

Rapid Needs Assessment Report

ADDRESSING URGENT HUMANITARIAN PRIORITIES IN SYRIA

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Empowerment



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OVERVIEW

After 14 years of a complex and protracted humanitarian crisis, compounding substantial challenges and evolving complexities, Syria witnessed the fall of the regime in the city on December 1, 2024, as a result of the opposition's "Deterring Aggression" operation that began on November 27. The humanitarian toll since November has been severe, with over 156 civilian deaths and 2 568 injuries in Northwest Syria, most of which are trauma related. Looting and destruction of shops and warehouses have limited the availability of relief items and essential supplies, leaving communities more reliant on humanitarian assistance to survive. The impact on the local population is profound, with families facing acute challenges in accessing necessities. In coastal areas, insecurity and ongoing airstrikes continue to place the population at risk¹

This comes after years where Syrians faced one of the worst years of this crisis, marked by a multitude of converging challenges that included ongoing hostilities, human rights abuses, economic collapse, disease outbreaks, natural disasters, climate shocks, mass displacement, food insecurity, and others. Coping capacities of households reportedly reached an all-time low and, despite increasing needs, there was a drastic reduction in humanitarian assistance due to funding shortfalls. As in previous years, women and girls fared the worst, with heightened risks of falling victim to negative coping mechanisms and gender-based violence (GBV). Most women and girls in Syria experience compounded forms of violence and discrimination, in addition to facing high barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance and specialized GBV services. Women and girls described an ever-present feeling of insecurity in their daily lives. They reported persistent and growing GBV both inside and

outside of the home, including sexual violence and kidnapping; child and forced marriage; tech-facilitated GBV; movement restrictions and denial of education, inheritance, and other rights; and intimate partner and domestic and family violence. These forms of violence are systematically normalized and reinforced through patriarchal gender norms, traditions, and institutions that maintain gender inequality and increase the barriers women and girls face when attempting to disclose violence and seek support. Risks of GBV for women and girls in Syria vary depending on their age, marital status, ability, and displacement status.²

In addition, worsening economic conditions have been coupled with a drastic reduction in humanitarian assistance, due to funding shortages. ⁷ Despite growing needs, there have been increasingly widening gaps in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including the delivery of GBV services. According to the UN Security Council, “5.5 million people who benefitted from general food distributions at the beginning of 2023 will no longer receive it.” ⁸ Respondents across Syria reported that, despite initial aid mobilization to support earthquake-affected areas, the level of assistance has been inadequate and is declining. High prices, lack of job opportunities, and the ongoing food and water crisis have led to households across Syria requiring additional assistance. These shortages have put added stress on households, with direct impacts on the level of violence being experienced by women and girls. Despite this increasing incidence of violence, many women and girls have not been able to access WGSS and GBV services due to their limited availability and compounded access barriers. Closures of WGSS and mobile teams in 2023 also had serious repercussions on the wellbeing of women and girls, including GBV survivors.

From December 21 to 30, 2024, **Equity and Empowerment** conducted a comprehensive rapid needs assessment in **Idleb, Hama, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, and Tartous**, reaching 769 individuals through a detailed survey. As one of the leading women-led organizations dedicated to achieving gender equality and enhancing women's roles in society, we prioritize addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups. This assessment aimed to understand urgent humanitarian priorities and analyze existing challenges in the targeted areas to inform and develop effective response strategies.

Focusing on critical sectors such as **shelter, food security, health, education, and protection**, the assessment highlighted key needs and gaps, ensuring that interventions are data-driven and tailored to the pressing realities on the ground.

1- Objectives

- Identify the immediate needs of the affected populations.
- Highlight gaps in basic services and infrastructure.
- Provide data-driven recommendations to support relief efforts.

2- Methodology





The assessment used surveys conducted with 769 respondents across multiple locations. Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires targeting various aspects such as shelter, food security, health, education, and protection. Results were analyzed to present findings as percentages to provide an accessible overview of the situation.

3- Target Groups

- Families living in newly liberated areas.
- Vulnerable population groups including women, children and people with disabilities.

