



June 2020

# DON'T LEAVE THEM ALONE

The future of the cross-border response in north west Syria

The cross-border humanitarian operation provides a vital lifeline for millions of people in Syria. At this moment, there is **no viable alternative** that can match the scale and effectiveness of the cross-border operation. It is critically important, therefore, that the UN Security Council resolution authorizing the cross-border operation is renewed for another year.

**Mark Cutts**, Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis

# SIGNATORIES

## NGOS

ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association

BINAA for Development

Children Of One World

Hand in Hand for Aid and Development

Horan Foundation

Hurras Network

MARAM Foundation

Mercy Corps

Orange Organization

Syrian American Medical Society

Save the Children

Shafak Organization

WOMEN NOW

## NGO FORA

**The League of Syrian Networks;**  
*a league of eight civil society networks representing more than 180 NGOs*

## Acknowledgements

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In order to protect the children and the families who agreed to be interviewed, names in this report have been changed and exact locations omitted.

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Report coordinator: Dima Marawi, ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association

Authored by: Hani Okasheh. Save the Children.

Typeset by: Save the Children



Photo credit: Hurras

# INTRODUCTION

Since December 2019, nearly a million people have left their homes in southern Idlib and western Aleppo following the significant escalation of violence, nearly 840,000 of those are still displaced.

The majority of newly displaced Syrians sought safety in densely populated areas and camps by the Turkish – Syrian border in north west Idlib, as well as in northern Aleppo. This has

significantly strained an overstretched humanitarian response and forced humanitarian actors to relocate many of their services from areas that have become either within or in close proximity of conflict lines.

Humanitarian conditions in north west Syria are dire. More than 2.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, the majority of which is brought in the country through

the cross-border modality via two crossings named in the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2504. In fact, the months of March, April and May recorded the highest number of aid transshipments into Syria with 1,486, 1,365 and 1,781 trucks carrying life-saving assistance entering north west Syria during these months respectively.<sup>1</sup>

## UNSCR 2504 could be detrimental to the lives of more than four million people

With the current economic downturn the region is witnessing due to the rapid devaluation of the Syrian Pound, reduction in remittance and lack of access to income-generating activities, aid actors predict that the humanitarian situation will worsen, making the life-saving assistance provided through the cross-border modality a vital lifeline for the civilian populations in north west Syria.

In the first quarter of 2020, the UN led cross-border assistance reached 2.87 million people in north west Syria through a total of 3.03 million interventions across various

sectors including food security and livelihoods, shelter, non-food items, health, education and protection. This assistance has covered people in more than 856 communities across 72 subdistricts in north west Syria. The UN plays a pivotal role in the cross-border response in north west Syria. In addition to overseeing the dispersing of the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund to humanitarian partners, UN agencies lead the primary coordination clusters and provide logistical and technical support to humanitarian actors on the ground.

This leadership and support are now more critical than ever amid the rising concerns of a COVID-19 outbreak, which could threaten the lives of millions of people stuck in overcrowded shelters and displacement camps. To this end, the humanitarian response across north west Syria is overstretched and underfunded, a non-renewal of UNSCR 2504 could be detrimental to the lives of more than four million people across north west Syria. Additionally, many humanitarian actors who rely on funding provided through this mechanism will likely become unable to continue meeting the exponentially growing needs in north west Syria.

Any loss of access at this time will be all the more problematic due to increased concerns of a COVID-19 outbreak in north west Syria, particularly in light of the acute lack of readiness and preparedness to mitigate or contain such an outbreak.

This report provides insights on the humanitarian situation on the ground, through information aggregated by first-line humanitarian responders. The report presents an account of the acuteness of needs in north west Syria, and shows the critical function that humanitarian actors operating through the cross-border modality serve in alleviating the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people in need across the region. The figure is a sectoral summary of the below shows the cross-border humanitarian reach and activities from Turkey<sup>2</sup>.



