



## **Syria Protection Sector Update #3**

### **Sweida Situation**

### **19 September 2025**

#### **Situation Overview**

The situation in As-Sweida governorate remains volatile, with continued insecurity driving displacement within Sweida and towards Dar'a and Rural Damascus. While active hostilities have decreased in intensity compared to early August, insecurity persists across frontlines and key transport routes. Road closures, including intermittent restrictions on the Sweida–Damascus highway, continue to hinder mobility, obstruct humanitarian access, and fuel shortages of essential goods. Reports of secondary displacement from Sweida into Dar'a highlight ongoing fears for safety, as families move repeatedly in search of stability.

As the academic year approaches, insecurity in and around schools being used as shelters has created additional pressure to relocate displaced families. Recently, some schools have received eviction notices with no clear alternative solutions. This coincides with heightened economic hardship, rent inflation, and exploitation risks in host communities, further deepening protection concerns.

Tensions inside collective shelters and host communities have escalated, with several incidents of violence reported, including against vulnerable groups such as women, children, and pregnant women. Protection partners also noted an increase in disputes linked to overcrowding and the mixing of unfamiliar communities within shared shelters.

As reported by The IDP Task Force as of 1 September 2025, the total number of IDPs from As-Sweida governorate stands at 186,500. An approximate of 113,900 IDP remain displaced within As-Sweida Governorate, while an estimated 60,200 IDP are reported settled in Dar'a , and 11,700 IDPs have settled in Rural Damascus. Recently, an estimated 10,400 IDPs returned to their communities of origin, mainly to Salkhad District (~4,200) and As-Sweida District (~3,600).

Children remain particularly vulnerable due to ongoing conflict, displacement, and limited access to critical protection services. Child protection risks were also observed and reported, including mental health disorders and server psychological effects, violence against children, injuries, participation in armed conflict, child marriage, child labour, and lack of official civil documentation.

GBV risks continue to be heightened as a result of the ongoing conflict, displacement, overcrowding, lack of privacy and gender-segregated spaces, and community tensions. Loss of income sources and access to basic goods and services further exacerbates risks of resorting to negative coping strategies, including early marriage, and sexual exploitation, especially among women and girls.

(Legacy) Explosive ordnance (EO) contamination remains one of the most acute safety threats in southern Syria. Movements between As-Sweida, Dar'a, and Rural Damascus continue to expose IDPs and host communities to life-threatening risks. The need for sustained explosive ordnance risk education, non-

technical survey to identify and mark EO items, and EO disposal remains urgent.

The overall protection environment remains precarious, with civilians facing cumulative risks from ongoing insecurity, displacement, explosive hazards, and limited access to justice and basic services.

## Protection Needs

### Protection:

- **Restoring safe mobility** and reopening main transportation routes, including the Sweida–Damascus Road, is essential to enable access to assistance and services. However security concerns and road closures persist, limiting supplies and inhibiting community recovery.
- With the **new school year approaching**, a pressing challenge is the continued use of schools as hosting centres for displaced families. Many schools remain overcrowded with IDPs, leaving little or no space for classrooms to reopen. As a result, there is an urgent need to identify and prepare alternative shelter solutions. Recent reports of pressure on IDPs to evacuate schools - without clarity on alternatives - are raising concerns. Relocations must not become forced evictions; clear safeguards and safe alternatives are needed before schools are vacated.
- Partner reports indicate continued **difficult conditions faced by IDPs in displacement sites**. In some areas, IDPs are choosing to self-relocate out of hosting sites due to the harsh conditions, settling in . In Saida Zeinab field assessments identified 75 families living in unsuitable and unsafe conditions in Saida Zeinab IDP sites. The emergency room is actively trying to support these families and some of them were accommodated in an unfinished swimming pool as a temporary measure. Notwithstanding that reliance on unfinished or overcrowded structures falls below adequacy standards and risks new displacement.
- **Loss of documentation** due to the burning of the Civil Registry Offices raises an urgent need for alternative verification mechanisms (municipality-issued ownership letters, community leader attestations) to prevent future land and property conflicts. Many homes have also reported been burned or looted, complicating restitution and highlighting the urgency of documentation alternatives.
- Tensions inside collective shelters and host communities have escalated, with **several incidents of violence reported**, including against vulnerable groups such as women, children, and pregnant women. Protection partners also noted an increase in disputes linked to overcrowding and the mixing of unfamiliar communities within shared shelters.
- **Psychosocial Support (PSS)**: High levels of psychological distress are evident across displacement sites and host communities, requiring an immediate scale-up of structured psychosocial support, recreational activities for children, community-based resilience programs, and specialized services for individuals at risk of self-harm. Several incidents of suicidal attempts and escalation of violence have been reported highlighting an urgent need for **MHPSS and social cohesion interventions** to support both children and adults.

