Northeast Syria Needs and Response Overview

May 2022

Needs Overview

The humanitarian crisis in Northeast Syria (NES) continues to evolve as the result of a myriad of emergency and longer-term needs. While conflict-related needs in Northeast Syria persist, inadequate basic services and the destruction and degradation of basic infrastructure, compounded by worsening economic conditions have become the most significant drivers of humanitarian needs in Northeast Syria. These conditions exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities among the population caused by displacement, conflict or other shocks. Low water levels in the Euphrates River, late and limited rainfall, and irregular water flows from Alouk station have continued to impact the hydro-electric power supply and worsen an already critical drought forecast and reduced harvest for 2022.

Economic Situation

According to the most recent multi-sector needs assessment, a total of 79% of the surveyed households in Northeast Syria reported having insufficient means to meet basic needs. Nearly half (43%) of the households surveyed mentioned a lack of income or access to income as being the main barrier to meeting their basic needs, followed by 21% of surveyed households reporting that they can no longer afford the increased prices for shelter, food, medication and other critical goods. The value of the Syrian Pound has further depreciated by roughly 14% from April 2021 to April 2022 (from 3,413 SYP/USD to 3,884 SYP/USD). As of April 2022, the cost of survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) food items has increased by 67% across NES over the past 12 months while the cost of SMEB cooking fuel has increased by 71%.

Livelihoods

Across Northeast Syria, 99% of the population are living with less than USD 1.90 per person per day, meaning that almost the entire population is classified as living in extreme poverty. Households are using various coping mechanisms to endure this untenable situation, as 79% of the households report to having purchased essential items on credit, 55% to having reduced expenditure on essential items, and 35% to having sold household assets. Almost half (40%) of the internally displaced people (IDPs) in Northeast Syria lived below the SMEB in 2021, with these numbers increasing to 60% for IDPs residing in camp settings. As of April 2022, the SMEB is valued at 5,855,524 SYP, an increase of 67% since April 2021, as a result of the devaluation of the Syrian Pound (SYP) and increase in prices for key commodities.

Displacement

Northeast Syria is currently hosting approximately 686,813 displaced individuals. 17% of these individuals reside in the 12 camps (formal and informal camps) with access to camp management or AANES camp

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1 REACH Multi-Sector Needs Assessment - Northeast Syria level, 2021
2 REACH Multi-Sector Needs Assessment - Northeast Syria level, 2021
3 REACH Joint Market Monitoring Initiative, April 2022
4 HNAP Socioeconomic Situation, 2021
5 HNAP Socioeconomic Situation, 2021
6 HNAP Socio Economic Conditions of Syrian IDPs, 2021
7 REACH Joint Market Monitoring Initiative, March 2022
8 OCHA Population Taskforce, August 2021.
administration structures and regular service provision. All camps in Northeast Syria are at or beyond capacity and decreased funding is leading to capacity gaps as partners are unable to cover needs in all locations. An even larger portion of the displaced individuals (22%), however, live in the 168 informal settlements and 142 collective centres throughout Northeast Syria, which do not receive regular service provision and as such, these substandard living conditions are exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

**Pull-factor towards last-resort sites**

Increasing socio-economic hardships for communities across Northeast Syria are giving rise to a new and concerning trend. Emergency response modalities that are heavily pivoted towards a camp-based response are generating pull-factors towards camps and other last-resort sites as households move towards settings where they perceive to have better access to services. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of individuals within camps, informal settlements and collective centres has increased by roughly 27,500 individuals, in addition to an increase of 43,108 individuals between 2020 and 2021, despite the absence of large-scale conflict during this period.

It is therefore imperative that humanitarian actors in Northeast Syria, including UN agencies and its partners, develop a NES-specific response strategy, which seeks to better maximise their comparative advantages and to strengthen and rationalise their respective response modalities. This will enable humanitarian partners to fulfil their mandate as last-resort service providers in camp and other last-resort settings, while also providing a more robust out-of-camp response for communities in need throughout Northeast Syria. Absent this, the response capacity of NGOs will continue to be over-drawn into camp settings, contributing to pull factors for vulnerable populations in under-severed communities, thereby inhibiting the ability to properly prevent future displacements and instability across Northeast Syria.

