

Scenarios

Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP)

May 2014

Scenarios are a description of situations that could occur; a set of informed assumptions about a development that may require humanitarian action to support strategic planning, create awareness, provide early warning and promote preparedness activities for those working on the Syria crisis. The document covers 6 scenarios for Syria that are considered possible in the next 6 months.

Overview

Baseline: Continuation of the conflict with increased focus on geographically strategic areas

 Almost certain to occur within next 6 months

 Important humanitarian impact*

Summary The conflict persists and humanitarian situation continues to degrade, with basic services becoming increasingly unavailable and severe protection concerns increasing.

Possible triggers All parties to the conflict continue to receive funds, logistical support, intelligence and weapons from allied state and non-state actors and support levels do not significantly change.

Drought in northern Syria

 Almost certain to occur within next 6 months

 Major humanitarian impact*

Summary Agricultural production and related income generation opportunities are significantly affected, leading to an increase in the number of people facing acute food insecurity.

Possible triggers Below average rainfall results in a decreased flow of rivers and decreasing ground water tables which in turn results in widespread water scarcity in large areas of north-eastern Syria.

Government takes full control of Aleppo City

 Likely to occur within next 6 months

 Important humanitarian impact*

Summary The Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) gains control of the industrial city of Aleppo and the eastern part of Aleppo city including Bostan al

Qasr. Although supply of goods and service provision from GoS-controlled areas increases, it does not fully compensate for the disruption to supply from Turkey: major gaps remain until infrastructure is restored in the city.

Possible triggers The SAF takes control of the northern supply routes to Aleppo and proceeds to seize control of the whole city.

Cholera Outbreak

 Possible to occur within next 6 months

 Major humanitarian impact*

Summary The deteriorating WASH situation gives rise to a cholera outbreak. Limited resources and humanitarian space to respond result in high levels of morbidity and displacement from affected areas.

Possible triggers Foreign carrier in addition to significant deterioration of the WASH situation in highly affected areas.

ISIL takes control of most of northern Syria, except Kurdish areas

 Unlikely to occur within next 6 months

 Major humanitarian impact*

Summary ISIL consolidates control of areas such as Ar-Raqqa and Jarablus (Aleppo). Severe protection concerns are reported, while humanitarian space is extremely limited.

Possible triggers Both Islamic Front and SAF focus primarily on strategic locations along the Aleppo–Damascus axis, giving ISIL space to expand and gain control of resource-rich areas.

Significant displacement occurs in Damascus City and suburbs as a result of increased local conflict

 Possible to occur within next 6 months

 Important humanitarian impact*

Summary A significant increase in fighting around Damascus city prompts significant displacement, within the governorate as well as to Lebanon and Jordan.

Possible triggers Either opposition groups launch an offensive to take the southern and eastern outskirts of central Damascus, or the SAF launch an offensive to remove opposition fighters from eastern and western Ghouta.

**Humanitarian impact is a measure of how the humanitarian situation deteriorates due to the scenario assumptions.*

Scenario 1: Baseline - Continuation of the conflict with increased focus specific strategic geographical areas

Probability level				
Impact level				

Summary: This baseline scenario assumes conflict continues with pockets of sustained high-intensity fighting but no major changes in the balance of power occur, despite gains by the GoS in the central and southern regions. Opposition groups continue to fight the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) along the main highway linking Syria's major urban centres, from Aleppo to Dar'a while fighting between armed groups, including between Al-Qaeda affiliated groups and Kurdish forces, continues in the east and north of the country. Intense fighting around frontlines (including Dar'a, Rural Damascus, Homs and Aleppo) continues, leading to large-scale new displacement and ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The number of people in need increases significantly due to barriers to access humanitarian assistance and economic resources, reduction in agricultural production, scarcity of employment opportunities, associated drop in purchasing power, and eroded coping mechanisms.

Assumptions

- **Conflict dynamics:** All parties to the conflict continue to receive funds, logistical support, intelligence and weapons from allied state and non-state actors and support levels do not significantly change. No international military intervention takes place. International and national peace efforts fail to achieve intended aims. The June elections have little impact.
- The conflict continues throughout most of Syria with pockets of intense fighting between SAF and opposition groups along 3 main strategic frontlines in the south (Dar'a and Damascus/Rural Damascus), the central region (Homs) and North (Aleppo). Opposition groups also reinforce the offensive in the east of the country, in and around the Lattakia mountains. Despite localised gains there is no major change to the overall balance of power.
- Infighting between armed opposition groups continues around key border areas and supply lines and along existing fault lines, such as between ISIL and non-ISIL opposition forces and Kurdish armed groups. ISIL loses ground to other opposition groups in rural Eastern Aleppo.
- In GoS-controlled areas, localised attacks, including suicide bombings and mortar shelling, continue. Sporadic suicide attacks also occur in opposition-held areas, mostly launched by ISIL.

- **Fragmentation v unification:** Opposition groups continue to divide and shift alliances with most alliances superficial and fragile. Between opposition groups attempts at unification take place mainly to fight ISIL, but increased fragmentation is seen between main political forces particularly along the lines of their diverging views on peace-negotiations with the GoS.
- **Cross-border measures:** Sporadic security incidents continue to occur; triggering limited ad-hoc military response from, and more frequent border closures by, the Government of Turkey. Following the GoS takeover of the Qalamoun region, the Syrian-Lebanon border is more tightly controlled by authorities on both sides of the border. More restrictive immigration policies are adopted, limiting the influx of refugees to Lebanon resulting in the growth of existing camps and informal settlements on the Syrian side of the border and increased immigration into Lebanon through illegal border crossings. The number of formal and informal settlements increases particularly along the border with Turkey. Along the Jordanian-Syrian border both informal tented settlements and organised camps are established. Increased targeting of civilians by aerial shelling occurs especially in areas with high IDP concentration, with the likelihood of mass casualties in IDP camps/settlements. Attacks on camps potentially lead to large refugee flows, leading to possible difficulties in crossing the border into Turkey.
- Limited UN cross-border action and continued constraints on cross-lines activities result in on-going difficulties in meeting the basic needs of the affected population. In addition, the limited UN advocacy for access for NGOs, and limited reach of UN presence countrywide, is insufficient to provide the logistical and 'protective umbrella' required for NGOs to scale-up their response to reach more people in need.
- **Funding:** decreased levels of funding, as the conflict drags on, impact humanitarian operations with a shift towards small-grant funding and development programming increasing the competition among NGOs and focusing on high-severity areas, while the breakdown of infrastructure and local administration in some areas puts heavy pressure on humanitarian actors to engage in providing basic services.
- Limited reconstruction efforts occur but do not significantly improve the overall humanitarian situation.