Photo credit: Orange

## FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

Food insecurity has become a defining characteristic of the humanitarian situation in north west Syria. Continued conflict, prolonged displacement and the lack of access to income-generating opportunities has impoverished civilian populations. In addition to this, the high inflation caused by the plummeting value of the Syrian pound<sup>3</sup> and the repeated cutting-off supply lines has reduced purchasing power, with vulnerable groups being the hardest hit by this general economic down-turn.

In April 2020, the value of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)<sup>4</sup> in north west Syria reached SYP 122,451, equivalent to USD 101. This marked a 6 per cent increase compared to the prices recorded in March, and set the highest recorded price of the SMEB in north west Syria for the sixth consecutive month.<sup>5</sup> According to OCHA, there are more than 145,492 people in north west Syria in immediate need for food assistance. Children under five and pregnant and lactating women are particu-

larly prone to severe malnutrition caused by poor dietary diversity. The Nutrition Cluster also reports that malnutrition is rising in north west Syria, with nearly 30 per cent of pregnant and breast-feeding women reportedly malnourished. Any disruption to the ongoing FSL response will multiply the numbers of people in need of food assistance and those at risk of acute malnourishment, ultimately putting their lives at immediate risk.

The continuation of the cross-border FSL response is especially important in view of the unsurmountable challenges that the agriculture sector faces. High production costs, damaged vital infrastructure, high transportation costs and low-quality agricultural inputs are all factors that exacerbate food insecurity in north west Syria. The loss of more than 9,000 hectares of arable lands in southern Idlib and western Aleppo during the most recent escalation further diminished the availability of food-stock in markets in Idlib, and caused farmers to lose their income sources. Furthermore, livestock keepers face considerable difficulties in providing feed for their livestock, which often

constitutes the household's primary source of income. This ultimately forces them to sell their livestock and thus lose an important source of income.

The most recent escalation has not only led many people to lose their jobs and access to sources of income, but also caused a drastic shift in the nature of the FSL response. Instead of continuing to substantiate interventions that seek to help people recover and rebuild their lives, FSL actors found themselves forced to revert to an emergency mode of operation to assist displaced people who abandoned their livelihoods, lost their income, and became wholly reliant on life-saving assistance to survive. The outbreak of global pandemic has also deeply affected people north west Syria, particularly those who are (or have become following their displacement) completely dependent on remittances from their relatives outside Syria. Therefore, if those relatives outside of Syria lost their jobs, chances are those dependent on them back in Syria have enormously suffered as well.



### Harvest season

A photo during the 2020 harvest season within the value chain support project for the wheat crop implemented in several areas in the northern countryside of Aleppo, the project that provided seeds, fertilizer for farmers in addition to extension sessions and support for the harvest process and the purchase of the crop from farmers. Photo credit: Shafak.

**Bottomline:** FSL accounted for 90 per cent of the total amount of cross-border assistance transhipped into north west Syria since the beginning of 2020. More than 5,394 trucks carried vital assistance that was delivered to more than 2.04 million people in 36 sub-districts across north west Syria, many of which are wholly reliant on this lifeline to secure their daily needs.



Photo credit: SAMS

## HEALTH

In 2019, WHO alone requested \$39 million to assist the affected population in north west Syria through cross-border operations<sup>6</sup> to be implemented by health cluster partners. UNICEF was also leading on vaccinations services in collaboration with the Syrian immunization group (SIG). In the case of non-renewal, this loss of funding will limit the capacity of local partners to provide much-needed medical care, including life-saving medical supplies, support for trauma cases, mental health consultations, and referral network support.

The SCHF provides flexible and timely resources to address the most urgent humanitarian needs and assist the most vulnerable people in Syria, focusing on areas accessible through cross-border aid. SCHF allocated a total of \$117 million through five allocations in 2019<sup>7</sup> that helped 2.7 million people in need in Aleppo and Idlib governorates. \$13.6 millions of this funding went to health needs. When SCHF was lost in northeast Syria due to the elimination of Al Yarubiyah crossing from UNSC 2504, it comprised 33% of the total loss

in pooled funding. This has led to an estimated gap of \$10million to cover assistance until the end of 2020. 19 health facilities in northeast Syria, three of which are in IDP camps, will face closure or disruption in service provision due to this loss of funding. In the north west, where the fund remains accessible, SCHF has provided \$147.99 million, including \$24.4 million for health under 3 different allocations in 2020.<sup>8</sup> If health partners can no longer utilize this funding mechanism, people in need will be exempt from accessing lifesaving health services that are aimed to respond to the most urgent emergencies.