**Funding Gaps**

NGO partners have recently experienced severe decreases in funding for the response in Northeast Syria, leading to capacity gaps in addressing the increasing humanitarian needs. As vulnerabilities for both displaced people and other communities rise, a comprehensive response across Northeast Syria will continue to be necessary to support communities, mitigate community tensions, and increase resilience to deal with ongoing and future challenges that exacerbate vulnerabilities.

**NGO Response Overview**

The Northeast Syria NGO Forum (NES Forum) is a unique NGO-led coordination body comprising of 42 international and national NGOs operating cross-border from Iraq and from within Northeast Syria. These NGOs deliver humanitarian and development programming across all four governorates of Northeast Syria, in areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in Hasakeh, Raqqa, Aleppo and Deir-ez-Zor governorates. This is complemented by, and coordinated with, the United Nations (UN)-led humanitarian response delivering cross-line assistance from Damascus in several areas in Northeast Syria.

The collective efforts and response activities of NES NGOs are coordinated by Working Groups that make up the nine core humanitarian sectors: Education, Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL), Health, Nutrition, Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI), Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Sites and Settlements, Early Recovery and Livelihoods (ERL) and Protection. The Protection Working Group includes several sub-working groups/networks: Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Housing Land and Property Rights (HLP), Child Protection (CP), Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA). The NES Cash Working Group (CWG) supports inter-sectoral coordination and harmonisation, as well as
technical support to improve cash and voucher assistance (CVA), including multipurpose case assistance (MPCA).

**People Reached by NGO Response**

During 2021, the NES NGO response directly reached 967,000 people in need in April, and an average of 643,000 people in need on a monthly basis, by implementing direct interventions and activities in 991 communities (42% of the total number of communities) and 12 camps across Northeast Syria. The monthly average reach of people in need by indirect activities was 736,000 individuals.

**Number of overall Communities Reached**

![Map showing number of communities and camps reached by NGO response]

- **991 Communities**
- **12 Camps**

- **NES Estimated Population**
  - 2.7M Total estimated population
  - 2.1M Total persons reached

- **Population Disaggregation**
  - By Gender and Age:
    - 51% female
    - 49% male
    - 6% children
    - 4% women
    - 8% elderly

- **Targeted Community**
  - Inter-sector needs severity (WASH 2022):
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5

**Direct reach**
- January: 860,716
- February: 580,495
- March: 609,752
- April: 670,677
- May: 639,569
- June: 766,029
- July: 610,624
- August: 582,297
- September: 534,461
- October: 445,644
- November: 492,311
- December: 423,504

**Intervention/Indirect reach**
- January: 809,200
- February: 796,463
- March: 916,449
- April: 967,890
- May: 954,257
- June: 895,610
- July: 766,225
- August: 761,825
- September: 680,770
- October: 612,653
- November: 732,450

*Direct inter-sector reach*
NGO response modality and humanitarian access

Northeast Syria-based NGO partners enjoy a relatively permissive access environment throughout all areas that are under the control of the Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria (AANES) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The geographic reach of the NGOs response is supported through a network of 89 offices in 12 sub-districts across Northeast Syria, enabling NGO staff and management to be based in, or travel regularly, to the sites and locations in which communities are supported. NGOs deliver programmes directly through a large network of permanent staff and incentive workers, employing over 300 international and 6,400 national staff based in NES. More than 3,500 incentive workers are also hired on a regular basis to carry out project activities. This network and vast presence of NGOs throughout Northeast Syria allows for the comparative advantage of the NES NGO response to benefit from close proximity to the communities supported and allow for sustainable service delivery.

As the AANES governance structure is decentralised into local level offices - where permission to operate is required both from centralised offices and at the local level - this sustainable presence and ability to meet with local authorities and negotiate access is critical for maintaining humanitarian space and independence, sensitis local counterparts and communities to humanitarian principles and operational modalities, and to address any interference in aid delivery. The NES Forum and its members, with their widespread presence throughout the region, play a central role in engaging with local authorities and ensuring that aid is targeted and appropriate to those in greatest need, as well as in ensuring accountability to and protection of beneficiaries, and to support reduction of risks to fraud and aid diversion.