Projected Impact:

- **National:** By the end of 2014, most of the population remaining in Syria is in need of humanitarian assistance, with a significant majority in need of life-saving assistance. Those most affected are concentrated in areas under siege; heavily contested areas; and areas hosting a large number of IDPs.

- Localised, rapid displacement related to specific events, including use of heavy weaponry and barrel bombing and coordinated offensives on strategic areas, takes place. People are forced to flee not only conflict incidents, but also because of a lack of access to basic services, with increasing occurrences of populations trapped between fault lines unable to flee violence such as in Quneitra, Dar'a, Homs and Aleppo, and border areas in the south.
- Livelihoods are further disrupted due to continued erosion of the economic and administrative infrastructure, increasing inflation, on-going conflict and the effect of drought-like conditions, which severely reduce agricultural production. Agricultural production drops significantly to as low as 1.5 million tonnes (compared to 4 million tonnes average for 10 years prior to 2011) due to a lack of inputs during the planting season in October 2013 and insecurity hampering harvest and trade. The population relies heavily on black market activities and the war economy, including corruption and smuggling. An increased percentage of the population is solely dependent on humanitarian assistance. Non-state actors establish patronage systems for those supporting their political and ideological objectives, leading to a further breakdown of the rule of law and societal norms. Families resort to harmful coping strategies as resources are depleted. Early marriage, child recruitment, child labour, survival sex and trafficking increase.
- Access to water is of significant concern with many people lacking access to potable water due to water shortages and a widespread breakdown of water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, which result in the spread of communicable diseases.
- The health infrastructure is further depleted and vaccination coverage is at critical levels in areas that are hard to reach, besieged and subject to high-intensity conflict. There is a severe shortage of qualified medical staff and medical supplies. Localised outbreaks of communicable diseases, including typhoid and measles, occur. Cases of child and maternal malnutrition are increasingly reported throughout the country, although there is limited capacity to properly identify and respond to malnutrition.
- The besiegement of populated areas is widely used as a military tactic with food and medical supplies blocked either by GoS or opposition forces. Some local truces are negotiated in besieged areas in Rural Damascus, which results in limited returns of civilian population. However, most of the contested areas remain under a semi-siege situation as the entry of aid and food remains limited and goods are scrutinised at checkpoints. The widespread SAF military operations coupled with tight besiegement in and around Damascus force opposition groups to establish some temporary truces, under which part of the civilian population is able to evacuate from contested areas and limited amounts of humanitarian aid are allowed in. Men and boys will be at high risk for arrest, detention, torture and enforced disappearance.
- Continued use of heavy weaponry results in an increased number of injuries and casualties as well as high levels of destruction of shelters and infrastructure. There is significant increase of protection concerns reported specifically for minority groups and populations under siege.
- Shelter and basic household needs is a severe concern for those displaced into communities that have a decreased ability to support guest populations.
- **GoS-controlled areas:** In most areas the population are distanced from the conflict and enjoy relatively stable access to basic services. As a result, these areas witness an influx of IDPs from contested areas increasing demand for shelter: high rents and become key issues while schools hosting IDPs are no longer available for educational purposes. The number of both informal and formal tented settlements increases.
- Displacement from GoS-controlled areas is limited and intermittent following attacks by armed groups.
- Agricultural production in GoS-controlled areas, mainly located in Lattakia, are primarily affected due to the inability to market produce outside of GoS-controlled areas. Loss of inputs and damage to infrastructure is limited compared to opposition-controlled areas.
- **Opposition-controlled and contested areas:** A significant part of the infrastructure in opposition-controlled and contested areas is damaged or destroyed. In addition, the disruption of services due to absence of functional governance structures is affecting electricity supply, sanitation and solid waste management. Major disease outbreaks occur in opposition-controlled areas.
- Agricultural production is hampered due to the drought-like conditions and lack of inputs. Supply routes are often blocked, making the distribution of goods in opposition-controlled areas more difficult. The destruction of infrastructure and factories and the high manufacturing costs results in further reduction of production. Salaries paid by armed groups are one of the most important sources of income in addition to informal cross-border trade.
- Shortages of food and medicines lead to the spreading of diseases and increased malnutrition. Treatment of the injured is hampered.
- Because of radicalisation around ethnic and religious affiliations, serious protection issues are likely to affect the population specifically in the north and the east. Lack of law and order in areas where local authority has not

been maintained result in significant numbers of retaliations, arbitrary arrest and detention, summary executions, revenge killings, sectarian violence, and an intensification of gender based violence and human rights violations.

- Arbitrary detention and kidnapping of political opponents or those perceived to have allegiance to particular groups is widespread among armed groups.
- Radicalisation of communities erodes social solidarity and reduces community resilience, which has been one of the main coping mechanisms of the population to date, resulting in significantly increased numbers of people in acute need of humanitarian assistance.
- **Kurdish areas:** Fighting between ISIL and Kurdish groups causes intermittent displacement into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) or to other Kurdish areas within Syria.
- The conflict situation stabilises in some Kurdish areas, somewhat improving the overall humanitarian access situation and reducing severity of needs. As a result of the relative stability, trade resumes on a small-scale despite access constraints-slightly improving access to livelihood opportunities. As these areas are considered to be relatively safer-the number of IDPs increases.
- However, insecurity, lack of access to the markets, lack of basic agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and seeds, continue to pose serious threats to farmers' ability to produce food, affecting food security.
- **Regional level:** As the refugee crisis continues and funding levels are not sufficient to address the growing needs, the humanitarian situation deteriorates in host countries. Syrian refugees in Lebanon in particular face acute shelter needs, while those in Jordan and Iraq face shelter problems due to high rents, which also exacerbate tensions with local communities. Resources of refugees residing outside camps are depleted and, lacking sufficient support, refugees are forced to relocate to the overcrowded camps or informal tented settlements where possible or to return to 'safer areas' inside Syria.
- Border regulations of the host countries are increasingly restrictive as are policies in the host communities related to the legal rights of residence and employment of refugees. The number of people fleeing to neighbouring countries decreases gradually due to increasing restrictions at the border and decreasing tolerance by host communities and governments, parallel to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in host countries.
- Border monitoring hampers the supply of goods entering through smuggling routes.