Cross-border assistance from the UN continues to be vital to the response, in addition to security considerations and bureaucratic impediments, political, political interference can also prevent NGOs from dealing with the local authorities in non-Syrian Government controlled areas. UN agencies such as WHO have to seek a detailed approval from Syria authorities for every shipment distributed through cross-line aid. Previously, this policy

has led to the removal of vital medications, medical supplies, and equipment from the UN convoys sent to non-Syrian Government controlled areas such as Eastern Ghouta.<sup>9</sup> There is no guarantee that this would not happen again in areas which have been accessed exclusively through cross-line aid. The inability to predict or to schedule regular assistance or sufficient medical supplies would greatly affect the continuity of services of health facilities in these areas.

The threat of a COVID-19 outbreak in north west Syria has further complicated the provision of health services. The health system in Idlib remains underprepared for a potential outbreak. Implementation of the preparedness and response plan<sup>10</sup> continues to face delays, with only two community COVID-19 treatment centres (CCTC) currently operational to isolate mild to moderate cases out of 30 planned CCTCs. Furthermore, only 28 ICU beds with 22 ventilators are ready in isolation hospitals to receive severe cases of COVID-19.

Restrictions on the procurement and distribution of PPE have further affected the response. Tests are only conducted for suspected cases. So far, only 735 samples have been collected in north west Syria,<sup>11</sup> all of which have tested negative. Any further obstruction of access will negatively impact the COVID-19 preparedness and response and will increase the morbidity and mortality of people relying on health services provided through cross-border programs.

In 2019, 38 NGOs implemented cross border projects in north west Syria, collectively providing 10,454,493 medical consultations, 3,749,899 treatment courses, 103,651 major surgeries. Non-renewal implications on health could include an end to the financial and in-kind support provided by UN agencies. It also threatens the continuity of the UNOCHA-managed pooled fund (SCHF) mechanism. It would come at a time when COVID-19 is severely affecting the humanitarian situation in north west Syria.



### Nidal's case

Staff at Idlib Central Hospital recently received a 9-month-old patient, Nidal\*, suffering from a large tumor in the abdomen, shortness of breath, and vomiting. After conducting all the necessary tests and scans, the infant was diagnosed with a large mass encroaching on the right kidney and extending upward to the inferior vena cava, which consisted of necrotic and hemorrhagic tissue. Immediately, surgeons prepared the infant for surgery. By the end of the procedure, the infant is doing very well and continues to recover at the hospital. Photo credit: SAMS

**Bottomline:** In 2019, 38 NGOs implemented cross border projects in north west Syria, collectively providing 10,454,493 medical consultations, 3,749,899 treatment courses, 103,651 major surgeries. Nonrenewal implications on health could include an end to the financial and in-kind support provided by UN agencies. It also threatens the continuity of the UNOCHA-managed pooled fund (SCHF) mechanism. It would come at a time when COVID-19 is severely affecting the humanitarian situation in north west Syria.



Photo credit: ATAA

## SHELTER, NFI AND CAMP COORDINATION

Shelter and non-food items (NFIs) are among the most pressing needs for displaced people in north west Syria, especially for those who left behind all of their belongings when they were displaced. The lack of adequate shelter support and excessive rent prices in areas that received the largest numbers of displaced people since December 2019 are the main reasons that make shelter the top priority for many displaced families. According to the Shelter/NFI Cluster, only 27 per cent of displaced people have access to adequate housing, while more than 16 per cent and another 11 per cent

currently rent partially destroyed structures and unfinished buildings respectively.<sup>12</sup> At the onset of displacement earlier this year, rent prices increased by 200 per cent in some areas following the mass displacement of people between December 2019 and March 2020, and property owners started demanding payment in United States Dollars.

