



“Widows’ Camps” in North-West Syria

“I am a widow. It is difficult to access services because the community customs, traditions and culture play a role in preventing women from leaving the house.”

Adult woman, Maaret Tamsrin sub district, Idlib, Voices from Syria 2022

“Widows’ camps” are segregated sites for women who are widowed, divorced, with missing husbands, or who are otherwise with children but not currently with a male spouse. The conditions in these camps pose multiple protection concerns and compounding needs.

At least 50

“widows’ camps” exist in north-west Syria

Almost 70%

of camp residents are children (over 13,000 children)

over 19,000

women and children live in these “widows’ camps”

USD 8.2M

needed for the implementation of the Inter-Cluster “widows’ camps” Action Plan

Female Headed Households (FHHs) are five times more likely to report no formal schooling compared to Male Headed Households (MHHs).

According to the Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP), only 7% of households in north-west Syria are headed by women yet they disproportionately have a higher number of dependents compared to MHHs.

With limited access to formal education, women face more barriers in accessing livelihoods opportunities and are at greater risk of exploitation and abuse.

PROTECTION CONCERNS

- Restrictions on freedom of movement
- Family separation and increased risk of child labor and recruitment by armed groups
- Forced and child marriages
- High incidence of mental health issues
- High risk of physical and psychological violence
- Inability to safely access services outside of the sites

KEY REASONS COMPELLING WOMEN TO MOVE TO “WIDOWS’ CAMPS”

- Inability of female caregivers to access livelihoods opportunities
- Inability to access inheritance and other Housing, Land and Property (HLP) challenges
- Stigmatization of widowed and divorced women
- Threats of forced marriage to a family member such as a brother-in-law
- Widowed and divorced women are at a higher risk of GBV and other protection violations

INTER-CLUSTER RESPONSE ACTION PLAN

Building on previous pilot GBV and Livelihood Programming, funded by the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (2021- 2022), the Protection Cluster has spearheaded an Inter-Cluster Action Plan, in collaboration with eight other clusters. The Plan involves:

- Systematic collection of information on needs in each “widows’ camp”
- Scaling-up of GBV livelihoods programme, in addition to other GBV and Child Protection programming, with focus on female-headed households and separated families
- Provision of Health, Education, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services
- Relocation of individuals/families at high risk
- Advocacy and resource mobilization

The longer-term strategy is to support the integration of women and children into society, including the creation of safe conditions and targeted livelihood opportunities for all female-headed households. **USD 8.2 million is required to fund the plan.**

KEY ASKS

1. **Advocacy** with decision makers to ensure:
 - Unfettered humanitarian access to all camps across north-west Syria
 - Freedom of movement for accessing services and livelihood opportunities outside of these sites
 - Cessation of expelling boys from their families to maintain family unity
 - Cessation of forced relocations from these sites
 - Support safer conditions for FHHs (both women and their dependent children) outside of the sites and promote conditions conducive to integration into society
2. **Ensuring** access of all FHHs to humanitarian services inside and outside of camps, and supporting the safety and dignity of all women, girls, and boys
3. **Funding** for the Inter-Cluster Action Plan

SNAPSHOT

“WIDOWS’ CAMPS” IN NORTH-WEST SYRIA