4- Key Findings

5.1 Geographic Distribution

- Idleb:  (52%)
- Aleppo:  (30%)
- Hama & Homs:  (15%)
- Latakia & Tartous:  (3%)

5.2 Security Situation:

| Governorate | Areas Reporting Security Risks (%) | Main Risks Identified |
|-------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Idlib | 60% | Armed conflicts, theft, gender-based violence |
| Aleppo | 75% | Explosions, organized crime, communal violence |
| Hama | 50% | Theft, lack of law enforcement |
| Tartus | 65% | Lack of law enforcement, communal tensions |
| Latakia | 65% | Lack of law enforcement, communal tensions |
| Homs | 80% | Armed violence, communal tensions |

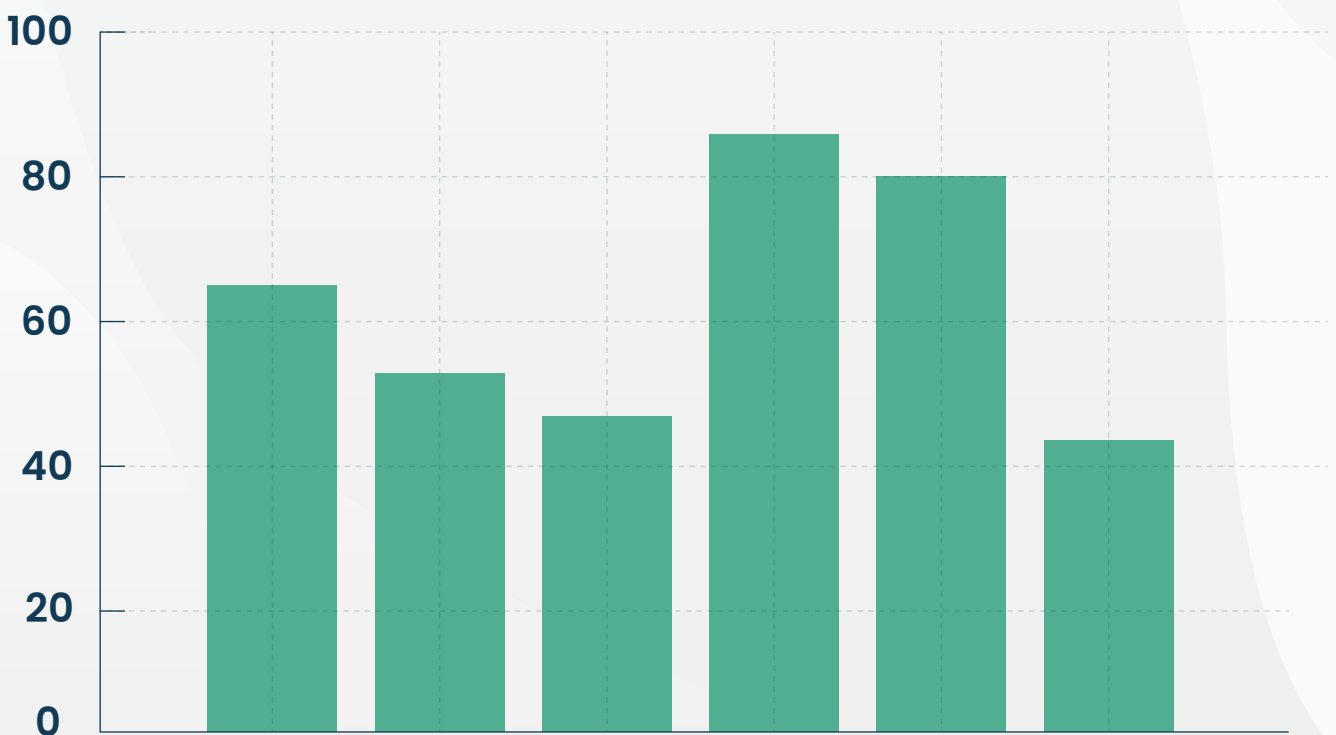
The security landscape across surveyed governorates reveals significant challenges, with varying degrees of severity:

- **Idlib:** Security risks affect over half of the surveyed areas, driven by ongoing armed conflicts and incidents of theft. Additionally, gender-based violence is an escalating concern.
- **Aleppo:** Security concerns are the most prevalent, with 75% of respondents identifying explosions and organized crime as major threats. This highlights an urgent need for enhanced law enforcement and comprehensive risk mitigation measures.
- **Hama:** Moderate security risks (50%) are reported, primarily attributed to theft and inadequate policing.

- **Tartous and Latakia:** Approximately 65% of respondents in these coastal regions highlight security challenges.
- **Homs:** The most severe security situation is observed in Homs, where 80% of respondents cite armed violence and communal tensions as significant threats to safety.

Overall, the security situation remains precarious across all governorates. Addressing these challenges requires prioritizing the strengthening of law enforcement, implementing community safety programs, and tackling the root causes of violence, particularly in Aleppo, Homs, and the coastal areas.