Last year, the shelter sector focused on providing life-saving shelter in emergency situations, in addition to supporting the repair and rehabilitation of housing, infrastructure, collective centres and transitional shelters. Despite the

concerted efforts of humanitarian actors, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that shelter assistance provided by humanitarian actors barely covers 20 per cent of the actual needs (shelter actors reached 0.9 million beneficiaries in 2019 and 1.1 million beneficiaries in 2018). Additionally, only half of the 81,000 tents needed to accommodate 435,000 recently displaced people had been installed as of 19 May. Moreover, a recent assessment of 87 collective shelters concluded that none of the assessed sites met the minimum emergency standards across all relevant sectors.<sup>13</sup>

The threat of COVID-19 outbreak in north west Syria, particularly in congested camps and reception centres, prompted the camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster to create the Land Identification Task Force to explore expanding and establish new camps to decongest. The task force managed to identify nearly 319 sites for expansion (eight million m<sup>2</sup> in total which can accommodate 270,000 persons). However, a non-renewal of UNSCR 2504 could threaten the work of this task force

and ultimately put the lives of hundreds of thousands of people at risk.

Shelter actors in north west Syria faced an array of challenges that impeded their ability to meet needs timely and effectively. The sudden mass displacement of more than 960,000 individuals earlier this year caused a great deal of disruption to existing coordination structures. As 90 per cent of displacement sites in north west Syria are self-settled and lack camp management systems, the continuity of assistance in these areas is a pressing priority. This is mainly because distributing tents and NFIs is not a one-off intervention. They wear over time, especially during winter as rain and flooding causes severe damage to tents and infrastructure, all of which requires specialised interventions to re-accommodate affected families. At this juncture, losing cross-border access and the vital support provided by the UN funding and coordination mechanisms will likely leave the hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrian at increased risk due to the inadequacy of shelter support.



### A roof for a birthday

"My daughter Soha was eagerly awaiting her third birthday gift. Like all children, they think about how to enjoy the smallest details. And I, as a father, were thinking about how to protect them from this severe cold, especially as we have become displaced and homeless. An NGO helped me with the house we live in now, and it was a timely gift for me and my children. My daughter now has a roof over her head." Photo credit: ATAA.

**Bottomline:** From January – April 2020, aid agencies assisted 406,900 people in north west Syria through transhipped NFIs and tents. In April, ten transhipments in total were conducted through Bab Al Hawa and Bab Al Salam, carrying 11,000 NFI kits, 20,000 hygiene kits and 900 tents to assist 167,900 people.



Photo credit: HIHFAD

## WASH

Before the crisis, the vast majority of population centres in Syria were properly served by well-managed water systems. However, water systems sustained considerable damage throughout the conflict and became dysfunctional or non-functional in various areas, operating at varying levels of efficiency, with urban centres generally better served in comparison to rural areas. The available WASH infrastructure assessment showed that many of the water systems are only capable of operating at a fraction of their original capacity, because of the absence of sufficient power (electricity) to operate water stations and support water pumping, damage by constant shelling some areas were exposed to, vandalism, and disintegration.<sup>14</sup> These limitations in regular and sustainable operations, maintenance and repair reduced the system's efficiency and made it more vulnerable to the risk of contamination. Ultimately, these factors forced households in

many areas to turn to costly alternative water sources to secure their water needs, despite the worsening economic conditions and depression prevalent in the area.

At least 10 percent of garbage is left in the public areas, which could expose people in some areas to increased risk of contracting infectious diseases such as Leishmaniasis. As a result of the crisis at least 70 percent of sewage is untreated and at least half of the sewerage systems are not functional, exposing communities to significant health risks such as Acute Bloody Diarrhea, Typhoid, or Jaundice. This environment is a prime setting for disease outbreaks. Limited water supplies are primarily used for drinking and cooking, while lesser amounts are used for hygiene. Safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services are an essential part of preventing and protecting human health during infectious disease

outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most cost-effective strategies for increasing pandemic preparedness, especially in resource-constrained settings, is investing in core public health infrastructure, including water and sanitation systems. Good WASH and waste management practices, that are consistently applied, serve as barriers to human-to-human transmission of the COVID-19 virus in homes, communities, health care facilities, schools, and other public spaces. However, if WASH actors lose the support they currently receive through the cross-border mechanism they will likely not be able to sustain their efforts to promote hygiene and ensure that they provide people with enough WASH assistance to keep themselves safe.

