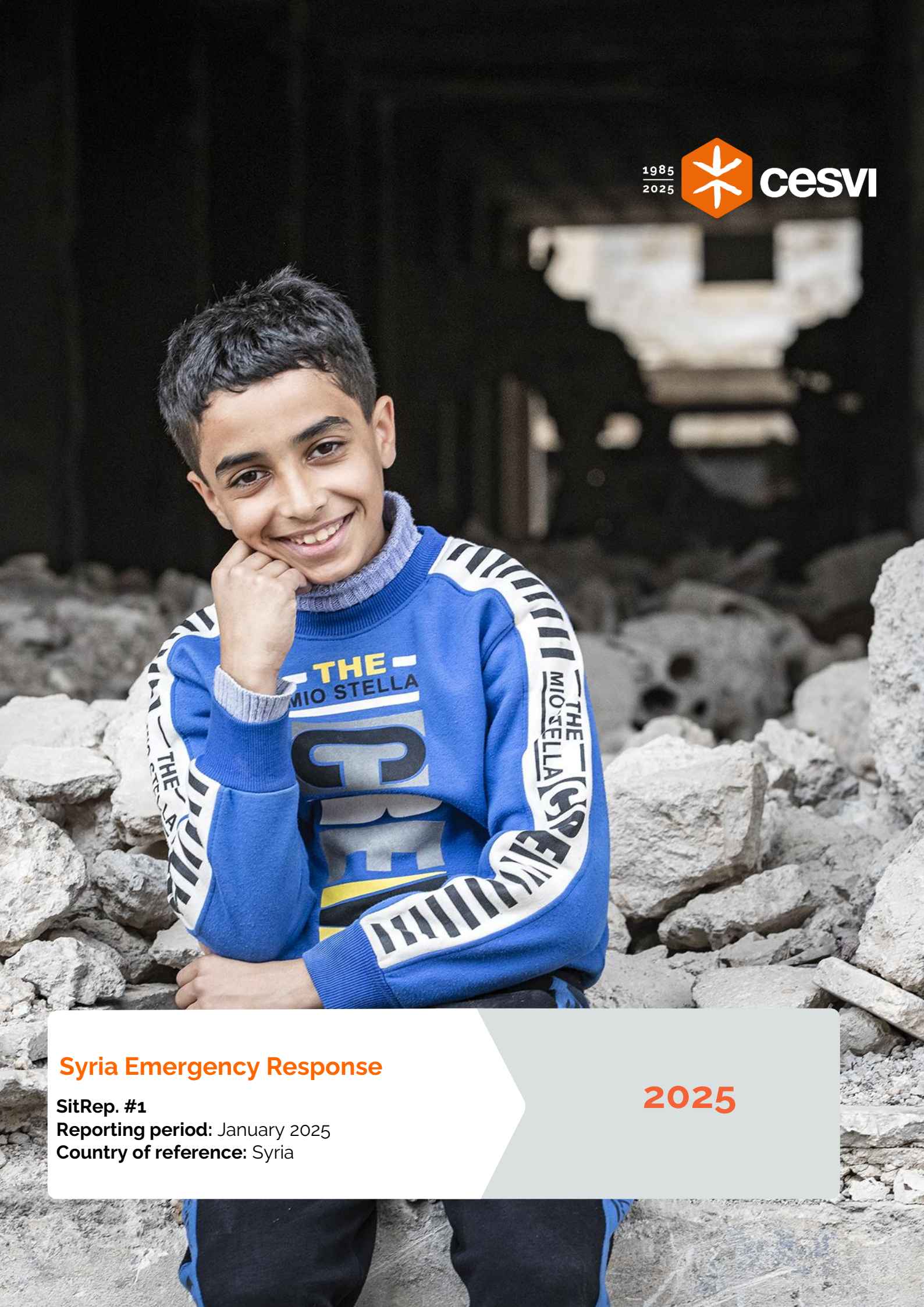


1985
2025



cesvi



Syria Emergency Response

SitRep. #1

Reporting period: January 2025

Country of reference: Syria

2025

CONTENTS

1. CESVI EMERGENCY RESPONSE STRATEGY	3
2. CRISIS IMPACT IN NUMBERS	4
3. KEY UPDATES AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS	5
4. MAP(S) OF AFFECTED AREAS	6
5. RESPONSE AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS OF THE GOVERNMENT, UNs AND OTHER AGENCIES	7
6. PARTNERSHIP AND LOCALIZATION	8
7. CESVI's RESPONSE CAPACITY	8
8. MAIN CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS	9
9. CALL FOR ACTION	10
NOTES	

