

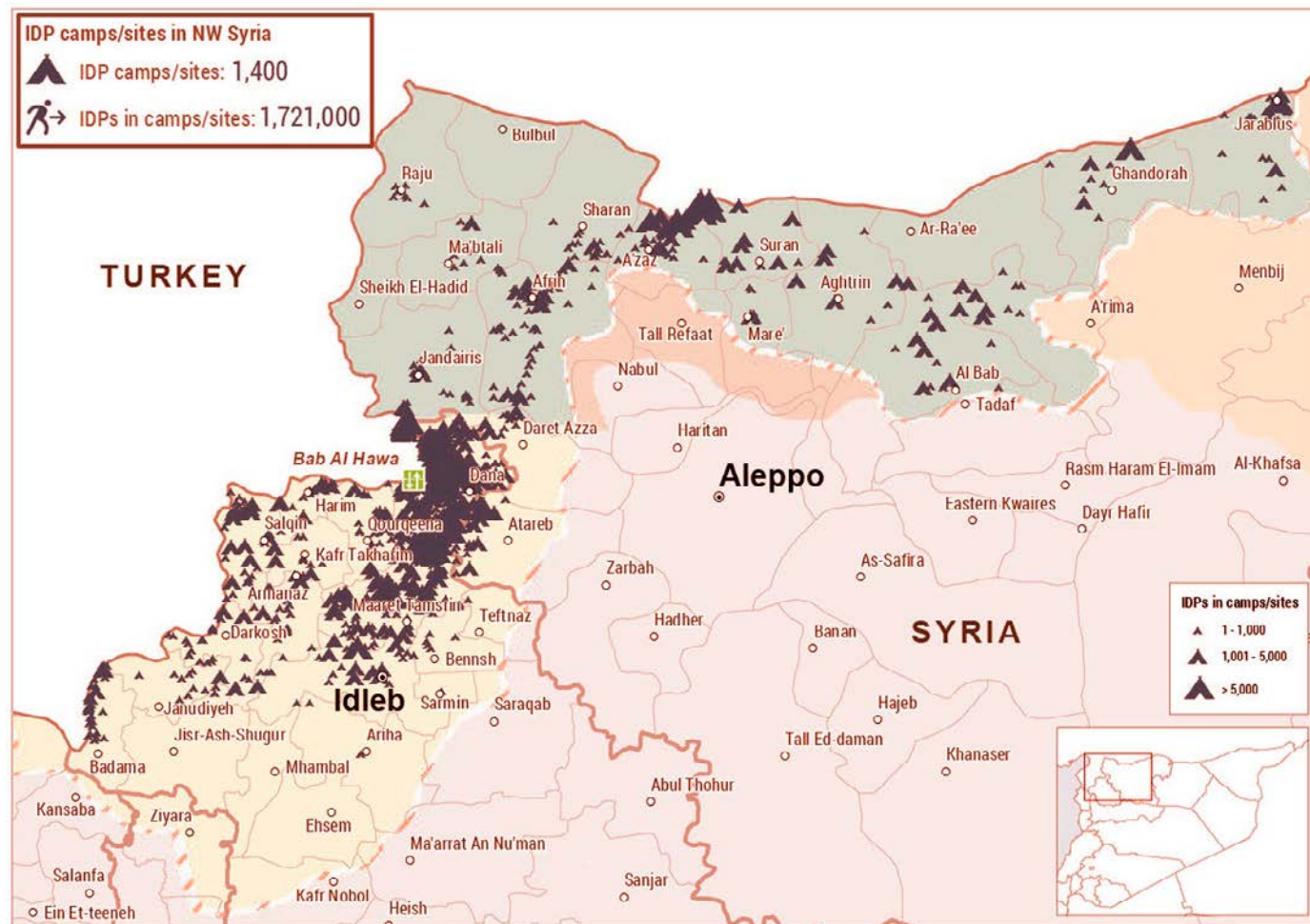


NORTHWEST SYRIA

Situation update
Dramatic education crisis

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Situation Update - Dramatic Education Crisis



Highlights

- ◆ Northwest Syria hosts 2.8M Internally Displaced People (IDPs), of which **1.7M are school-aged children**.
- ◆ The education situation has worsened dramatically since 2019. In Idlib province alone, where our center Ma'an is located, an estimated **60% of children are out of school**.
- ◆ Most parents want their children to get an education: for our center Ma'an - with a capacity of 70 due to covid protocol -, Still I Rise has received more than 1,500 applications for children between 10 to 15 years of age.
- ◆ Latest assessments show that **nine out of ten people live in extreme poverty** and almost half of the population do not have access to safe water sources.
- ◆ COVID-19 Delta variant is mercilessly striking the area. The number of confirmed cases has doubled in a month.

