

# 1.1 Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Background

- [Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Background](#)
  - [Calamities and Seasonal Affects](#)
  - [Capacity and Contacts for In-Country Emergency Response](#)
    - [Government](#)
    - [Humanitarian Community](#)

## Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Background

Disasters, Conflicts and Migration		
Natural Disasters	Yes / No	Comments / Details
Drought	Yes	<p>The Syrian Arab Republic experiences a Mediterranean climate with dry summers and winter rainfall. Most of the country is semi arid to arid with over 90% the area receiving less than 350 mm mean annual rainfall. The rangelands desert steppe occupies 55% of the country and covers about 10 million hectares, excluding the irrigation band along the Euphrates River. It is in the Badia that most of the country's nomadic herders and sheep are located. Drought is one of the more serious natural hazards affecting the country, which has a major negative impact on the agricultural sector.</p> <p>The recent drought experienced in 2007-2009 was considered to be the most severe in 25 years. It necessitated relief assistance and stimulated the initiative for formulating a national drought management policy. This policy was supported by A.0 and aims to provide a suitable framework for drought preparedness, response and mitigation in order to minimize the impact of drought and to facilitate post- drought recovery.</p> <p>In the winter of 2007/8 the rural population of Syria was hit by two concurrent major shocks: the worst drought in four decades and a dramatic price increase of basic food commodities over a short period of time. The drought had a serious effect on crop and livestock production, natural vegetation and consequently the livelihoods of herders and farmers in the rural areas. Total rainfall during October 2007 - May 2008 was much below average: the majority of the weather stations have recorded 25-85 percent less rain than the average cumulative precipitation. At the same time the population has to cope with soaring food and fuel prices: the price of rice has risen by as much as 143 percent and the price of diesel by 350 percent since January 2008</p>
Earthquakes	No	<p>The western parts of Syria, where the major urban centers (Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama) are located, are the most vulnerable to earthquake.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Western side of country that composed 1/3 of country is located along fault line.</li> <li>2. The expected affected population will be about 250,000. The majority will be Syrian with smaller number of the third country nationals and Palestinian refugees.</li> <li>3. The major assistances are search and rescue, emergency medical services, ongoing medical services, shelter and non-food items, food, water and sanitation, psycho-social services, education, disease surveillance, vaccination.</li> <li>4. The initial phase for this emergency will be 3 months.</li> <li>5. Most of the displaced persons are expected to have no shelter and no access to the basic health and educational service.</li> <li>6. Decreased freedom of movement and related livelihood opportunities for IDPs lead to increased food insecurity.</li> <li>7. The minimal requirements of the GoS are overall coordination from government, identification of shelters, civil defense responsibilities, and government call for international assistance.</li> <li>8. The local NGOs have limited capacity for search and rescue and lack in the coordination ability. Limited presence of the INGOs.</li> </ol>
Epidemics	No	-
Extreme Temperatures	Yes	Climate in Syria is mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus.

<b>Flooding</b>	Yes	Syria has suffered several flood events in the past which have resulted in death and destruction of property, livestock and vital infrastructure. These flood events are usually associated with winter rains and floods emanating from snow melt. During the period 2000-2003, Syria was impacted by a total of 18 such events which affected an average of 8 of the 14 Governorates, all with infrastructure damage mainly in the form of destroyed or collapsed roads, flooding-out of cultivated lands and damage to historical sites. Most recently, a disaster was declared when flooding occurred as a result of the collapsed 71 million cubic meters capacity Zeyzoun dam a June 2002 which accounted for the lives of 22 persons and flooded out village Carmlands. Closely associated with this flooding was the frequent occurrence of landslides.
<b>Insect Infestation</b>	No	-
<b>Mudslides</b>	No	-
<b>Volcanic Eruptions</b>	No	-
<b>High Waves / Surges</b>	No	-
<b>Wildfires</b>	No	-
<b>High Winds</b>	Yes	Most of drought areas in the Northern Eastern part of Syria are vulnerable to wind and sand storms. The last one too place in Hassaka in 2008.
<b>Other Comments</b>	-	
<b>Man-Made Issues</b>		
<b>Civil Strife</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>International Conflict</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Internally Displaced Persons</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Refugees Present</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Landmines / UXO Present</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Other Comments</b>	Transport accident on the 21Sep1998, (killed 37), on the 31Mar2005 (killed 30), 27Jan2007 (killed 26), 21Apr2011 (affected 20) and miscellaneous accident (affected 10,020)	

For more detailed database on disasters by country, please see the Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters:

[Website of Emdat - Disaster Database](#)

## Calamities and Seasonal Affects

Seasonal Affects on Transport		
Transport	Comments	From (month) to (month)

<b>Primary Road Transport</b>	No effect or restriction applicable.	January to December
<b>Secondary Road Transport</b>	The raining season could affect the Secondary road transport, from November till end of March. In addition, the secondary road transport could face some traffic during the harvest season.	November to March
<b>Rail Transport</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Air Transport</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Waterway Transport</b>	n/a	n/a