Humanitarian Access

- With increasingly restrictive border policies coupled with insecurity and increasing violence against humanitarian actors, access is seriously limited, hampering the provision of aid to contested and besieged areas. Access is mostly limited to areas reachable through Damascus or those in the direct proximity to operating border crossings. As a result, aid is primarily provided to those in GoS-controlled areas and those in formal camps and informal settlements along the borders. Access to the population in Homs improves, as actors operating from Damascus are able to reach civilians in Homs city after GoS takes control of the area. Populations in the east of the country such as in Deir-ez-Zor, continue to be cut off from assistance for several consecutive months.
- Access to Iraq, Jordan and Turkey remains severely restricted with only occasional openings of crossing points allowing for humanitarian convoys. These cross-border aid distributions however remain limited to areas in close proximity to the border areas. With prevailing insecurity along the borders with Turkey, border crossings are more frequently closed, leading to an increased number of extremely vulnerable and exposed civilians along the border without protection.
- Fragmentation of control and restrictions imposed by armed groups on humanitarian actors hamper the access of aid, especially in opposition-held and Kurdish areas. Areas controlled by ISIL are almost inaccessible to international organisations. SARC and local organisations have limited access.
- Local truces are a key element in negotiating access to long-term besieged areas. However supplies and quantities of assistance are strictly regulated and insufficient to meet the needs of the affected populations. In addition, most truces are short-lived.
- Powerful groups and actors increasingly interfere with delivery modalities and content of assistance, including for sporadic convoys, significantly limiting effective response.
- Access to Damascus-based warehouses and supply routes is sporadically blocked.
- Insufficient levels of funding hamper operations. Donors are less likely to channel funds to operations in areas under control of Al-Qaeda related groups.

Priority Concerns

- The provision of food, access to water, health and other essential assistance by humanitarian actors to besieged, hard to reach and contested areas continues to be high priority.
- The lack of protection against the continuous violation of human rights is of grave concern.
- Overcrowded shelters and communities hosting IDPs require urgent contingency shelter interventions.
- Improved monitoring and disease surveillance are a priority to detect and prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases such as measles. Areas with limited access are key for vaccination efforts.
- Provision of clean water to areas experiencing water shortages and lack of access to water treatment are further key to prevent WASH related diseases.
- Early recovery, including livelihood support, in areas expected to remain relatively unaffected by the conflict.

Scenario 2: Drought in northern Syria

Probability level				
Impact level				

Summary: Due to below average rainfall, agricultural production areas experience conditions similar to the large-scale drought from 2008. Poor rainfall, decreased flow of rivers and decreasing ground water table results in widespread water scarcity in large areas of north-eastern Syria. The agricultural production and wheat production falls to as low as 1 million metric tonnes, severely increasing acute food insecurity in Syria and overstressing the capacity of humanitarian actors to deliver sufficient quantities of assistance.

Assumptions

- Due to below average rainfall, agricultural production areas experience conditions similar to the large-scale drought from 2008. The conflict and lack of inputs have damaged the irrigation infrastructure to the extent that irrigation cannot be used as an alternative in previously rain-fed areas.
- High levels of conflict continue in Syria, including in areas affected by the drought.
- While remote monitoring highlights the existence of the drought, the extent of the water shortages remains unclear in many areas hard to reach. As a result, the on-going humanitarian response is slow to integrate a drought response, which results in increased severity of needs, thus exacerbating food insecurity among vulnerable populations.

Projected Impact

- The drought compounds the already severe humanitarian crisis in the north west of the country (Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Ar-Raqqa, southern al-Hassakeh, Quneitra and areas of Deir-ez-Zor away from the Euphrates River)
- **Displacement:** Opportunities to migrate, the traditional drought coping mechanism, are limited and displacement takes place primarily to less preferred areas of resettlement. During the 2008 drought most people migrated to urban areas and southern agricultural lands in Rural Damascus in Aleppo in search of income generating opportunities. However, the high levels of conflict in these areas and the retreat of the country's industry to the coastal areas and neighbouring countries hamper access to livelihoods. However, some displacement is witnessed from affected areas, primarily to areas unaffected by the drought.

- **WASH:** Poor rainfall, decreased river flow and decreasing ground water table results in widespread water scarcity in large areas of north-eastern Syria. Wells have either dried up or require much more time and cost to enable them as water sources. In addition to its scarcity, the water quality deteriorates. Well water is increasingly contaminated with salts and nitrite, rendering it inadequate for human consumption. As a result, wells are left neglected and out of use. Conflict, insecurity and access constraints hamper the establishment of new wells to address the existing water shortages. Inhabitants of many villages depend on water trucking by the GoS or through private contractors (at a charge). In many cases, however, the quality of water trucked privately is below acceptable standards. Shortages of potable water and the great distances to the nearest available source are forcing many families to revert to unsafe water from wells or ponds for their daily use.
- **Health:** Malnutrition is the main health problem resulting from the continued drought, which in turn is expected to weaken child immunity, hence increasing their susceptibility to communicable diseases. As a result, there is a marked increase in the cases of diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and anaemia increasing the susceptibility to measles. Drought exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and increased cases of mortality are witnessed.
- School attendance further decreases, with children forced into labour to support affected households.
- **Food security & Livelihoods:** Lack of livelihoods increases the dependency on humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable populations especially in areas still reliant, despite the conflict, on agricultural production, where the population face a significant decrease in livelihoods. In besieged areas where the population survives on agriculture, starvation is witnessed.
- Decreased water and grazing resources for households dependent on livestock result in further loss of livelihood opportunities. Increased deaths of livestock are reported.
- The lack of local production results in an increased reliance on markets for households as well as an increased dependency on cereal imports.
- Although global wheat prices in 2014 are likely to fall by 11%, due to high stock levels, civil unrest in Ukraine, an important source of wheat for Syria, leads to higher prices for imported wheat.
- The lack of a durable response to address the impact on agriculture affects Syria's capacity to produce wheat and barley in the long term.

- Rising food prices have been the main driver of inflation since violence started to escalate in 2012, prospect of lower production and increased reliance on imports is likely to push up food inflation once more in 2014.
- **Protection:** Hunger will lead to an increase in harmful coping mechanisms including the sale of girls into early marriage, child labour, survival sex, and possibly an increase in trafficking.

Humanitarian Access

- Until a drought is officially confirmed by the GoS it will not have a significant impact on humanitarian access, which will remain difficult in many drought affected areas in the north, particularly in hard to access areas in Aleppo, Idlib and in Al-Hasakeh.
- Even if drought is proclaimed, heavy fighting and the proliferation of armed groups in the affected areas hamper an effective response and the delivery of life-saving food assistance to these areas is prioritised over the drought response.
- The increased reliance on imports underlines the continued need for cross-border trade and access.
- The lack of funding (WFP has reduced the size of its food parcels by 20% in response to higher demand and a shortfall in funding) further decreases the nutritional intake of vulnerable populations and elevates food insecurity.