1. CESVI EMERGENCY RESPONSE STRATEGY

CESVI adopts a **comprehensive approach to crisis response**, offering effective solutions for both immediate and long-term emergencies, with a focus on linking humanitarian aid, development, and peace in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. In line with CESVI's global strategy, our aim is to increase our capacity to respond quickly and effectively to sudden-onset emergencies and protracted crisis based on people's needs.

In **Syria**, following the change in authorities on **December 8**, hostilities and insecurity persist across the country, particularly in **north-east**, leading to movement restrictions and further damage to vital infrastructure, including water stations, bridges, markets, and essential services. Humanitarian access remains restricted in several areas, while border crossings operate with varying levels of functionality.








Nationwide, the **humanitarian situation remains critical** due to a combination of internal, regional, and international factors. Syria's economic conditions are dire; although inflation has stabilized, purchasing power remains low, banking transactions continue to face challenges, and living costs are rising. Fuel, electricity, and water shortages persist across governorates, exacerbating daily hardships. There is an **urgent need to restore livelihood opportunities** and address the extensive damage to businesses and infrastructure to **support local economic recovery and the re-establishment of sustainable enterprises**. Furthermore, **education** facilities are severely strained, impacting access to education and learning opportunities. Additionally, female-headed households, adolescent girls, **persons with disabilities (PWD)**, and other vulnerable groups face heightened risks of **gender-based violence (GBV)** and negative coping mechanisms, including child marriage, child labour, and sexual exploitation.

The cumulative impact of these challenges has increased the number of **people in need** of humanitarian assistance, with the total affected population reaching **16.7 million**.

As part of its response strategy, CESVI conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment in the governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, As-Sweida, and Dara'a to evaluate key challenges and opportunities in the **Education, Protection, and Early Recovery and Livelihoods** sectors amid ongoing political and socio-economic instability.

CESVI is committed to protecting the most vulnerable populations, including children, women, and displaced persons affected by the fourteen years of violence generated since the outbreak of the civil war and by recent political developments.

2. CRISIS IMPACT IN NUMBERS

KEY FIGURES		
	Total Population ⁱ	24.3 M
	People in Need ⁱⁱ	16.7 M
	Internally Displaced People ⁱⁱⁱ (IDPs)	~ 7,426,023 M
		New IDPs after Dec 8 2024 ~ 627,585
	Estimated returnees within Syria ^{iv} Since 27 Nov 2024	~ 522,000
	Protection	16.3 M
	Education	7.8 M
	Early Recovery and Livelihoods	14.56 M

3. KEY UPDATES AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS^v

Between December 29, 2024, and January 20, 2025, **CESVI conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment** to evaluate the humanitarian context and new needs in Syria. Given the evolving operational landscape, CESVI's team leveraged its expertise to analyse the persistent drivers of need, with a focus on the deteriorating education system, escalating protection risks, and the widespread lack of livelihood opportunities.

Education

- Across Syria, school rehabilitation and overall support remain critical issues, with continued disruptions hindering access to both formal and non-formal education. **An estimated 25% of children are not attending school**, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Teachers and students require psychosocial support and trauma healing to facilitate their reintegration into the education system; additionally, there is a lack of safe spaces to cater children who are out of school.
- In the whole Syria, there is an urgent need for school rehabilitation, and particularly in rural Idleb and Aleppo, where schools were damaged by war and the 2023 earthquake. **In total, 8,400 schools require repairs or rebuilding.**

- Cash assistance is needed for families and teachers, while winterization support remains insufficient, leaving many schools without heaters and essential supplies to protect students during the colder months.
- According to the Inter-Cluster Needs Assessment (January 2025) for Aleppo and Idlib, 18% of responses identified a need for teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, stationery), 12% called for the establishment of new learning spaces, 10% emphasized the need for rehabilitation of existing schools, 17% reported a lack of heaters for classrooms and 10% highlighted the need for winterization kits for children.