### GBV

- **Inadequate shelter facilities**, overcrowding, poor privacy and non gender-segregated WASH facilities heighten risks of harassment, sexual violence.
- **Economic hardship increases household tensions**, exacerbating risks of intimate partner violence and resorting to negative coping mechanisms, including early marriage and sexual exploitation.

- **Restricted mobility**, reduced availability of safe spaces, and **disrupted referral pathways**, continue to prevent women and girls from seeking timely access to services. There is an urgent need to **scale-up GBV psychosocial support and case management services**, restore safe spaces for women and girls.
- **Mobile GBV services** remain critical for reaching rural villages, while enhanced coordination and resourcing is required to expand coverage, while ensuring flexible scale-up and repositioning of mobile teams based on population movements and emerging needs. There is also a need to strengthen **static services in urban centers**.
- **Trauma-informed psychological distress** is increasingly affecting women, girls, and service providers, requiring scale up of MHPSS interventions, including for IDPs at higher risk of GBV.
- **Shortages of dignity kits** and hygiene supplies for affected women and girls continue to pose risks of engaging in negative coping mechanisms, sexual exploitation and abuse. Scaling up emergency supplies distribution remains a critical need.
- **Fear of stigma and social tension** continue to prevent survivors from seeking support, as many women and girls fear community backlash, family rejection, or blame as a result of GBV incidents disclosure. This contributes to underreporting of GBV incidents, calling for an increased need to raise awareness on GBV risks, services and life-threatening GBV consequences among shelters hosts.

#### Child Protection:

- **Many children are showing signs of psychological distress and trauma** as a result of direct or indirect exposure to violence, or from hearing about hostilities from adults or social media, this requires professional MHPSS support and scale up to mitigate adverse outcomes
- **Multiple cases of unaccompanied and separated** children have been recorded in several collective shelters, these require timely and urgent case management support and multi-sectorial support to address the specific needs at identification, case processing and post case closure follow up by trained and professional social workers
- **There is an acute shortage of clothing:** many families, including children, arrived at shelters without sufficient clothing, with the winter fast approaching these unmet needs should be planned and addressed with urgency.
- **Violence against children has been reported** within shelters, primarily attributed to tensions between families from different social and cultural backgrounds, in the absence of safe spaces or psychosocial support, there is need for more mobile or static child friendly spaces where children are mentored to coexist and equipped problem solving skills
- **There is also a lack of child-friendly spaces**, leaving children with no safe area to play, relieve stress, and resume a sense of normalcy.
- **The risk of child neglect and negative coping mechanisms among caregivers and children**, this further exposes children to rejoin and get involved in violent non child friendly engagements or associations.

#### Mine action:

- Intensifying delivery of **EORE sessions** for IDPs and host communities as the first lifesaving measure to reduce the risk from death and injury is the most urgent priority for all partners operating in the South. As delivery of humanitarian aid to the region is ramping up, humanitarian aid workers will need refresher training on EO threats, especially aid workers delivering support to the hard-to-reach areas.

- Limited availability of historical data on EO contamination in the southern governorates coupled with the outbreaks of violence over July and August, has made it an urgent priority to **scale up non-technical surveys** in order to identify and mark hazardous areas and guide clearance efforts.
- While very limited explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) is already taking place in Dar'a and Rural Damascus, **clearance efforts**, especially around critical infrastructure and in the vicinity of IDP sites across the South will need to be prioritised, most notably as returns start picking up.
- Availability of **specialised medical, physical rehabilitation and protection services** for past and recent survivors of EO accidents, persons with disabilities and their families has been exceptionally poor across the southern governorates and will need considerable scale-up.