Despite the generally permissive access environment, Northeast Syria-based NGOs experience access constraints in several sub-districts, particularly in areas close to northern frontline areas as a result of

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Office mapped for 35 out of 42 NES Forum members
ongoing hostilities and conflict activity. NGOs also experience access constraints in areas that remain highly contaminated with explosive ordnances, as well as in Al-Hol camp where dynamics of insecurity threaten NGO operations and interference by local authorities is commonplace, ostensibly linked to security considerations. Lastly, despite a growing spread of NGO presence and operations geographically across Northeast Syria, several sub-districts in Deir ez-Zor remain challenging for NGOs to operate, mostly as a result of complex tribal, clan and family dynamics impacting NGO presence and operations.

**Import challenges**

The NGO response in Northeast Syria is reliant on a fragile import pathway that is used to bring both humanitarian supplies and personnel into the region. The ability to use this pathway, although usually permissive, has on occasion been impacted by external factors resulting in temporary suspensions of movements in and out of Northeast Syria. Where possible, supplies are procured locally, however there remains a significant proportion of specific items required for complex sectoral responses, such as for the health response, that must be imported.

**Sectoral Needs and Response Priorities**

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**
- 17 NGO partners reached over 2 million people in NES with emergency WASH assistance in 2021. There were 431,000 individuals reached with water trucking activities and NGOs supported 55 healthcare facilities and 45 schools with WASH rehabilitation or support.
- There is a continued need for the rehabilitation of water systems across NES. In 2021 more than 800,000 individuals were reached with similar activities.
- Support to WASH facilities in health centres and schools, and WASH services in camps (including hygiene kit distribution and vector control) continued throughout 2021 and will continue throughout 2022. Gaps due to funding cuts are becoming apparent with camps being potentially impacted by these.

**Early Recovery and Livelihoods (ERL)**
- In 2021, 9 NGOs reached 93,000 individuals with cash for work programmes, vocational trainings, business grants and apprenticeships, and other early recovery support.
- There is a need to support stronger area-based coordination mechanisms that combine restoration of basic services, rehabilitation of productive assets, and livelihoods support and market recovery in vulnerable communities.
- Support and multi-year funding is needed for livelihoods activities that lead to lasting outcomes, including apprenticeships, business support, value chain rehabilitation, and longer term employment activities.
- There is a need to address humanitarian needs created by failures of basic services, through the rehabilitation and maintenance of essential services and basic infrastructure.
- Projects with multi-year time horizons are needed in order to strengthen capacities of local partners, civil society organizations, and communities.

**Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)**
- Over 1 million individuals received food baskets and vouchers in 2021 by NES NGOs and approximately 880,000 individuals received agriculture inputs, livestock distributions, garden kits, seeds, vocational training and business grants in 2021.
- Almost 1 million people in need are still waiting for food assistance since 2021 and overall, only 41% of those in need have received livelihood and agricultural support.
- There is a heavy reliance on general food rations in camps. Currently the expected gap shows that over 38,000 IDPs across 4 camps will stay without coverage from June 2023.
- There is a projected increase in need for cash, voucher or in-kind assistance in 2022, in both IDP and host communities.
Health and Nutrition

- In 2021, 18 NES NGOs provided over 3 million medical procedures and approximately 815,000 with treatment courses. These health partners during the year supported 176 health facilities including hospitals, primary health care centres and, 44 mobile clinics.
- As of March 2022, the average time period required for the import of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies was up to six months. Primary reasons attributed to this were COVID-19 related restrictions and border closures.
- There is currently a threat of imminent closure for some primary healthcare facilities and hospitals due to lack of funding and/or limited support for local health authorities to sustain PHC networks.
- Hospital systems are under extreme stress, and significant investment is needed to build hospital systems, as well as the need for expanding 24/7 Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and New-born Care (CEMoNC) services for all camps and communities.
- There is a shortage of essential medication such as NCDs, paediatric medications, PEP kits, and life-saving drugs across camps and non-camp settings.
- Partners are facing a shortage of human resources for health to meet the optimum number of staff to run a facility.
- There is a need to address acute and chronic malnutrition, and anaemia for pregnant and lactating women.
- There is an ongoing need to fill the gaps left by the UN reduction in support for NES following the non-renewal of UN Res 2533. Both in terms of health service provision and pharma/supply pipelines.