Protection

- **Explosive ordnance (EO) incidents have drastically increased**, with December seeing a 300% rise compared to November. At least 64 civilians were killed, and over 100 wounded in more than 75 incidents involving unexploded ordnance (UXOs), landmines, or explosive remnants of war. Most incidents occurred in Deir-ez-Zor, Idlib, Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Hama, As-Sweida, and Dara'a. **Children are particularly vulnerable, with 116 reported cases of child casualties in December alone.**
- Explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and emergency clearance are urgently needed, especially around key infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and public buildings.
- Ongoing assessments in northwest Syria highlight **cash assistance, psychosocial support, shelter, and housing as key needs**. Homelessness, denial of resources, and psychological distress remain serious protection risks.
- Child-friendly spaces, psychosocial support, and recreational activities are urgently needed. Specialized PSS support is essential to help severely affected individuals rebuild their sense of security.
- **Gender-based violence (GBV) services remain critically underfunded**, with limited access to life-saving support for women and girls. Survivors of sexual violence, particularly former detainees, including men and boys, face social stigma, mental health struggles, and reluctance to seek help.
- **Access to civil documentation remains a significant barrier** to returnees and internally displaced people. Many civil registries are only partially functional, and legal services are still disrupted due to non-operational courts.
- **Mobile protection services face severe movement restrictions** due to unsafe roads and ongoing clashes in rural areas. As a result, most mobile teams are operational only in urban and peri-urban areas, leaving rural and remote areas largely unreached.
- In Damascus, an increasing influx of returnees is leading to **heightened risks of GBV and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)**, particularly due to lack of accommodation and economic hardships preventing them from affording rental costs.