Priority Concerns

- Adopting a cross-cutting approach to mitigate the drought impact including a wide range of inputs (e.g. cultural, socio-economic, etc.)
- Provision of food rations and agricultural inputs
- Provision of potable water and support to water treatment plants support for chlorination
- Extend and strengthen the nutrition surveillance and response
- Ensuring access of farmers in rain-fed areas to seeds of local varieties of drought-tolerant wheat and barley and other potential crops for the upcoming cropping season
- Sustaining the remaining asset base of vulnerable small-scale herders through provision of animal feed to most destitute ones;
- Assist in crop diversification and water and soil appropriate management;
- Supporting creation of new income sources for most vulnerable farmers and herders, which could be agriculture or non-agriculture base;

- Assisting in building GoS capacity to implement the prepared drought mitigation strategy and early warning system;
- Assisting IDPs in re-starting their livelihoods in the areas of origin.

Scenario 3: Government takes full control of Aleppo City

Probability level				
Impact level				

Summary: The SAF takes control of the northern supply routes to Aleppo and proceeds to seize control on the whole city. The return of IDPs to the east remains constrained by the lack of the rehabilitation of infrastructure. The population in eastern Aleppo is highly dependent on the supply routes from Damascus and on the public services provided in western Aleppo.

Assumptions

- The GoS gains control of the major supply routes to the east of the city linking opposition-held areas with Turkish borders taking control of the industrial city of Aleppo and ensuring control of the eastern part of Aleppo City including Bostan al Qasr, the only crossing between the two areas of control.
- Barrel bombing and air strikes thus cease on the eastern part of the city resulting in small-scale returns of the IDPs to the eastern part of the city.
- Due to the high level of damage of infrastructure, significant rehabilitation efforts are required to re-establish functional electricity and water and health systems in Eastern Aleppo. Until then, the population residing in eastern Aleppo is reliant on services in other parts of the city.
- Once controlled by the GoS, the eastern part of the city is no longer able to rely on cross-border trade and humanitarian aid from Turkey. As a result, the population in the eastern part is fully reliant on GoS-provided or approved goods, services and assistance from Damascus and Lattakia. While traders and humanitarian organisations in GoS-controlled areas are generally able to meet the increased demand for commodities, access to services is of concern, as the already damaged health, water and education infrastructure in the western part of Aleppo city is unable to absorb the additional demand. As the services in Eastern Aleppo were destroyed during air raids, the potential returnees to the east will continue to make use of hospitals in the west.
- Revenge killings, arbitrary arrest and detention and summary executions of those determined to be key opposition supporters will occur.

Projected Impact

- **Return to the east:** Due to IDPs returning to the east, the western part of the city is relatively relieved and overcrowding in the western part will slightly decrease. Still, reliance on the western half of the city will remain paramount as the rehabilitation of infrastructure in the east is taking place, but gradually. However, the extremely limited resources in the east are not able to meet the demand of returnees. People in the eastern part will still rely on sources in the western part to meet their health, food and livelihoods needs – though to a lower extent than before.
- **Access to food:** Markets do not operate to full capacity in the eastern part, where livelihood opportunities and bakeries are significantly more damaged than in the western part. Access to food is dependent on food supplied from the south and from the west, which is susceptible to price speculations by traders. Because trade has not been restored to adequate levels, shortages of food and basic household supplies still occur. However, food prices decrease, as the main land-based supply route is functional.
- **Livelihoods:** Livelihoods opportunities remain largely unavailable, although some small trade activities occur. Overall, heavy reliance on assistance continues.
- **Inadequate shelter:** Due to high infrastructure damage, particularly in Fardoos, Haidariyeh and Hanano, the returnees are forced to live in informal tented settlements and other open spaces, which increases the severity of their immediate shelter needs as well as access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. The stability of the security situation in the eastern neighbourhoods is the key factor determining the number of returns. Up to 700,000 IDPs return from the western neighbourhoods.
- **Water shortages and communicable diseases:** Lack of water and low quality of water is observed in both parts of the city due to pressure on the water supply system resulting in increased prevalence of communicable diseases. Eastern part of the city is particularly affected, due to lack of rehabilitation of the water and health services and inadequate shelters.
- Leishmaniasis is a growing concern; with limited WASH services throughout both parts of the city, the return of IDPs to inadequate shelters, and damaged health infrastructure, cases of Leishmaniasis increase significantly.
- Due to the high concentration of people, hot weather and lack of adequate solid waste management activities, solid waste accumulates in the streets, further increasing the risk of the spread of diseases.

Humanitarian Access

- With the opposition controlling areas north of Aleppo, supply routes into Aleppo city from these areas, including the trade routes and border crossings with Turkey, remain highly inaccessible to traders from Aleppo. Humanitarian aid convoys for Aleppo will highly rely on the transport route from Damascus.
- Access of humanitarian assistance to the city of Aleppo will be highly reliant on Damascus-Aleppo road through As Salamiyeh in Hama governorate. Security on this road is fragile, due to sporadic fighting incidents. This route remains vulnerable to opposition offensives from their pockets of control in Hama.
- Humanitarian access to Aleppo city from the north is limited as opposition forces are tightly controlling areas linking the city with the Turkish borders, affecting transport and trade through the borders.
- As GoS forces gain control of the areas surrounding Aleppo airport, humanitarian assistance can only be airlifted to the area.

Priority Concerns

- Improved access for humanitarian actors to cover the returnee's needs in the east and reduce the pressure on the strained services in the west.
- Restoration of sanitation and water services, including spraying against Leishmaniasis, is key to prevent WASH related diseases.
- Rehabilitation and repair of shelters and infrastructure in the Eastern part is crucial to facilitate IDP returns.
- Provision of medicines and medical equipment and staff as well as early recovery initiatives for health centres to cope with the elevated health needs.

Scenario 4: Cholera Outbreak

Probability level



Impact level

Assumptions

- Following contamination of water sources and lack of water treatment and the entrance of a foreign carrier of the vibro cholerae bacteria, a cholera outbreak emerges.
- The outbreak starts in one of the areas suffering a significant deterioration of the WASH situation, such as the heavily contested areas in the northeast, and spreads to overcrowded areas such as ITS and collective shelters.
- National health services are unable to contain the outbreak, which spreads rapidly throughout the country due to highly dynamic population movements. As a result, a widespread international response is necessary.
- Lack of knowledge on identification of the disease and political sensitivities related to official acknowledgement of an outbreak delays response.

Projected impact

- With breakdown of the traditional health systems coupled with lack of access to clean water and adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities as well as lack of humanitarian access, high morbidity and mortality severely impact the health status of the population.
- Internal displacement from areas where cholera has been identified increases, with limitations of freedom of movement for populations in besieged areas. In addition, movement restrictions for individuals from contaminated areas, confined to areas of outbreak are reported. Once confirmed, less military resources will be deployed to contaminated areas. However, to increase population support, in GoS areas, WASH and health facilities will be reinforced to prevent further outbreaks.
- Neighbouring countries impose complete closure of border crossings including crack-down on illegal border crossings and control of population movements, impacting cross-border trade.
- All health resources are diverted to the cholera prevention & response take away resources for other communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as food security interventions. Overall, resources are diverted to health and WASH interventions.