5.2 Education:

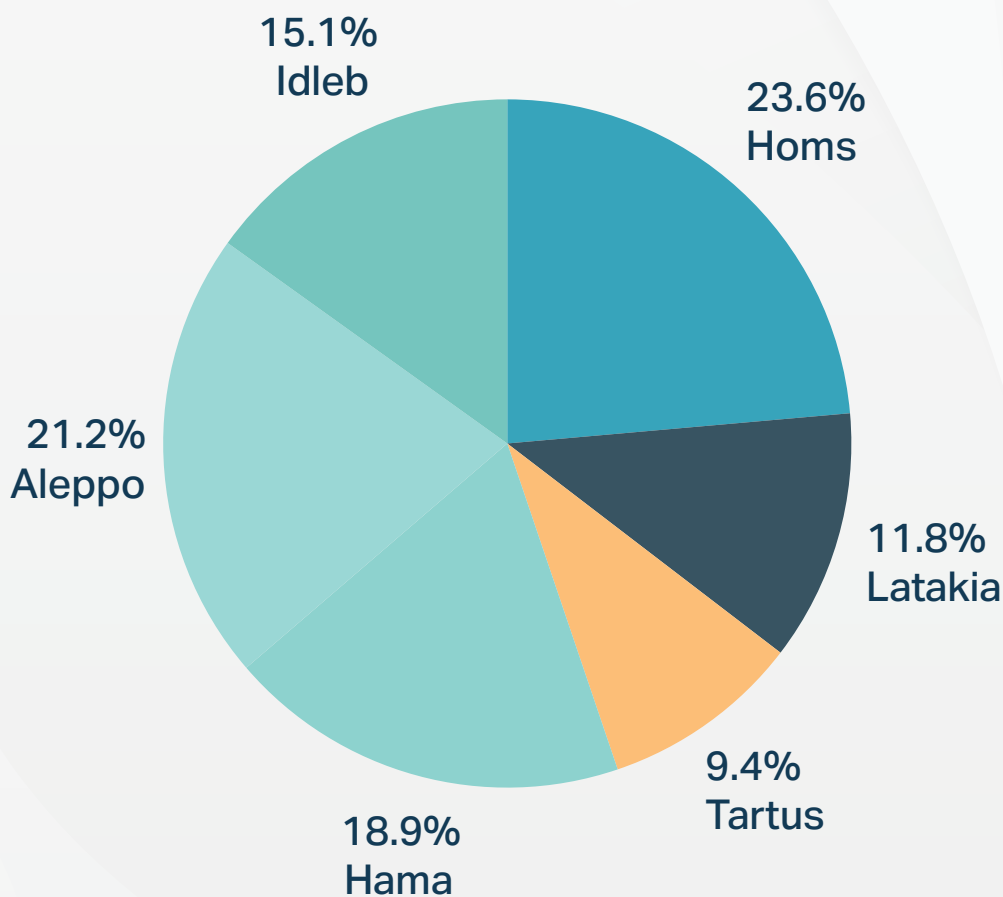


- **Idlib:** Although 64% of children are enrolled in schools, there is a pressing need to enhance the quality of education and improve existing infrastructure.
- **Aleppo:** With enrollment rates falling below the national average at 50%, targeted campaigns to promote school attendance and increase the availability of educational resources are essential.
- **Hama:** A notably low enrollment rate of 45% is attributed to widespread displacement, highlighting the urgent need for support programs aimed at displaced families.
- **Tartus:** Boasting an 85% enrollment rate, Tartus demonstrates positive educational outcomes, yet sustained support is necessary to maintain this progress.
- **Latakia:** The relatively high enrollment rate of 80% reflects stability in the region; however, investment in strengthening educational infrastructure is crucial to ensure continued success.
- **Homs:** The low enrollment figure of 45% underscores the severe impact of displacement. Establishing mobile schools could offer a temporary yet effective solution to ensure children's access to education.

Overall, education remains a critical concern, with significant disparities between governorates. While regions such as Tartus and Latakia exhibit encouraging trends, areas like Homs, Hama, and Aleppo demand focused

interventions. Key priorities should include constructing or rehabilitating schools, supplying essential educational materials, and implementing targeted programs to re-engage students who have dropped out of the education system.