Early Recovery and Livelihoods

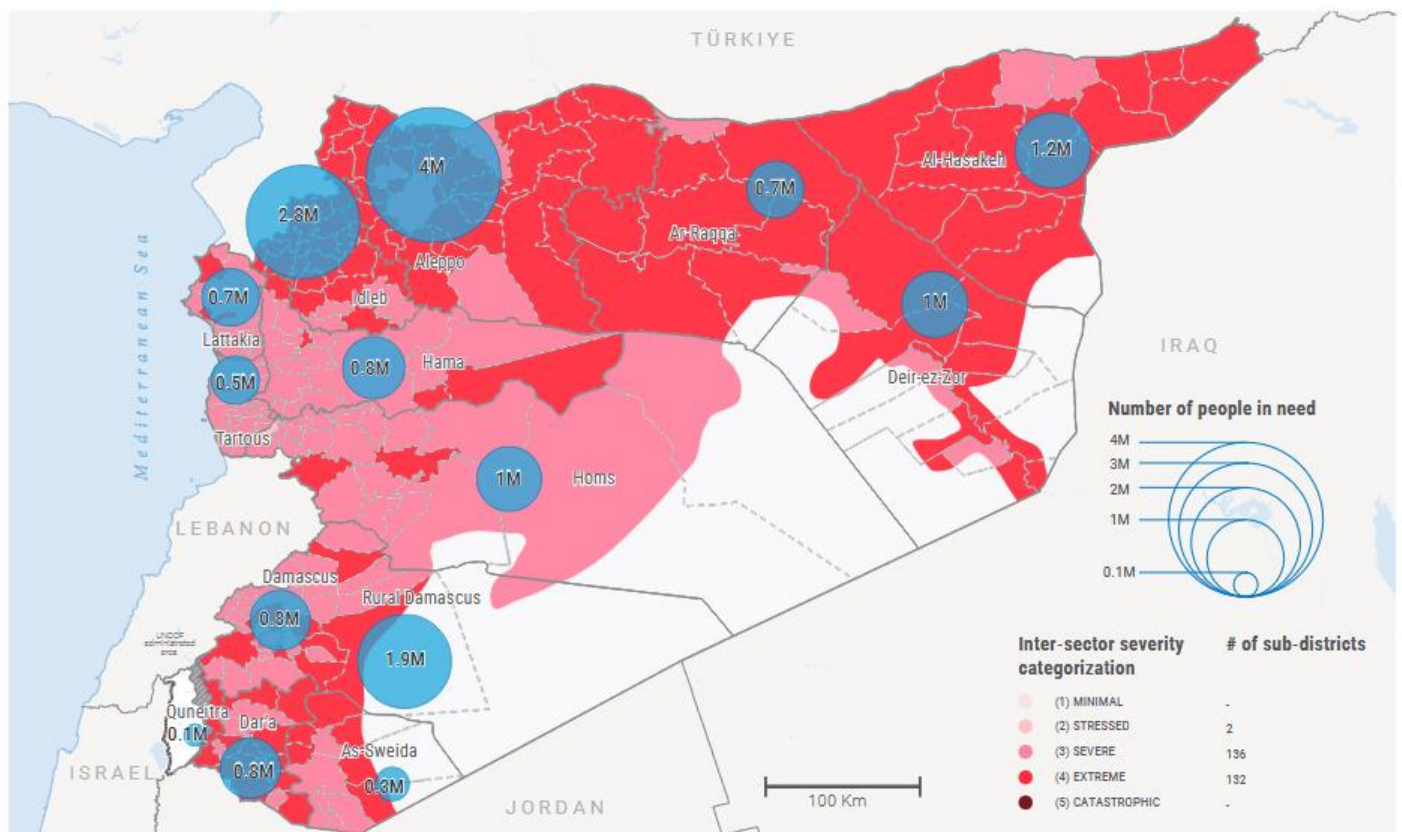
- **Income gaps persist, with 82% of communities reporting insufficient earnings to cover basic needs**, and 64% highlighting a lack of suitable employment opportunities. Unemployment is especially high among youth and women, and job opportunities scarce. An inter-cluster assessment highlights extensive damage to community infrastructure, severely affecting services, livelihoods, and access to economic opportunities. Many households are resorting to negative coping strategies, including depleting savings, selling belongings, and cutting spending on health and education, as well as child marriage and child labour.
- Agriculture remains a key income source for 45% of communities, yet high costs and market instability continue to threaten its sustainability.
- **Restoring livelihoods is a top priority**, requiring income-generating projects, job creation, vocational training, and support for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

(MSMEs). Cash assistance and cash-for-work programs are urgently needed to support vulnerable populations.

- **Critical infrastructure rehabilitation is essential**, particularly for electricity networks, irrigation systems, roads, sewage systems, and solid waste management. Many areas currently receive less than six hours of electricity per day, posing a major obstacle to economic activity.
- **The cost of basic survival has increased**, with the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) rising by 6% in January. While markets remain operational, soaring prices continue to limit purchasing power, increasing the need for livelihood support and income-generating activities.
- In areas with high returnee movements, strengthening community-based initiatives to foster social cohesion and reduce tensions is also critical. **Special attention is needed to ensure inclusivity for persons with disabilities** through accessible infrastructure and tailored livelihood programs.

4. MAP(S) OF AFFECTED AREAS

Number of people in need by governorate and severity by sub-district



5. RESPONSE AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS OF THE GOVERNMENT, UNs AND OTHER AGENCIES

The crisis in Syria remains highly complex, with a fragmented governance structure following the fall of Assad, creating significant challenges for humanitarian coordination. The collapse of the government has left power dynamics in flux, with shifting ground realities shaping control. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continue to destabilize the northeast, while Israel consolidates its presence in the Golan Heights, contributing to an increasingly volatile environment. On January 29th, Abu Mohammed al-Julani, the leader of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), was appointed president of Syria for a "transitional period," further complicating the political landscape.

Despite intensified efforts by international agencies, **a severe funding gap persists**. The 2024 Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) remains critically underfunded, with **only 34.5% of the \$4.1 billion required secured**. As a result, essential services such as water, sanitation, and healthcare have been suspended, particularly affecting camps and facilities in northwest Syria.