Education services have severely deteriorated

Children in northwest Syria are starting a new school year, but less than half of them will actually be able to go to class.

The reasons behind this situation are complex and manifold, but our team in the field points to the lack of economic resources dedicated to tackle this aspect of the crisis, even by the humanitarian community.

According to the latest information Still I Rise had access to, in **Idlib province**, where Ma'an school is located, around 60% of the school-aged children do not have access to education. Public schools have limited capacity and there are not enough

places for both IDPs and host community children. As a result, **even those enrolled are attending in shifts of 2 to 3 hours a day**. Moreover, the public schools network runs with insufficient human resources working for meager salaries, if they are even paid. There are only 1,200 active teachers in Idlib and one third of them do not receive a regular salary.

Students of secondary school are the most at risk of school drop-out

due to the lack of public and humanitarian funds for this population. Indeed, the education sector - and funding allocated to it - is mainly focused on the primary education of children up to 4th grade (9 years old). Not only do secondary schools



Atmeh camps. On the borders with Turkey.

receive less international funding, but their teaching staff is the most affected by the lack of budget. **Two-thirds of teachers that have been working without compensation are secondary school teachers¹**, further compromising the quality of the education provided.

Additional factors contribute to the low enrollment of children in Northwest Syria. Families are coping with 10 years of war, multiple displacements and a deepening economic crisis. As a result, most of the families cannot afford the cost of

sending their children to school. COVID-19 poses an additional threat in overcrowded classes without ventilation and proper WASH systems. Moreover, the area has undergone a **military escalation** in recent weeks, compromising the safety of the schools and even the commute between the school and the camps where most of the children live.

Provision of education and safe learning spaces is paramount for children's protection. Short-term and restricted support to the education system in Northwestern Syria



Ali Bin Abi Taleb school. Daret Azzeh Village.

¹ OCHA Situation Report No. 29 - July 2021

is putting children at risk, undermining a whole generation's literacy levels and increasing their psychosocial distress. Early abandonment of education jeopardizes children's safety as it immediately exposes them to other risks and forms of abuse like child labour and arranged marriage combined with early pregnancy. The ripple effect continues into adulthood as quality of life diminishes and opportunities narrow for early school leavers.

A deepening humanitarian crisis

The Syrian Army's military offensive on Idlib in the summer of 2019 provoked the biggest displacement catastrophe since the beginning of the war². The ceasefire agreement of March 2020 led to a temporary period of relative stability until the military escalation of recent weeks brought more people to the area. As yet, neither development initiatives nor humanitarian assistance have increased to meet the needs of an overcrowded and devastated area.

More than 1.5 million people in Idlib

and Aleppo provinces live in "catastrophic need", the acutest level in the humanitarian scale. That means no reliable access to shelter, safe water, food, health and psycho-social support. Approximately, 80% of this displaced population in northwest Syria are women and children. Dana, where Still I Rise's school is located, has the third highest rate of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria.

Displaced populations living in camps survive in inhumane conditions, usually in self-made tents in the middle of desolated spaces far from any kind of basic services and infrastructures. Even **humanitarian assistance is bound by the political and military interests of the opposing sides**: there is only one active border-crossing in the whole of Syria to supply humanitarian assistance through Turkey, and the first humanitarian convoy since 2017 only recently reached Idlib from Government-held areas.

The Syrian population also has to deal with a profound economic crisis that has devalued the national currency and destroyed even more

² "It's the fastest growing displacement we have ever seen in the country," Jens Laerke from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for Reuters. (February 11, 2020 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-un-idUSKBN2051MA>)



Destroyed school inhabited by IDPs in Binnish village.

jobs. More than half of the IDP households had to take on more debt since their displacement in early 2020 as they do not have access to income or livelihood opportunities. Amid a health crisis, about one million people in north-west Syria do not have access to clean water and sanitation services. Less than half of the population in displacement sites have access to soap, water and handwashing facilities.

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