Humanitarian access

- The outbreak fuels international demand for immediate humanitarian access including cross-border operations, leading to a strong Security Council resolution entailing stronger sanctions.
- Humanitarian access to currently hard to reach areas becomes possible through temporary local truces to allow for health and WASH interventions. Localised truces are negotiated with powerful groups in control to facilitate humanitarian access to affected populations. However access to strategic areas is being used to pressure opponents and the international community.
- More funding becomes available for humanitarian operations, however attention is diverted from immediate, life-saving food aid to health and WASH interventions.

Priority Concerns

- Prepositioning of emergency supplies such as clean water, hygiene kits, hygienic water containers, water purification tablets, chlorine and cholera prevention kits;
- Provision of cholera treatment centres to treat those affected and shelter options for those displaced with adequate WASH cells to prevent spreading of the disease, including installing hand washing stations and improving disinfection procedures.
- Establishment of cholera alert and epidemiology surveillance systems; strengthening disease surveillance and early warning systems, including the diagnostic capacities of the referral laboratories.
- Implementing interventions to improve water and sanitation, providing appropriate treatment to people with cholera and mobilizing communities.
- Health education campaigns to promote appropriate hygiene practices and breastfeeding (while also encouraging people with symptoms to seek immediate health care) coupled with repair of WASH infrastructure.
- Vaccination with Oral Cholera Vaccines in high risk areas.
- Rapid and appropriate rehydration with Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS) and IV fluids for severe cases (cornerstones of cholera patient management).

Regional dimension

- Host countries witness a shift in emphasis to WASH and Health assistance while imposing significant restrictions on border crossings to prevent the spread of the outbreak.
- Monitoring of the outbreak coupled with increased humanitarian access leads to diversion of resources from host countries to tackle the Syria outbreak

Scenario 5: ISIL taking control of most of the north of Syria, with the exception of the Kurdish areas

Probability level	Yellow	Orange	Red	Dark Red
Impact level	Yellow	Orange	Red	Dark Red

Summary: ISIL, after consolidating control of areas such as Ar-Raqqa and Jarablus (Aleppo), launches an offensive from its strongholds against other opposition groups, to obtain control over border crossings between Syria and Turkey and between Syria and Iraq. ISIL is increasingly engaged in fighting Jabhat al Nusra, Islamic Front and the local tribes' forces in Deir-ez-Zor in an attempt to control the main oil fields in the east of Syria and provide its economical independency. ISIL also continues fighting PYD, targeting Kurdish and other minorities in its areas of control.

Assumptions

- ISIL, in an attempt to widen their area of control to northern Aleppo and northern Idleb take control of the remaining 2 main border crossings (Bab al Hawa and Bab al Salama) being used for humanitarian access from Turkey by moving their forces in Menbij, al Bab, Ar Raee and Jarablus toward these areas. The Islamic front is the main rival during this offensive. Heavy fighting with Lewaa al Tawheed (one of the main forces in IF) results in high number of casualties and high level of displacement in the northern rural parts of Aleppo.
- With growing assertion of territorial control ISIL is able to absorb smaller armed groups under the ISIL umbrella. Because of the increased number of fighters joining ISIL, its capacity is significantly strengthened.
- ISIL controls the Eastern Abu Kamal border crossing with Iraq, enabling ease of crossing for fighters. This results in conflict with Iraqi armed forces in Anbar province in Iraq and triggers a limited intervention of Iraqi armed forces on Syrian territory.
- The SAF offensive continues to focus on strategic locations along the Aleppo–Damascus axe and does not attempt to regain control of areas under opposition control in Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh.
- ISIL takes control of oil-fields of Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh, leading to increased conflict with competing armed groups and powerful local tribes. By taking control of the yields of the oil-fields, ISIL achieves economic independence and ensures a stable supply of weapons and supplies, thus

establishing full control of the north eastern arch in Northern Syria and ensuring their capability to maintain the control.

- Heavy conflict in border areas not under control of ISIL continues. Conflict with PYD intensifies in Al Hasakeh in attempt to control strategic towns such as Ras al Ain. PYD support to other FSA groups fighting ISIL in Ain al Arab and the surrounding increases. ISIL tries to control more areas close to Kurdish territories, which leads to PYD moving the battle into areas mainly with Arabic majority population, in order to protect its own strongholds.
- Access for humanitarian actors is extremely limited and only possible in the immediate proximity of the border-crossings with Turkey, mostly serving IDP camps or PYD-controlled areas, but leaving up to 10 million people cut off from assistance.
- Population in Hama becomes isolated from Turkey and cross-border operations. Hama is served through Damascus route only, except of the rural parts under control of opposition such as Kafr Zeita and Suran, which are cut off from assistance.
- The GoS takes full control of Hama as opposition forces concentrate on fighting ISIL over control in the north. Up to 300,000 people are displaced as a result of the GoS offensive in Hama.
- Tight siege/isolation of the Kurdish areas is imposed and violence against minorities in areas under control of ISIL increases, especially against Kurds and Christians. This leads to Kurds and Christians fleeing from towns such as Ar-Raqqa toward areas under control of PYD where a high number of IDPs already reside there, putting more pressure on resources especially in major towns such as Qamishli, Amuda, Derbasiyeh, Ain al Arab and Afrin.
- GoS continues to provide services, personnel and equipment to maintain functioning of Euphrates dam and other main facilities such as the electricity factory in Aleppo in order to maintain its supplies of electricity. The Euphrates dam supplies seven governorates with electricity of which some are under GoS control.

Projected Impact

- **Health:** Shortage of medical supplies further exacerbates acute health problems, particularly in high-needs areas such as Deir-ez-Zor where supply routes are being controlled by ISIL. Vaccination campaigns are restricted and vaccination staff is targeted resulting in an increase of incidence of communicable and vaccine preventable diseases such as polio and measles.