## Response to date

### Protection

- As of 10 September, more than **48445 people** have been reached with protection interventions across the affected Governorates, with at least 17 sector partners involved in the response.
- **As-Sweida:** Has received the highest share of support where more than **18329 people** have been reached. **Dar'a:** Over **21262 people** were reached. **Rural Damascus:** More than **8852 people** were reached addressing critical protection needs
- As of 10 September, **1588 IDPs** attended **awareness raising sessions (GBV, Child Protection and PSEA)**, **113 IDPs** benefited from **case management** and referrals, **113 IDPs** participated in **FGD** for needs identification, **3607 IDPs** received **in kind materials**, **959 IDPs** participated in **recreational activities**, and **3450 IDPs** received **psychosocial support**.
- Since the onset of the situation in As-Sweida Governorate, a total of **1369 IDPs** have been assessed by **legal** partners. During these assessments, missing documentation and official papers were identified and registered by the teams. During the reporting period, more than **35 legal field visits** were conducted across As-Sweida, reaching IDPs in hosting centers (Arman, Qarayya, Afineh, Salakhed, Raha, Al-Koum). During the visits, more than **350 cases** of **lacking IDs**, loss of **family booklets**, **property deeds**, and **civil documents** were identified.
- HLP members are **documenting cases of lost civil and property documents, unregistered marriages, missing deeds, and irregular or informal property transactions** among displaced communities in Dar'a and Rural Damascus. While some of these issues can be addressed locally, many require follow-up in areas of origin, particularly Sweida, and cannot be resolved in the places of displacement. Current efforts therefore focus on recording and consolidating cases for structured referral and future legal action. To strengthen this work, members have highlighted the need for a dedicated workshop on property disputes, including usurpation and unlawful occupation. Judicial powers of attorney are being used to enable displaced persons to pursue claims remotely, with scope to expand legal assistance as new needs are identified.

### GBV:

- **As-Sweida:** GBV AoR partners provided **8,452 GBV specialized psychosocial support and PFA services**, organized 474 awareness raising activities, facilitated 349 referrals to health, legal and other services, delivered 42 GBV case management services, and distributed 7,701 dignity kits.
- **Dar'a:** GBV AoR partners provided 4,405 GBV specialized psychosocial support and PFA services,

organized 20 awareness raising activities, facilitated 24 referrals to health, legal and other services, delivered 151 GBV case management services, and distributed 6,064 dignity kits.

- **Rural Damascus:** GBV AoR partners provided 2,148 GBV specialized psychosocial support and PFA services, organized 46 awareness raising activities, facilitated 314 referrals to other services, delivered 284 GBV case management services, and distributed 2,828 dignity kits.

### **Child protection:**

- **As-Sweida:** Child protection partners provided child protection services for **(4,167)** beneficiaries, as follows: Psychological first aid, Recreational activities, structured and semi-structured MHPSS **(1,549) children**, including (783) girls. and **(1,474)** Adults, including (812) women. Case Management support was provided to (99) children, including (48) girls. To prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation, awareness messages were passed to (513) children, including (279) girls.
- **Dar'a:** CP AoR partners provided child protection services to **(28,869)** beneficiaries, as follows: Psychological first and recreational activities for **(8,185)** children, including **(4,227)** girls, and **(3,023)** Adults, including **(1,783)** women. Case management support was provided to **(84)** children, including (43) girls. and (64) Adults, including (48) women, while CP Awareness sessions (PSEA, EORE, GBV, child labour were conducted for **(10,190)** children, including **(5,571)** girls and **(7,323)** Adults, including (4,390) women.
- **Rural Damascus:** CP AoR partners provided child protection services for **(8,020)** beneficiaries, as follows: Psychological first and recreational activities for **(3,059)** children, including **(1,626)** girls. And **(1,456)** Adults, including **(1,153)** women. Case management support was provided to **(56)** children, including **(25)** girls. And (35) Adults, including (26) women. CP awareness sessions (PSEA, EORE, GBV, child labour were conducted for **(2,996)** children, including **(1,552)** girls. And (418) Adults, including (271) women.
- **Quneitra:** CP partners provided child protection services for **(340)** beneficiaries, as follows: Psychological first and recreational activities for **(37)** children, including **(25)** girls. And (24) Adults, including (13) women. Referral cases through Case management for **(108)** children, including **(77)** girls. CP Awareness sessions (PSEA, EORE, GBV, child labour,...) conducted for **(72)** children, including **(40)** girls. And (8) Adults, including (8) women.