Recent coordination meetings indicate that ECHO is looking to scale up early recovery and livelihoods projects, emphasizing the need to prioritize protection for the most vulnerable communities. **The European Commission has pledged €235 million in humanitarian assistance** for Syrians both inside the country and in neighbouring states for 2025. Additionally, the European Union has outlined a roadmap to gradually ease sanctions on Syria, aiming to accelerate reconstruction and stimulate the national economy.

UNHCR has also stressed the urgent need to shift from short-term humanitarian aid to long-term development investments that address the root causes of vulnerability. However, the temporary freeze on foreign assistance funding by the U.S. administration under President Trump may significantly hinder the activities of UN agencies and NGOs operating in Syria.

Several meetings with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) have explored potential funding opportunities. AICS has confirmed plans to launch two calls for proposals - one focused on emergency response and another on reconstruction - totalling approximately €12 million. However, the emergency call, initially expected in January, has been postponed at the request of the Syrian Humanitarian Action Coordination (HAC). The primary challenge remains the legal registration process for INGOs, which must be clarified before Italian NGOs can obtain authorisation to operate in Syria.

Enhanced coordination among humanitarian partners is more critical than ever, with increasing pressure to streamline efforts and avoid duplication. New authorities in Damascus are implementing regulations to define humanitarian access and ensure the continuation of state services, though response mechanisms are still evolving. INGOs and LNGOs are working to establish more structured coordination platforms and fora at national and sub-national levels, particularly to navigate government requirements and improve collective impact. Nevertheless, it is not clear yet how the new coordination mechanisms will be structured, in particular considering the previous division between Governmental (based in Damascus) and non-Governmental (based in Gaziantep) areas.

6. PARTNERSHIP AND LOCALIZATION

CESVI began operations in Northwest Syria in the immediate aftermath of the 2023 earthquake. From the outset, CESVI identified **Olive Branch (OB)**, a leading organization in education and protection, as a strategic partner.

In addition, OB and CESVI had carried-out a joint assessment in the months of December and January with a focus on education, livelihood and protection sectors in Idleb, Aleppo, Dara'a and As-Sweida governorates.

Through this partnership, CESVI and OB have enhanced **educational, protection, and psychosocial support services** in three IDPs camps in Afrin and rehabilitated services and infrastructure in four schools in the Jisr ash-Shughur district, Idlib governorate, in Northwest Syria.

This partnership reflects CESVI's **localisation strategy**, emphasizing sustainable collaboration with local actors. By prioritizing local expertise, the CESVI-OB partnership has tailored interventions to community needs, strengthened resilience, and expanded OB's capacity to lead new initiatives. This collaboration highlights the value of **coordinated, localised efforts** in addressing humanitarian challenges and advancing CESVI's vision of **sustainable development** through local partnerships.

Additionally, as part of its ongoing strategy, CESVI is committed to an **integrated, multisectoral approach** that leverages its international partnerships – especially through the Alliance2015 Network. **A2015 partners** have signed a Joint Capacity Statement to reiterate willingness to coordinate and collaborate, possibly establishing a **joint hub** in Damascus and conduct **joint assessment**. This collaborative approach not only at national, but also at international level would allow CESVI to offer a more robust response to the ongoing crisis. In this sense, a meeting in Brussels with COHAFA has been scheduled to discuss intervention measures.

7. CESVI's RESPONSE CAPACITY

CESVI is currently finalizing the need assessment analysis, mapping of operations, drafting of country strategy as well as supporting OB operations where the framework for aid delivery has largely collapsed and requires urgent restoration. **Future operating conditions for international NGOs remain uncertain**. OB and CESVI have also carried out a joint scoping mission, including an in-depth multi-sector assessment in the months of December and January with a focus on education, livelihood and protection sectors in Idleb, Aleppo, Dara'a and As-Sweida governorates.

CESVI has started the registration process to operate in Syria, though the process is still new for all organizations and timelines are unclear. In the **short term**, CESVI will continue to work with OB as more information on INGO activities and registration becomes available. Simultaneously, CESVI is finalizing registration in Jordan as a **Regional Hub** to facilitate operations in **southern Syria**, where significant humanitarian needs remain unmet.