- **WASH:** A deterioration of WASH and health services further impacts the health status of the affected populations as surrounding countries restrict supply and trade through border crossings controlled by ISIL and into ISIL controlled areas. Thus the risk of a major epidemic increases especially as foreign fighters increase among the ranks of ISIL. Decreased amounts of water-purification chlorine available in the North result in people having to depend on unsafe water resources, which lead to major health issues.
- High levels of displacement from major IDP hosting areas such as Azaz, Harim and Dana increase pressure on and competition over resources in Turkey. In the border areas within Syria existing IDP camps are expanded and the number of camps increases. Population with the economic ability to flee is displaced leaving the most vulnerable in the affected communities. An outflow of doctors, technicians and personnel who could maintain services, further impacts access and availability of basic services.
- **Protection:** Increased persecution of minorities, mainly targeting Christians and Kurds results in further forced displacements and increased protection violations, including arbitrary detentions and executions, forced marriages, enforcement of strict codes of behaviour and loss of freedom of movement for the non-displaced population.
- Increased recruitment of children into armed groups is reported.
- Members of civil society, civil movements, activists, academics and political leaders of Local Councils are persecuted and arbitrarily detained and killed.
- **LFS:** Economic opportunities for the local population deteriorate to small scale trade within ISIL controlled areas. Food availability and access to food decreases as ISIL controls all silos and food supplies. ISIL cuts food supplies to areas under control of rivals, further imposing policies of besiegement. The main livelihood opportunity remains the local refining of oil. Some individuals join armed groups in order to access income and/or basic goods.
- **Education:** Closure of universities, secondary schools and other functional learning spaces, together with enforced radicalisation of curriculum and training in schools, as well as exclusion of girls from education, severely disrupts education in affected areas.

Humanitarian Access

- Humanitarian space decreases, cutting off assistance to areas facing life-threatening problems existing due to lack of access to food, health care, and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

- Humanitarian operations face difficulties finding funding from institutional donors with the expansion of extremist control. Restrictions on humanitarian programming are imposed from both ISIL and humanitarian donors.
- Local actors, Local Council, NGOs and other actors are prevented from providing services and humanitarian assistance in ISIL controlled areas if they do not comply with ISIL policies.

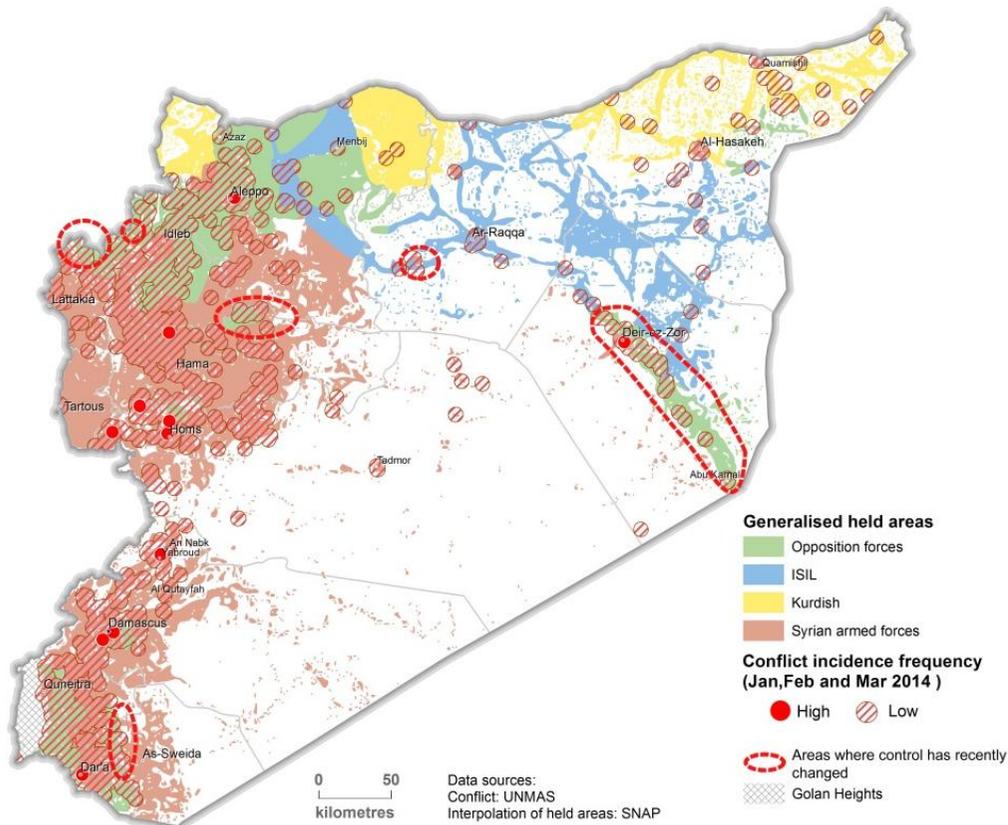
Regional Dimension

- Limited, small-scale cross-border military response to high insecurity and spill over of conflict along borders from Turkey and Iraq. These developments result in security incidents inside the respective host countries, posing further strain on social cohesion between refugee and host populations.
- An international push for FSA to concentrate all its efforts on battling ISIL, supported by a supply of arms and resources to FSA, alleviates battle fronts with the GoS, leaving space for GoS efforts to successfully concentrate on rooting its power in the south and re-building crucial infrastructures.
- Conflict takes roots in the north, resulting in a de-facto geographical division of Syria.