Shelter/Non-Food Items (SNFI)

- In 2021 10 NES NGOs reached approximately 299,000 individuals with NFI assistance.
- 82% of households supported by NES NGOs with NFI assistance were IDPs, with 63% of the total NFI response covering camps and settlements.
- 7 NES NGOs reached approximately 35,500 individuals with shelter rehabilitation assistance during 2021 including 43 collective centres.
- Due to decreased funding, it is expected that additional gaps will emerge in 2022 in last resort sites. Already the seasonal NFI responses for both winter and summer clothing and NFI kits is identified as a gap.
- There is an increased need to support multi-year private shelter rehabilitation projects across NES. Such durable shelter solutions are needed to facilitate returns with attention to Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues, especially with continuous displacement and the need to find alternative solutions to host IDPs due to camps being at capacity.

Sites and Settlements/Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

- There are 2 NGOs providing CCCM activities in 5 planned camps, 5 informal camps and 8 informal settlements. As of April 2022, there are a total of 170,799 IDPs benefitting from CCCM activities.
- Camps in NES are currently at or beyond capacity with partners and their services inside these last resort sites stretched. Due to the limited partner capacity to expand activities in camps and the inability for expansions, there is an acute need to improve the response in out of camp settings.
- There are major gaps in the response within informal settlements and collective centres. With increased funding constraints the capacity of partners to provide services in these locations is becoming increasingly challenging.
- An emerging approach of providing short term emergency assistance in transit centres is being explored in order to support displaced individuals. The NES Forum and the Sites and Settlements WG expect that this approach will provide a temporary solution to allow households to move back to their areas of origin when possible and reduce the pressure on camps.
- The minimum commitments and camp indicators for NES are in their final stages of completion. Once these have been finalised, they should support longer term planning and strategy for the response in last resort sites.

Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)

- In 2021, 7 NES NGOs reached approximately 45,900 individuals in 40 communities with Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA).
- The CWG would recommend that given the deteriorating economic situation and the increase in emergency needs, there is a need to expand MPCA activities within NES.
- Supporting sectors in adding CVA into their response toolbox will enable better flexibility in new emergencies.
**Protection**
- 24 NGOs reached 311 communities in NES with protection activities reaching 859,780 beneficiaries. As a new Area of Responsibility in 2021, HLP activities reached 92,383 beneficiaries.
- HLP Technical WG has developed a database of completed due diligence of NES camps to ensure that all actors are relying upon the same information and maintain sustainability for their humanitarian intervention and Do No Harm for Land and Property rights holders and affected targeted population.
- GBV sub-WG in NES is working to ensure durable solutions by engaging and partnering with local organizations and grounding the intervention through a community and rights-based approach. To implement and prioritize durable solutions, the GBV SWG aims first to ensure that access to essential services is granted and safe.
- Decrease in funding significantly impacted partner capacities to provide GBV services. In 2021 Al Hol Camp had only 2 GBV service providers while Serekaniye Camp had limited capacity to provide Case Management services. One partner had to suspend its GBV information desks while another GBV partner has a funding gap of 3 months.
- Lack of cash for protection is a key concern. Given deteriorating economic conditions in NES coupled with ongoing displacements, women and girls face challenges accessing life-saving services. There is a critical need for cash support that is linked to the material safety component for any durable solutions.

**Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA)**
- Mine Action partners in NES were actively involved in clearance, survey, and explosive ordinance risk education activities.
- During 2021, a total of 113,786 explosive devices were located and destroyed, while risk education activities reached over 1,759,988 individuals from all age groups.
- Approximately 30,182,800 sqm of land was released to communities for use after confirmation that it was free of explosive ordnance contamination during 2021.
- There have been 2,169 victims of explosive ordnance hazard related incidents reported, resulting in 922 deaths and 1,105 injury cases.

**Education**
- The Education Working Group (EWG) reports that there are 31 members in its sector. During 2021, a total of 181,000 individuals were reached with education programming across all governorates in NES.
- Currently, partners are intervening in areas that include non-formal and formal education, rehabilitation of schools, WASH in education facilities, and capacity building of the EWG members through training and technical support. The EWG is also supporting teacher professional development among other activities.
- There is a continued need to fund partners to implement education activities to support children and education professionals in both host communities and camps settings and other last-resort sites.
- There are currently not enough education facilities or qualified teachers to provide meaningful education for children in Northeast Syria. Greater funding is needed to rehabilitate education facilities, train teachers, and to provide teaching materials.