The scarce funding for WASH activities and shortened project period makes it hard to meet the needs of people and deliver quality WASH services. Furthermore, the reduced duration for the renewal of UNSCR 2504 this year posed a challenge for responders in terms of their ability to effectively plan their interventions given the uncertainty that the six-

month renewal has induced. This is especially critical during this time as the most recent mass displacement of people towards densely populated areas caused severe overcrowding in both urban communities and camps. This is particularly concerning in the context of a potential COVID-19 outbreak as the main mitigation measures against the virus, such as regular handwashing, require distributing additional amounts of water to those reliant on water distributed by humanitarian actors. According to the WASH Cluster, there are currently pressing shortages of WASH services in 19 sub-districts, affecting nearly 143,000 displaced people. Some 142,897 people need water trucking, with many others sharing water supplies of host communities or other displaced people within camps. Some 137,584 people are in need of public latrines rehabilitation or construction, some 142,307 need recurrent solid waste management and more than 171,500 people need hygiene kits.<sup>15</sup> Inability to maintain the provision of assistance will leave tens of thousands of people at greater risk of contracting infectious diseases, especially COVID-19 in the event of an outbreak.



Photo credit: HIHFAD

**Bottomline:** Since the beginning of 2020, more than 59 organisations carried WASH assistance into north west Syria through the cross-border modality, assisting more than 2.9 million people. With the threat of a COVID-19 outbreak, WASH assistance is more vital than ever, especially for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians residing in densely populated displacement camps and reception centres.



Photo credit: Children of One World

# PROTECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Children and women make up 51 and 25 per cent of the civilian populations in north west Syria respectively.<sup>16</sup> Years of conflict and displacement made children and women particularly vulnerable to grave violations of their rights, including gender-based violence and limited access to basic services, education and specialised protection services.

The volatile situation in north west Syria exposed women to a wide range of protection issues. Many female-heads-of-households had perilous displacement experiences, often ending up in collective or crowded shelters due to their financial insufficiency and inability to find an appropriate accommodation. The absence of privacy and personal security under these living conditions meant that women and girls could not have adequate access to services such as WASH, in addition to making them especially susceptible to abuse and violence. Women in displacement also lack access to sufficient healthcare. This is especially critical

to the lives of pregnant women and new-born children due to the acute lack of postpartum and new-born medical care. Displaced women also lack sufficient financial support and access to income-generating opportunities. This exacerbates the suffering of female-headed households and negatively affect their self-sustenance, making them reliant on life-saving assistance provided by aid agencies. All of these factors ultimately lead to the accumulation of psychological stress.

Humanitarian actors on the ground play a pivotal role in preventing and responding to different forms of child abuse, neglect, violations, and exploitation in north west Syria. This is especially critical in a context where children and their parents are repeatedly displaced and are often prone to the security hazards. This has reputedly exposed children and women to physical and emotional maltreatment, mental health and psychosocial distress. Furthermore, many children have been separated from their families, while many others

became increasingly exposed to risks such as social exclusion, child labour and early marriage.

Protection actors struggle to provide their services to women and children that are in dire need. At the onset of latest wave of mass displacement, the sudden suspension and relocation of protection and health facilities caused a shortage of coordination and absence of an effective referral pathway for vulnerable cases. Furthermore, the increase of informal displacement sites together with the dwindling funds for protection activities posed a significant challenge for protection actors to reach women and children in these sites. The adverse effect of the absence of protection services in displacement sites has been a rise in cases of abuse and gender-based violence, with impoverished

female-heads of households particularly being at higher risk. Protection actors identified the lack of long-term project funding as one of the main challenges they face to meet the protection needs of vulnerable women and children. Furthermore, the lack of protection mainstreaming across the various services provided by humanitarian actors leads to these services being insensitive to certain protection needs of target beneficiaries. This is particularly an issue for women, girls, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Any reduction of ongoing protection interventions will expose even more women and children to the risks outlined above, and will reverse the investments made by protection actors to enhance protection networks and referral mechanisms which required concerted efforts to build over the past years.