Population Living Damage Buildings By Governorate



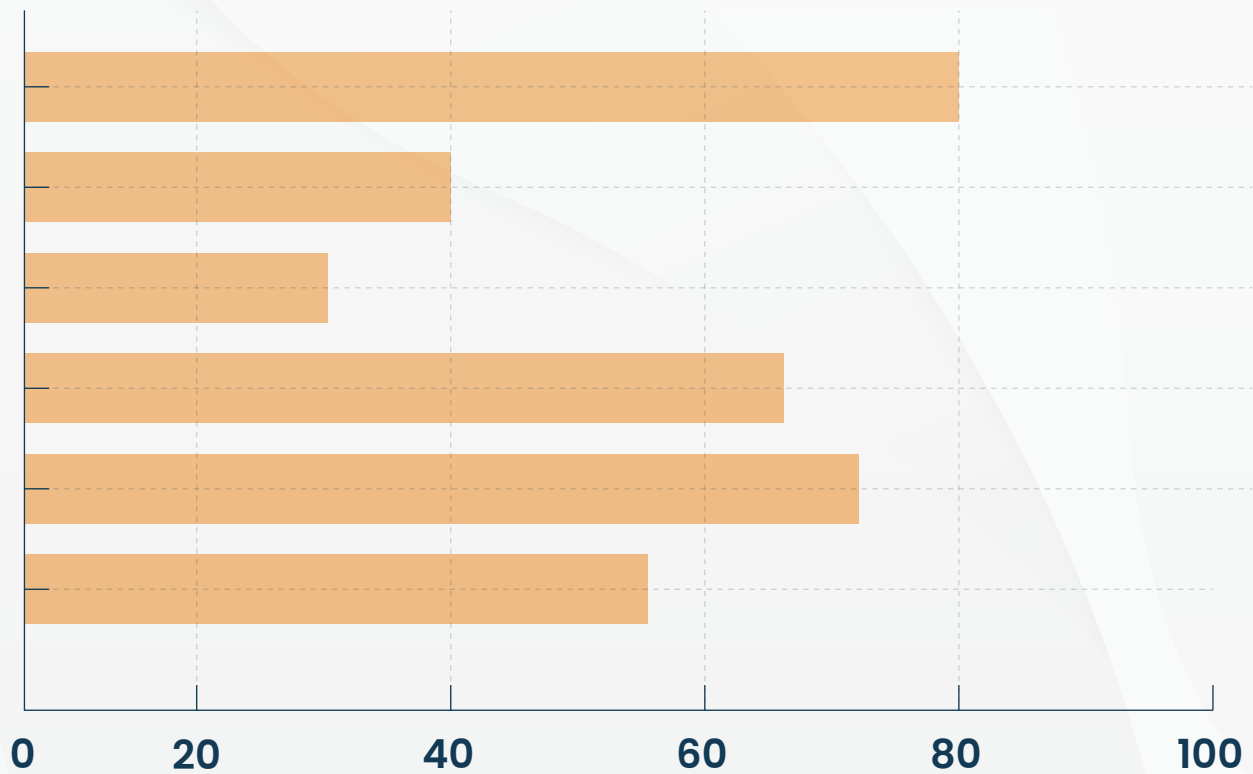
- **Idlib:** A considerable segment of the population (32%) resides in damaged buildings, while 14% are housed in camps or unfinished structures, necessitating urgent shelter interventions.

- **Aleppo:** Shelter needs are severe, with 45% of the population living in damaged buildings and 20% in inadequate or substandard housing conditions.
- **Hama:** Approximately 40% of residents are living in partially damaged buildings, underscoring the urgent need for structural rehabilitation.
- **Tartus:** Although shelter conditions are relatively stable, 10% of the population continues to live in unfinished buildings, indicating a need for targeted support.
- **Latakia:** The region faces moderate shelter challenges, with 25% of residents living in damaged buildings and 12% in tents or unfinished structures.
- **Homs:** The most critical shelter needs are observed in Homs, where 50% of the population resides in damaged buildings and 25% in precarious housing conditions.

Given the extent of damage, **shelter rehabilitation** is a priority, particularly in **Homs** and **Aleppo**, where the situation is most acute. **Idlib** also requires immediate action to address hazardous living conditions. Recommended interventions include the rehabilitation of damaged buildings and the provision of temporary shelters for displaced populations living in camps or unfinished structures.

5.4 Food Security:

Population Relying On Intermittent Food Supplies By Governorate (%)



- **Idlib:** Food insecurity affects 56% of the population, calling for increased food aid.
- **Aleppo:** The highest need, with 70% relying on inconsistent food supplies.
- **Hama:** A significant portion (65%) faces food insecurity, highlighting the need for sustainable solutions.
- **Tartus:** Relatively better off, with 30% requiring food assistance.
- **Latakia:** Moderate need, with 40% relying on food support programs.