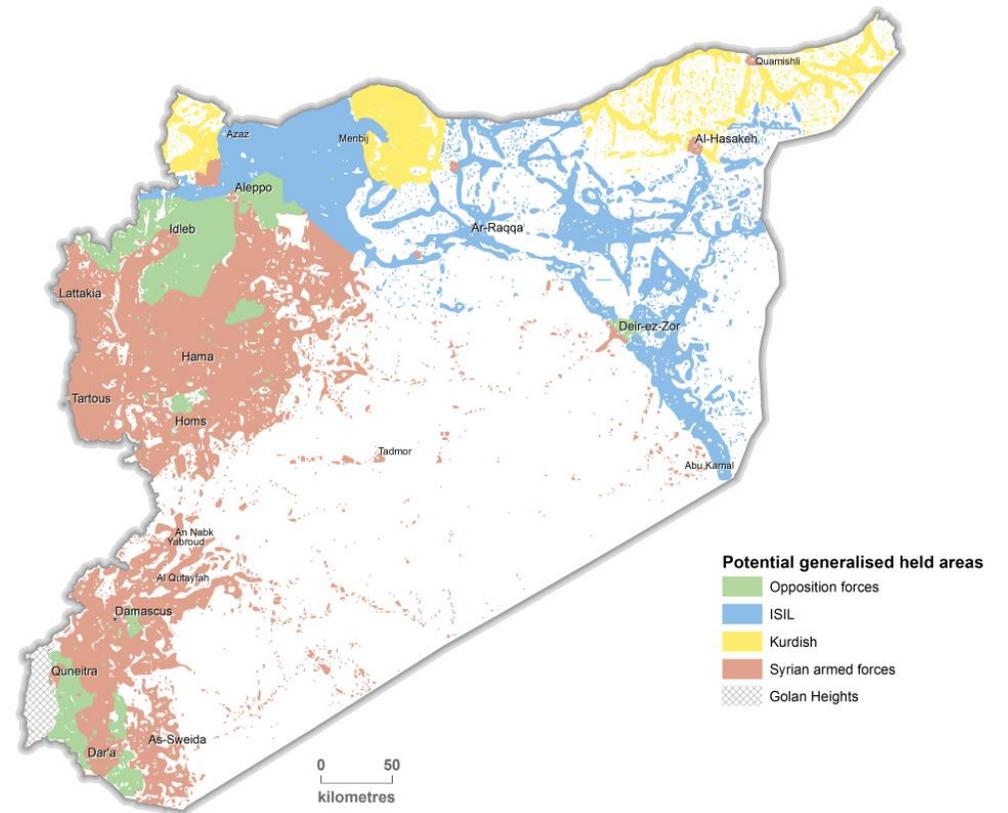
Priority Concerns

- Negotiating with ISIL for cross-border and cross-line operations to enhance humanitarian access.
- Supporting areas hosting IDPs, especially Kurdish areas where access is already limited, and allowing cross-border operations.
- Supporting health facilities with medical staff, medical supplies and medicines.
- Provision of alternative space for educational activities since traditional learning spaces will be highly affected.
- Raising the violations of ISIL against minorities and civil society to the Security Council.
- Providing agricultural assistance and inputs for areas where agricultural production has remained less affected by water shortages and drought-like conditions.

Map 1: Current generalised held areas

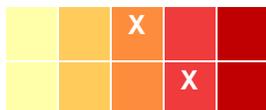


Map 2: Potential generalised held areas under scenario



Scenario 6: Significant displacement occurs in Damascus City and suburbs as a result of conflict

Probability level

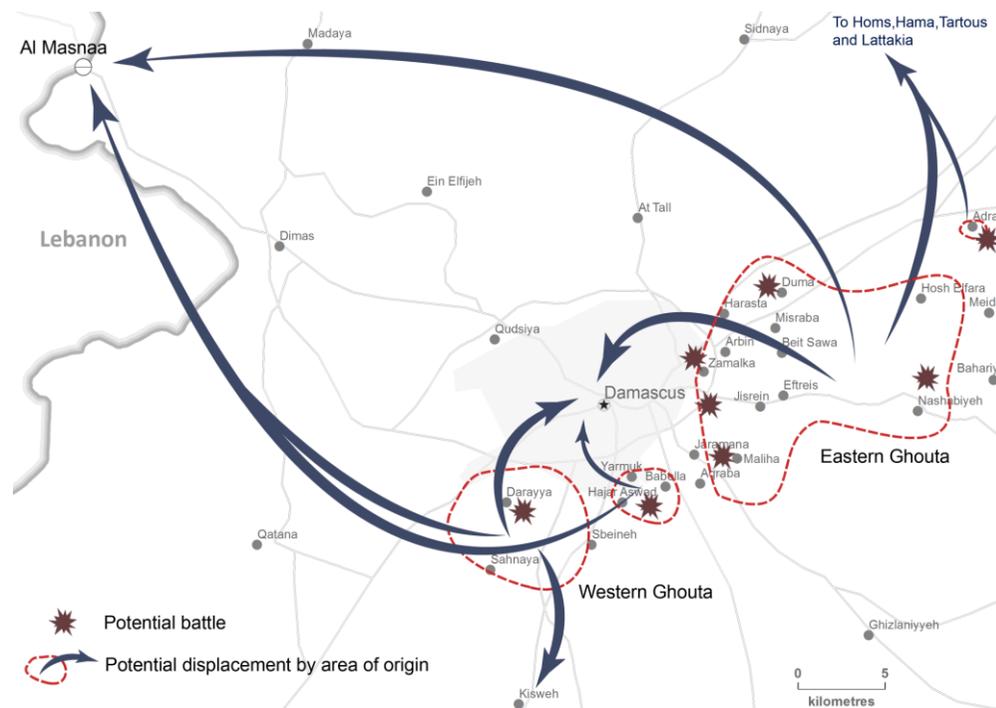


Impact level

Summary: Fighting intensifies for a significant period close to Damascus city as either the SAF or opposition groups launch an offensive to gain territory. This prompts significant displacement as neighbourhoods bordering central Damascus, such as Barzeh, Douwayl'a, Jaramana, Jobar and Qaboun, all of which host a significant number of IDPs, are caught in the fighting. High levels of conflict in the south and east of the city lead to the destruction of infrastructure previously unaffected by the crisis. Damascus-based international humanitarian organisations evacuate non-essential staff.

Assumptions

- Either opposition forces launch a strong offensive to take the southern and eastern outskirts of central Damascus and the SAF respond strongly with large-scale airstrike campaigns or the SAF launch an offensive to decisively remove opposition fighters from eastern and western Ghouta.
- Intense fighting on several fronts relieves the pressure on the siege of the opposition strongholds (eastern and western Ghouta and Yarmouk), enabling civilians to escape.
- Displacement from the opposition strongholds around Damascus, as well as bordering neighbourhoods, results in major IDP concentrations in western Damascus and surge in people fleeing to Lebanon. The GoL enforces its policy requiring full documentation to cross the Al Masnaa border and prevents Palestinians entering Lebanon. While this restricts some refugees, the majority of those fleeing Damascus are able to enter Lebanon through the official Masnaa crossing.
- Whether or not either side makes any gains, by the time the situation stabilises, sufficient destruction to infrastructure has occurred to render any returnees dependent on humanitarian assistance adding severe pressure on infrastructure in the neighbourhoods of the capital with major IDP concentration.
- Most international UN and NGO staff are evacuated from Damascus and support the response remotely from Beirut and Amman.



Map 3: Potential displacement from opposition-held areas. Similar displacement patterns might be seen from GoS-held areas should the conflict move further into the city.

Projected impact

- Displacement of between 100,000 to 500,000 people to GoS-controlled areas of Damascus place major pressure on basic services, particularly on shelter, which has suffered major destruction from shelling and aerial bombing. Schools are closed to accommodate IDPs. The number of IDPs living in open spaces / unsafe shelter increases significantly. In addition to those displaced within Damascus city and suburbs, at least 100,000 people flee towards Lebanon with the scale of displacement being highly dependent on the locations and the intensity of fighting. Palestinians are particularly vulnerable as many of the camps and communities where they are residing are affected by violence and they have few options to flee Syria.
- There is a massive influx of IDPs arriving to GoS-controlled areas of Damascus and amassing along the border with Lebanon. Priority needs of those entering Lebanon are provision of emergency healthcare and shelter, given the lack of camps and overstretched shelter situation already present in Lebanon.

