access environment in these areas.
- In Tall Refaat enclave, Aleppo Governorate, tensions associated with operations along the frontline continue to impact civilians, whilst some partners reported delays associated with bureaucratic processes. Moreover, civilians’ access towards Aleppo city remains subject to approvals.
- Access to Alouk water station remains a significant concern as disruptions continue to impact nearly 300,000 people in Al-Hasakeh city and surrounding camps.

- The closures of the M4 highway between Tal Tamer and Ein Issa continues to disadvantage civilian and humanitarian movements.
- Restrictions impacting the ability of conflict-affected populations to access services and assistance, including arbitrary restrictions on crossing points between areas under the control of different parties, were highlighted in many focus group discussions across the country.
- Regarding mines and explosive ordnance (from HNO): Approximately one in two people are at risk from explosive contamination, and a third of communities are potentially contaminated. These communities generally correspond to areas having witnessed intense hostilities over the past years in Aleppo, Idleb, Ar-Raqqaa, Deir-Ez-Zor, Quneitra, Rural Damascus and Dar’a.
- The challenging physical environment – particularly during seasons where risks of flooding are recurrent - were frequently mentioned as major access constraints, primarily in the northern region.
- Across the country, a scarcity of fuel presents a challenge for humanitarian partners to sustain programming, likewise for people in need to reach services.
- Access constraints related to COVID-19 preventative measures were not mentioned by humanitarian actors. This can be explained by the adaptation work humanitarians have done to embed COVID-19 mitigation measures in the response, facilitation measures negotiated with local authorities, and the easing (in some areas complete lifting) of COVID-19 mitigating measures, such as curfews and movements restrictions.
Top five humanitarian access constraints

In the following maps, sub-districts highlighted in blue indicate that the corresponding access constraint was reported by partners but does not reflect frequency or level of impact of the constraint. Determination of a sub-district's overall access severity scoring is based on experts' collective assessment regarding the impact the combined constraints have on affected populations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCESS CONSTRAINT</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF REPORTING</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of mines and explosive ordnance</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military operations and ongoing hostilities impeding humanitarian operations</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction of movement of agencies, personnel, or goods within the affected country</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction of movement of agencies, personnel, or goods into the affected country</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on, or obstruction of, conflict affected populations access to services and assistance, including the denial of access of women to services</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of the existence of humanitarian needs or of entitlements to humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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</tbody>
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The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Creation date: 31 Aug 2021  Feedback: ocharosyr@un.org  www.unocha.org  www.reliefweb.int
**ACCESS SEVERITY AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS**

**A) Inter-sectoral severity of needs**
by sub-district (in 2021)

**Comparing severity scores – access and needs**

- Map A shows the Inter-Sector Severity of Needs across the country down to sub-district level, as published in the Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2021, with the five graded levels of severity.
- 41 per cent (110 in total) of all subdistricts nationwide are classified as facing extreme or catastrophic needs; 64 of these same sub-districts face moderate or high levels of access severity (See map B).
- In 13 of the sub-districts – where there are access challenges, and where needs are classified as extreme or catastrophic – there are more than 100,000 residents in need (see map C).
- A majority of these sub-districts suffer from various humanitarian access constraints - primarily bureaucratic impediments, and ongoing hostilities between armed groups, including difficult physical environment such as flooding.

- Of these, Al Atareb sub-district in Aleppo Governorate, and Mareet Tamsrin and Dana sub-districts in Idleb Governorate present catastrophic severity of needs with moderate access constraints.
- Three sub-districts face extreme severity of needs while humanitarian partners report low access constraints (and insufficient partner presence) – Harasta and Qatana sub-districts in Rural Damascus Governorate and Deir-ez-Zor sub-district in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.
- There are unique challenges in Menbij and Ain Al Arab in Northern Aleppo, where INGOs and national NGOs report relatively lower constraints, though challenges for UN Agencies and others to operate means the current response is below requirements; INGOs also note a lack of capacity for operations in this area.

**C) Access Severity and People in Need - Subdistricts > 100,000 people in need**
by sub-district