- **Homs:** The most critical situation, with 80% of residents depending on intermittent food supplies.

Food insecurity is pervasive across all governorates, with Aleppo and Homs showing the most urgent needs. Initiatives should focus on distributing food vouchers, providing emergency food supplies, and developing long-term agricultural programs.

5.5 Protection:

| Identified Need | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Safe spaces for women and girls | 47% |
| Psychosocial Support | 43% |
| Legal Assistance | 10% |

- **Safe Spaces for Women and Girls:** Nearly half of respondents (47%) emphasized the need for safe spaces, highlighting the prevalence of gender-based violence and the urgency of interventions focused on women and girls' safety.

- **Psychosocial Support:** A significant 43% of respondents require psychosocial support, underlining the widespread impact of trauma on individuals and communities. This need is especially critical for children and survivors of violence.

- **Legal Assistance:** Although fewer respondents (10%) highlighted this need, access to legal aid is essential for resolving disputes, obtaining documentation, and protecting human rights.

The protection sector shows pressing needs across all regions. Interventions should prioritize creating safe spaces, particularly for women and girls, while scaling up psychosocial support programs. Legal assistance services must also be integrated to address the specific needs of vulnerable populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON KEY FINDINGS



1. Security Interventions

- **Strengthen Law Enforcement:**

In regions with high security risks, such as Aleppo, Homs, Tartus, and Latakia, prioritizing law enforcement capacity building is critical. This includes increasing the presence of trained security personnel, particularly in conflict-prone and newly liberated areas.

- **Establish Community Safety Programs:**

Launch community-driven safety initiatives and awareness programs to mitigate risks related to theft, armed violence, and communal tensions.

- **Support GBV Prevention and Response:**

Since gender-based violence is a growing concern, establish specialized GBV response units, strengthen referral mechanisms, and ensure access to psychosocial and legal support services.

2. Education

- **School Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Development:**

Focus on reconstructing and rehabilitating damaged schools, particularly in Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, where enrollment rates are low due to displacement and inadequate facilities.

- **Introduce Mobile Schools:**

Deploy mobile schools in areas with high displacement, such as Homs and Hama, to ensure continuous education for displaced children.

- **Promote Enrollment Campaigns:**

Design targeted campaigns to increase school enrollment, particularly in Aleppo and Hama, by addressing barriers to education such as poverty and movement restrictions.

- **Teacher Training and Support:**

Provide training for teachers to improve the quality of education and introduce psychosocial support programs for students who have experienced trauma.

3. Shelter Solutions

- **Immediate Shelter Support:**

Provide temporary shelter solutions, such as tents and prefabricated homes, for displaced populations in Idlib, Aleppo, and Homs, where a significant percentage of residents live in damaged or unfinished buildings.

- **Rehabilitation of Damaged Structures:**

Initiate large-scale rehabilitation of partially damaged buildings in Hama, Aleppo, and Homs. Engage local contractors and laborers to accelerate the process and create employment opportunities.

- **Support Vulnerable Groups:**

Prioritize shelter support for vulnerable populations, including women-headed households, people with disabilities, and displaced families.

4. Food Security

- **Emergency Food Aid Distribution:**

Scale up food aid distribution in regions with the highest levels of food insecurity, such as Homs, Aleppo, and Hama, where over 65% of the population relies on intermittent food supplies.

- **Introduce Food Voucher Programs:**

Implement food voucher or cash assistance programs to provide families with flexibility in accessing food, particularly in regions like Idlib and Latakia.

- **Promote Agricultural Livelihoods:**

Support long-term food security by investing in agricultural programs, including the distribution of seeds, tools, and fertilizers, as well as training for farmers in sustainable farming practices.

5. Protection

- **Establish Additional Safe Spaces:**

Since 47% of respondents identified the need for safe spaces, prioritize the establishment of Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) in all governorates, particularly in high-risk areas like Aleppo, Homs, and Idlib.