## Survivor's plight

A young child carrying a dirty bag above his shoulder stretches his head inside a waste container to collect some garbage or food wastes. A survivor of the landfill accident in which 3 children died in the first month of 2020. The child is separated from his parents and lives with his younger brother, uncle, and cousins in a small tent where the uncle cannot provide the necessary needs of the child and the family. A job opportunity was provided to the child's uncle, which is selling secondhand clothes in the camp and the neighboring town, as well as providing a tent for the child and his brother so that they can live in it together. The Uncle now is working and he can secure the child's basic needs. And the child has left his work in waste collecting, the work that puts him always at risk. Now, the child and his brother stay in a private residence next to the uncle's tent, and the uncle's wife takes care of them and meets their needs as a primary caregiver. Photo credit: Hurras

**Bottomline:** In the first quarter of 2020, cross-border actors provided specialised protections services to 160,000 people across 37 subdistricts in north west Syria. In April 2020 alone, protection actors reported providing over 180,000 interventions to IDPs and affected host community members across north west Syria. These services included (but were not limited to) psychological first aid, legal awareness raising sessions, integrated/comprehensive case management services and referral to other services.<sup>17</sup>





Photo credit: Maram Foundation

## EDUCATION

The ongoing and renewed bouts of violence and escalation of conflict in north west Syria had a great deal of impact on the education sector. Between February 2019 – February 2020, Save the Children and Hurras Child Protection Network recorded 92 incidents of attacks on education facilities. In 2019 alone, more than 250 children died as a result of indiscriminate attacks against schools and other civilian facilities and structures. Aside from damage that befell education facilities as a result of conflict, increased hostilities have led to the displacement of more than 398,000 school-age children since 1 December 2019. Due to the magnitude of displacement and in light of the acute lack of adequate shelter, many schools have been utilised as collective shelters to accommodate newly displaced

families. More than 277 across north west Syria including in Afrin and A'zaz in Aleppo, and Ariha, Harim, Idlib city and Jisr as-Shughur in Idlib were turned into collective shelters. In fact, education activities in north west Syria have been repeatedly suspended due to heightened insecurity. In the Ariha sub-district south of Idlib, there are only five operational schools in an area.

More than 398,000 school-age children are displaced in north west Syria where education services have been repeatedly suspended due to heightened insecurity, repurposing schools into collective shelters (277 schools across north west Syria), and most recently as a preventative measure to curb the spread of COVID-19. In the Ariha sub-district south of

Across north west Syria, more than 300 schools are not operational, affecting more than 117,000 children and 5,000 teachers.<sup>18</sup> Since 14 and 16 March, schools in Idlib and Aleppo were closed down respectively amid fears of a COVID-19 outbreak in north west Syria. Other factors that threaten to keep children disconnected from learning include costs related to accessing education, psychological stress, shortage of education personnel and harmful coping mechanisms adopted by households, including child labour and child marriage.

Several challenges inhibit education actors from reconnecting children with learning in north west Syria. The lack of funds for education activities is one of the most pressing challenges facing education actors. This is particularly problematic since education actors

needed to invest resources in relocating their services from areas that became hot-spots of conflict, into safer areas, particularly areas that were receiving the largest number of displaced children to ensure the continuation of the educational process. This relocation requires a great deal of investment to rehabilitate schools and establish learning centres in areas of displacement in addition to replacing education equipment such as white boards, desks, learning and teaching materials, which were destroyed as a result of conflict. However, education actors reported immense difficulties in reaching children who are constantly on the move. Furthermore, schools and education services in areas of displacement were already overstretched even before the latest influx of displaced children.