- Conflict-related damage on the water infrastructure and increased demand exacerbates water shortages.
- Food prices increase during the first few weeks due to an increased demand, but reduce once the supplies from commercial, government and humanitarian sources, especially of bread, increase.
- Despite the high level of conflict, GoS authorities prioritise the delivery of aid in central and western areas of Damascus, where the majority of IDPs flee.
- **Protection** becomes a major concern as densely populated residential areas, already hosting large numbers of IDPs, come under air and ground attack resulting in high numbers of casualties and conflict-related injuries. Freedom of movement is severely restricted within Damascus, as checkpoints increase and become more restricted, while people with special needs are unable to leave and are exposed to heightened violence, particularly in besieged areas. Rape, arbitrary arrest and detention, summary executions, disappearances and gender-based violence occur at checkpoints.
- Access to **Shelter, NFIs and WASH** are priority concerns as the newly displaced seek refuge in areas already hosting a significant number of IDPs. The shortage of safe shelter forces significant numbers of people live in public buildings and other in open spaces with inadequate WASH facilities. Shelter shortages become a long-term concern due to the large-scale damage as a result of the conflict. Availability of rented accommodation is insufficient, resulting in a steep increase of rents. Increased number of schools and public buildings are used as collective shelters reducing availability of learning spaces.
- **Health** needs increase significantly in besieged areas where there are a disproportionately large number of casualties and a lack of functioning health services. In GoS-held areas, health services are generally able to cope with the increase in injuries, but do so at the expense of treatment of chronic diseases. As the capacity of healthcare facilities is highly stretched in opposition-controlled areas, communicable diseases spread into GoS-held areas with increased influx of IDPs.
- **Food security** remains a major concern for those unable to flee heavily besieged areas, particularly as these groups are characterised by having pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as medical conditions, physical and mental disabilities and old age. As the besiegement is reinforced following the initial offensive and no aid or food is available, there will be additional cases of severe malnutrition.

Humanitarian access

- Humanitarian access to opposition strongholds is heavily restricted due to the conflict and lack of GoS permission. As a result, hundreds of people with special needs and vulnerable populations that have been unable to escape from besieged areas remain left behind.
- Within GoS-controlled neighbourhoods of Damascus, SARC and other GoS actors respond with increasingly strained capacities.
- International humanitarian response organised from Damascus is reduced due to both the reduction in international staffing levels and a further slowing of GoS administrative processes. Access to As-Sweida and Dar'a decreases. Large parts of the country previously served by UN/INGO warehouses in and around Damascus face a decrease in access to humanitarian aid. Cross-line delivery of assistance to conflict-affected areas in the north and west decreases, until the main hub for international assistance shifts to Tartous.
- The transport of commodities into Syria via Al Masnaa crossing is delayed but not significantly hampered. GoS fuel imports via the major Syrian ports (Tartous and Lattakia) are slowed, leading to temporary price increases in Damascus.

Priority Concerns

- Provision of emergency health care to injured and most vulnerable populations trapped in high intensity conflict areas.
- Continued advocacy to pressure armed groups to abide by the law of armed conflict and IHL to allow humanitarian access.
- Evacuation of civilians from contested areas.
- Provision of safe spaces and psychological support in areas with high IDP concentrations.
- Provision of food and nutritional support where access becomes available in besieged neighbourhoods.
- Overcrowded shelters and communities hosting IDPs require urgent contingency shelter interventions.
- Provision of clean water to areas experiencing water shortages and increased access to water treatment are further key interventions to prevent WASH related diseases.
- Improved monitoring and disease surveillance are a priority to detect and prevent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases such as measles. Areas with limited access are targeted for vaccination efforts.

Comparison between February 2013 and May 2014 scenarios

In February and September 2013 SNAP outlined the likelihood and impact of several scenarios. Over the past 7 months, economic and political factors have led to a change in the situation on the ground as a result of which some scenarios considered in 2013 have become more (or less) likely. This section outlines why.

Comparison likelihood over time

	February 2013	September 2013	May 2014
Continued fighting/political and military fragmentation	Almost certain	Almost certain	Almost certain
Regional deterioration	Unlikely	Likely	Almost certain
International military intervention changing balance of power	Possible	Possible	Very unlikely
Negotiated settlement	Very unlikely	Very unlikely	Very unlikely
Chaotic transition after Government collapse	Likely	Very unlikely	Very unlikely

Likelihood
■ Almost certain
■ Likely
■ Possible
■ Unlikely
■ Very unlikely

Similar likelihood

- Continued fighting and political and military fragmentation:** Over the last 6 months, the warring sides in Syria have been locked in a military stalemate. Despite periodic gains in particular areas, the overall balance has changed little due largely to continued support from regional actors. The balance is likely to endure should no external force act decisively in favour of one side.
- Negotiated settlement:** This scenario envisioned a political settlement based on President al-Assad stepping down and the formation of a government comprised of both opposition and former GoS representatives. This scenario remains highly unlikely, due to increased fragmentation of opposition groups and the strengthened military position of the GoS, and would only become more likely where regional powers to decide that outright victory for either side was no longer possible.

Increase in likelihood

- Regional deterioration:** The security situations in neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq have deteriorated significantly in recent months, highlighting a tense and

fragile regional connection to the situation in Syria. While there is no desire within Lebanon to bring the conflict across the border, Syrian opposition reaction to Hezbollah's overt and significant support to the GoS and the pressure of the sheer numbers of refugees increases the likelihood of Lebanon being drawn further into the conflict.

While all scenarios covered within this document envisage a deterioration of the regional situation, the humanitarian impact varies per scenario.

Decrease in likelihood

- International military intervention changing balance of power:** After an international military intervention was averted in September 2014 following an agreement over the removal of Syria's chemical weapons, the option is currently no longer (publicly) considered. Barring any major game changing events, e.g. a large-scale chemical attack, an international military intervention is currently very unlikely.
- Chaotic transition after GoS collapse:** In early 2013, with defections from the GoS taking place and the opposition strengthening its political and military ranks, the overthrow of President Assad seemed likely. Since then, however, the GoS has demonstrated its resilience while the opposition has become increasingly divided. Hezbollah's significant support to the SAF; the taking of opposition-held areas such as Yabroud and the Qalamoun mountains in late 2013 and early 2014; and reaching several strategic local settlements with opposition in southern Syria has all served to further strengthened the position of the GoS. Meanwhile, infighting between groups in the north and the inability to establish effective governance structures in their areas of control has weakened the opposition.

Methodology – For more information on scenario building, please refer to the ACAPS Technical Brief Scenario Development which can be found [here](#).

Disclaimer – Information provided is provisional as it has not been possible to independently verify field reports. As this report covers highly dynamic subject, utility of the information may decrease with time.

Sources – Center for Global Affairs 2013, SWP 2013/06, ASCAD/ISDR 2011, UN Drought Response Plan 2009, RedAnalysis 2014/02/24, WFP 2014/03

The Syria Needs Analysis Project would like to thank all organisations who have provided input to this report and welcomes all information that could complement it. For additional information, comments or questions, please email SNAP@ACAPS.org