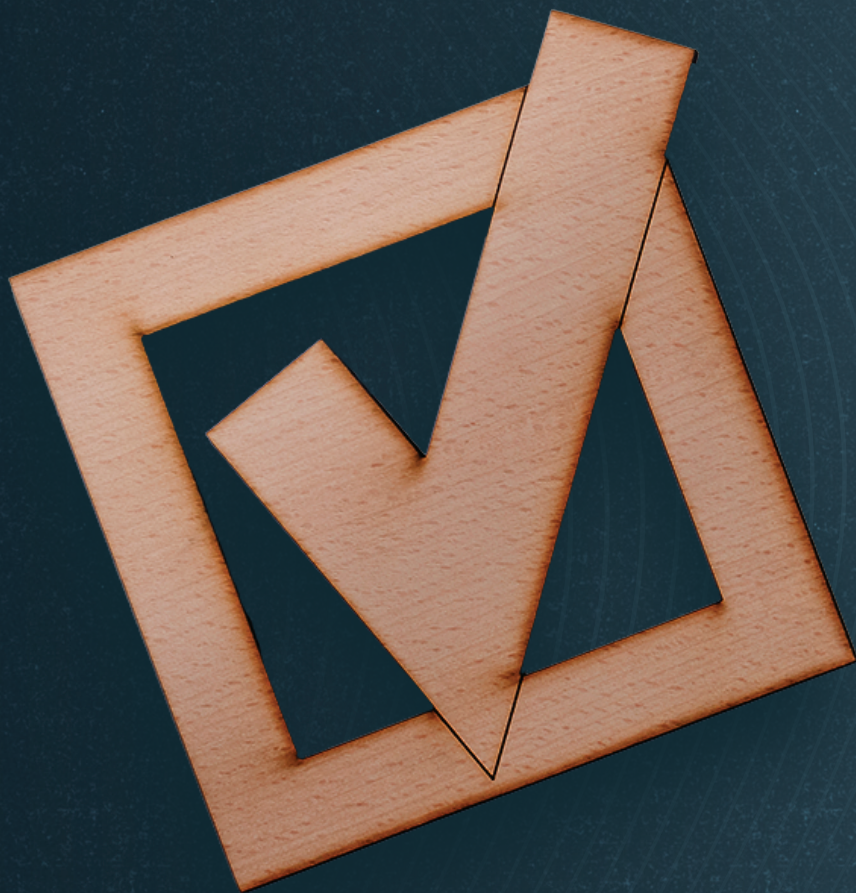
- **Expand Psychosocial Support Services:**

Given the high demand for psychosocial support (43%), scale up mobile and fixed psychosocial support services to reach affected communities, focusing on children, GBV survivors, and displaced populations.

- **Legal Assistance Programs:**

Enhance access to legal aid by setting up legal assistance centers in key locations. These centers should assist individuals with documentation, legal disputes, and protection of human rights.

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS



1- Ensure Gender Sensitivity:

All interventions should integrate gender-sensitive approaches, ensuring that women, girls, and vulnerable populations are included in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs.

2- Strengthen Coordination with Humanitarian Actors:

Collaborate with local and international organizations to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of efforts. Establish a centralized database to track and coordinate humanitarian assistance.

3- Increase Funding and Advocacy:

Advocate for increased donor funding to address critical gaps in food security, shelter, protection, and education. Present data-driven evidence from the rapid needs assessment to mobilize support.

4-Monitor and Evaluate Interventions:

Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the effectiveness of interventions, gather feedback from beneficiaries, and make data-informed adjustments to programs.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the rapid needs assessment conducted by Equity and Empowerment from December 21 to 30, 2024, highlight the significant and multifaceted challenges faced by communities across Syria. After 14 years of conflict, compounded by worsening economic conditions and limited humanitarian assistance, the population remains in dire need of support in key sectors, including **security, shelter, food security, education, and protection**. The assessment underscores the critical need for immediate and coordinated interventions to address these urgent humanitarian priorities. Regions such as **Homs, Aleppo, and Idlib** emerged as high-priority areas, requiring urgent action to mitigate the severe impacts of conflict, displacement, and inadequate basic services. Specific vulnerabilities of women and girls, especially with regard to **gender-based violence (GBV)**, further emphasize the necessity of expanding protection services and creating safe spaces. Additionally, the need for sustainable solutions, such as livelihood programs and agricultural initiatives, is crucial for long-term resilience.

Equity and Empowerment remains committed to supporting vulnerable populations by providing data-driven and community-centered solutions. Through continued collaboration with humanitarian actors, local stakeholders, and donors, we aim to deliver effective, sustainable, and gender-sensitive interventions to alleviate suffering, restore dignity, and foster resilience among the affected communities. This assessment serves as a foundation for advocacy, resource mobilization, and evidence-based response planning to better serve the needs of those most impacted by this protracted crisis.

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If we would



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