### Happy day

February 2020, These three happy girls participated in one of the "Back to School" Campaign events in north west. These campaigns targeted school-aged children and their communities and included recreational, cultural and awareness-raising activities aimed to increase children's confidence and give them hope in their future. They are also got enrolled in one of the schools. Photo credit: ATAA

**Bottomline:** In the first quarter of 2020, cross-border education actors reached more than 579,000 children and adolescents in 49 sub-districts across north west Syria. Interventions included the provision of self-learning and digital learning materials, rehabilitation of learning centres and water facilities in schools. They also provided incentives and professional development training to teaching staff, in addition to psychosocial support and recreational activities that are vital to help children cope with negative experience they faced as a result of conflict and displacement.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Logistics Cluster, Cross-Border Operations- Turkey to Northern Syria, January-May 2020
- 2 UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic - Cross-border Humanitarian Reach and Activities from Turkey, March 2020
- 3 The value of Syria pound dropped rapidly during the first half of 2020, reaching SYP 3,800 per USD 1 at some point in June 2020, compared to SYP 480 per USD 1 during the same time last year.
- 4 The SMEB represents the minimum items required to support a six-person household for a month. It includes food items such as bread, water, rice, chicken, eggs, vegetables and oil, and non-food items such as soap, sanitary pads, fuel and telecommunication.
- 5 REACH, Northwest Syria Market Monitoring Exercise 6 – 13 April 2020, accessed 13 June 2020 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH\\_SYR\\_Northwest\\_Situation-Overview\\_Market-monitoring\\_April\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_SYR_Northwest_Situation-Overview_Market-monitoring_April_2020.pdf)
- 6 WHO/Europe Situation report #3, Whole of Syria Response – Turkey Update: [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/418313/Situation-report-MayJune-Gaziantep.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/418313/Situation-report-MayJune-Gaziantep.pdf)
- 7 SCHF annual report 2019
- 8 Reserve Allocation Strategy Paper Syria Cross Border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF) - February 2020; Allocation Strategy Paper Syria Cross Border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF) COVID-19 Response - April 2020; First standard allocation Strategy Paper Syria Cross Border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF) - May 202.
- 9 <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/some-aid-arrives-eastern-ghouta-convoys-stripped-medical-supplies>
- 10 COVID-19 preparedness and response plan for NW syria , available at : [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/health\\_task\\_force\\_nws\\_covid-19\\_sitrep\\_-\\_1\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/health_task_force_nws_covid-19_sitrep_-_1_april_2020.pdf)
- 11 Ewarn COVID19 Surveillance updates\_31/05/2020
- 12 SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC Recent Developments in Northwest Syria Flash Update - As of 29 May 2020
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 HNO 2019
- 15 SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC Recent Developments in Northwest Syria Flash Update - As of 29 May 2020
- 16 UNHCR, Cross-border Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet, Northwest Syria, April 2020
- 17 SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC Recent Developments in Northwest Syria Flash Update - As of 29 May 2020
- 18 *Ibid.*



Photo credit: ATAA

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The humanitarian justification for this resolution remains as valid today as when it was first authorised in 2014 and even more so with the spread of COVID-19. Principled humanitarian action through both cross-line and cross-border modalities remains the only way to support the 11.1 million Syrians in need of assistance. The renewal of Resolution 2504 authorising cross-border assistance through Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam for a minimum of twelve months and the re-authorisation of the Al Yarubiyah crossing are key to achieve this objective. There is no alternative, and no possible way to scale up the response to COVID-19 without it.

- **The UNSC must renew Resolution 2504**, authorising cross-border assistance through Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam for a minimum of twelve months to ensure millions of people in Syria continue to have access to the lifesaving services detailed above and to ensure humanitarian actors are able to scale up the response to COVID-19 appropriately.
- The UN Security Council should also **immediately work to find a solution to access challenges in north east Syria** including through reauthorizing UN cross border assistance through Yarubiyah, as the only viable way to ensure that vital medical and other supplies are available to populations in Northeast Syria.

# **DON'T LEAVE THEM ALONE**

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response in north west Syria**