### **Mine Action:**

- **In As-Sweida** governorate, EORE facilitators conducted 14 sessions in Salkhad, delivering safety messages for 370 internally displaced persons, specifically focusing on children and youth.
- **In Dar'a**, two partners reached 749 people through 28 EORE sessions across Busra esh-Sham, Hrak and Jizeh, while other partners continued delivering safety messages for IDPs and host communities across different locations in the governorate. NTS teams carried out 9 non-technical surveys through which they surveyed roughly 171,650,897 sqm of land, and identified at least six hazardous areas. 245 hazardous items were marked, while additional 265 EO items were safely disposed of. EORE, NTS and limited EO items disposal were also conducted in Dar'a city, where alarming reports of children playing with EO have been on the rise.
- **In Rural Damascus**, mine action partners conducted 41 EORE sessions reaching 1005 people across Babella, Duma and Nashabiya. At the same time, NTS teams completed 15 non-technical surveys, covering more than 114 million square metres of land, enhancing visibility of EO contamination for future

clearance.

## Gaps & Constraints

### Protection:

- Capacity limitations of local NGOs requiring urgent training on protection standards.
- Complaint mechanisms remain largely informal and inaccessible to many IDPs.
- Overcrowded and unsafe hotel accommodation; Shelter stock insufficient, with poor conditions (contaminated water, hygiene gaps, scabies, lice, food poisoning outbreaks).
- Dependence on ad-hoc shelter solutions (e.g., unfinished buildings, swimming pools) rather than sustainable planning.
- Many IDPs are unable to return home due to severe damage, fire destruction, or structural risks.
- Forced and repeated eviction; sudden school closures and hotel evictions without notice or alternatives, leading to repeated displacement.
- Loss of documentation and legal insecurity; loss of civil and property documentation, blocking access to education, services, and restitution of rights.
- Secondary occupation and security of tenure issues; secondary occupation of vacated properties and insecure informal tenure, increasing disputes and eviction risks.

### GBV:

- Lack of safe infrastructure and GBV risk mitigation measures: Shelter and WASH facilities lack gender-sensitive design, privacy safeguards and GBV risk mitigation measures, increasing exposure of women and girls to harassment and sexual violence.
- Access constraints affecting GBV service delivery: Reliance on irregular inter-agency convoys, coupled with movement restrictions and fuel shortages, severely hampers partners' ability to deliver supplies and deploy mobile GBV teams, resulting in service gaps and delayed response in affected areas.

### Child Protection:

- Exposure of children to violent language, family encouragement of aggression, and involved in non-child friendly engagements and activities.
- High risk for unaccompanied/separated children, with cultural guardianship arrangements complicating identification and follow-up.
- Access limitations constrains the timely provision of child protection services.
- Lack of adequate funding for child protection support has left children neglected and exploited.

### Mine Action:

- Safety constraints remain a key concern preventing deployment of NTS and EOD teams to affected areas, especially in As-Sweida.
- Chronic lack of funding to ramp up mine action interventions, especially clearance, remains a challenge, with support needed to increase the number of teams among the existing partners, but also to deploy



new partners into the area to support the response.

- Given the disruption of consistent health and protection services since July, survivors of EO incidents/accidents and persons with disabilities are living without critical care, including medical support, physical rehabilitation, assistive devices, livelihoods, etc.
- An urgent data collection surge on EO survivors and persons with disabilities is pivotal in enabling partners better address the immediate and long term needs.

### Call to Action

Humanitarian actors, donors, and authorities are urged to act decisively to prevent further deterioration of the protection environment and to uphold the safety, dignity, and rights of displaced populations and host communities in southern Syria. Priority actions include:

- **Humanitarian Access:** Advocate for the safe reopening of key roads, including the Sweida–Damascus highway, to restore mobility, enable timely delivery of humanitarian assistance, and strengthen civilian access to essential services.
- **Supporting the strengthening of the protection response:** Through increased and flexible funding commitments on the part of donors.
- **Alternative Shelter Solutions:** Identify and prepare alternative shelter options for displaced families currently residing in schools and unsafe temporary facilities, to ensure children can return to education without disruption and IDPs have access to dignified and safe living conditions.
- **Strengthen Coordination:** Enhance coordination between NGOs and local authorities managing displacement sites to address service overlaps, reduce discriminatory aid distribution, and establish formal, accessible, and confidential complaint mechanisms for IDPs.
- **Documentation and HLP Safeguards:** Support interim mechanisms for civil documentation and ownership verification to prevent land/property disputes and protect IDPs from forced dispossession.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction:** Support non-technical surveys to identify explosive ordnance (EO) hazardous areas and EO disposal and destruction efforts so as to enable safe movement of people, safe returns when the time comes, and pave the way for resilience and recovery in the future.

**Syria Protection Sector**  
**September 2025**