CESVI plans to collaborate closely with its **Alliance2015 partners**—none of whom are currently registered in Damascus. **Coordination is critical** at this stage, all Alliance2015 partners operating in Syria are working cross-border covering complementary sectors and have expressed interest

in sharing spaces in Damascus, sharing partner information (e.g., names, geographical cover, sectors); exploring passporting opportunities; and coordinating assessments to prevent overlap.

Finally, the **Italian Embassy in Damascus** was among the first to formally contact the newly formed government. Being one of the most active diplomatic delegations in Damascus, CESVI plans also to increase the level of **engagement with Italian government officials** at Rome level to leverage the open channel between the Italian and Syrian governments and explore opportunities for collaboration and support in Syria.

At the same time, coordination and advocacy with AICS at Beirut / Damascus level is essential in order to continue the dialogue, ensure CESVI visibility in the country, as well as positioning CESVI for the upcoming call for proposal.

At the moment, sectors of intervention and key priorities are yet to be precisely defined. Nevertheless, based on its previous experiences in the country (N/E) and on the data collected through the assessment, CESVI intends to focus on **Education in Emergencies**, and **Protection**, while integrating key **life-saving interventions as well as early recovery and livelihood activities**.

8. MAIN CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

- **The registration process in Syria presents significant challenges.** The interim government's priorities remain unclear across sectors, and there is limited information on registration and visa procedures. The absence of a formally appointed Ministry of Foreign Affairs further complicates matters for international NGOs, making it uncertain how Syrian authorities will regulate foreign organizations. In this context, the recently established communication channel between the Italian Embassy in Damascus and the newly appointed Syrian executive could prove valuable in facilitating CESVI's future interventions. CESVI's lawyer is finalizing the registration based on submitted documents and will provide updates on any emerging changes or challenges.
- **Political uncertainty adds another layer of complexity**, as shifting power dynamics may hinder access, strain partnerships, and limit operational effectiveness in certain regions.
- **Alliance2015 members have conducted intention surveys among internally displaced Syrians living in camps**, alongside rapid needs assessments in areas of origin. Findings indicate that **while many IDPs express a willingness to return, significant obstacles remain**, delaying large-scale population movements. Key barriers include inadequate housing, insufficient basic services, and a lack of financial resources and economic opportunities. Furthermore, weaknesses in the banking system make cash access in Syria highly challenging, leading to delays and inefficiencies in aid delivery, as well as difficulties in paying staff and partners. Infrastructure limitations—such as unreliable electricity, water, and internet—further complicate organizational operations, logistics, and communication.
- **Funding constraints and high operational costs**, coupled with escalating humanitarian and recovery needs, **place significant strain on organizational capacity**.

- Local NGOs (LNGOs) have been invited to apply for formal licenses, which are expected to be granted in short times. For now, many LNGOs, including OB, have secured initial authorization to operate through approval letters from community leaders.

9. CALLS FOR ACTION

In light of the latest political developments in Syria and the ensuing effects on the humanitarian crisis present in the country, CESVI urges all parties involved in Syria to:

- Uphold their obligations under **International Humanitarian Law**.
- Facilitate humanitarian operations guaranteeing **unhindered and safe access** to humanitarian workers.
- **Ensure the protection of civilians and allow those fleeing to return safely and voluntarily** by eliminating the main barriers.
- **Enhance coordination and collaboration among all actors involved** to maximize impact and link relief efforts with long-term recovery.
- **Protect and rebuild civilian infrastructure** severely damaged by years of war and by the recent outbreak of violence and **accelerate the reconstruction process**.
- **Increase and prioritise humanitarian funding for principled early recovery programmes** which are essential to sustain livelihoods and strengthen resilience of vulnerable communities.

NOTES

ⁱ [Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities - January to March 2025 \(Issued January 2025\)](#)

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ [UNHCR Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview](#)

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v [Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 13 on the Recent Developments in Syria \(as of 29 January 2025\)](#)



Syria Emergency Response
SitRep#0. Period: 9-13 Dec 2024

© Cover Photo by Giovanni Diffidenti