<b>Seasonal Affects on Storage and Handling (economic, social, climate...)</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>From &lt;month&gt; to &lt;month&gt;</b>
<b>Storage</b>	Outdoor storage, during harvesting seasons (June & July) of summer crops (Vegetables & Cereals)	June to July
<b>Handling</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Other</b>	n/a	n/a

## Capacity and Contacts for In-Country Emergency Response

### Government

The major natural hazards affecting Syria are drought, flooding and earthquakes. The capacity to deal with natural hazard risk in Syria is still at a fairly low level. In general, Syria is still attempting to put in place basic disaster preparedness functions that are not well developed and need to be strengthened. Also, national planning efforts do not systematically integrate risk reduction concerns into development planning. But although there is awareness of this at the highest political levels, limited national capacity exists to make it happen.

#### Governmental Institutional Arrangements and Coordination

The institutional arrangements surrounding disaster reduction activities in Syria are set within a complex web of committees, councils and institutions with the most active council being the Highest Council for Civil Defense. The only operational agency within this structure is the Civil Defense Agency, which maintains the traditional disaster preparedness and response mandate and falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment. The Civil Defense Agency, with a total staff of 4,000, is decentralized to the Governorate level covering the 14 Governorates within Syria where 3,000 of the staff are currently deployed. For emergencies, an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) exists in Damascus, which is linked to the Governorates via wireless equipment. The communication system within this EOC revealed serious weaknesses during the Zeyzoun Dam collapse in June 2002

The Civil Defense Department has a centralized National Plan which has yet to be tested in recent years. The Civil Defense, the Fire Departments and the Police Department are the three main national institutions involved in Syria's disaster response effort. These institutions are all decentralized, down to the Governorate level, and form part of the Local Committee for Disaster Management within the 14 Governorates

There is little co-ordination among the agencies involved in this institutional structure. The Civil Defense Agency is more operationally linked with the Ministry of Defense than the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE). This agency is primarily concerned with disaster response; hence, the issues of mitigation and disaster reduction are not considered as priorities. The Ministry of Interior has a role related to security and safety and needs to improve its capacity levels, especially related to evacuation planning and incident command

The Ministry of Health, with the support of WHO, has developed a National Disaster Plan for the Health Sector which is tested every 6 months. As part of this plan, the Ministry of Health maintains stores of emergency medical supplies and has equipped all polyclinics with emergency kits. Nevertheless, despite good cooperation with WHO, there remains a need for greater public information and awareness. There is no single national agency in Syria with a designated role for multi-sectoral coordination for disasters and emergencies. Recently, during Lebanese war in 2006, State Ministry for Red Crescent Affairs, has taken a key role in coordinating disaster and emergency responses among international and national institutions

As per the Memorandum # 15/7929 dated 5 December 2006 from the Office of the Prime Minister, coordination and supervision of international non-governmental organizations will be managed by the State Ministry for Red Crescent Affairs. On the other hand, national non-governmental organizations will be supervised and coordinated with by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MoSAL). Supervision of the Red Crescent Societies will be the jurisdiction of the State Ministry for Red Crescent

Government has a considerable number of different types of aircrafts and helicopters likely to be available to transport personnel and relief supplies; the approximate costs of operation of military and other government aircraft and helicopters.

#### [4.1 Syrian Arab Republic Government Contact List](#)

### Humanitarian Community

In the event of a natural disaster or of a man made crisis, the UNCT (or Disaster Management Team-DMT-) will assume responsibility for inter-sectoral coordination under the direction and guidance of RC. UNCT or DMT will activate sectoral working groups and streamlined them if necessary to respond to the emergency situation

RC's responsibilities involve organizing needs assessments, emergency appeals, information management, and other common services. RC is responsible for mobilizing external resources such as an UNDAC/INSARAG/USAR teams. The coordination body will work closely with GoS and Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)

#### **Composition of Cluster/Sector**

- UNRWA will retain primary responsibility for Palestinian refugee populations directed to UNRWA facilities by GoS
- UNHCR will be responsible for protection, reception, registration and assistance in accordance with its mandate on behalf of refugees and other persons of concern, if any, with other traditional partners such as WFP (Food), and UNICEF (Water & Sanitation)

#### **UN-Government Collaboration on Potential Disasters**

##### **Crisis Prevention and Recovery**

- UNDP Syria run a five year comprehensive disaster reduction programme project
- The strategic aims of this project are to strengthen national disaster risk management capacities by reinforcing national institutional and legislative systems
- This should encourage its integration and enhance local level risk management initiatives through the decentralized governorate system while strengthening technical capacities of main stakeholders to sustain the disaster reduction capacity development activities initiated through this project
- A comprehensive approach should be devised which concentrates on support towards the preparation of a national strategy for disaster risk reduction
- The strategy will emphasize the integration of disaster risk reduction into development issues at the national and governorate levels, facilitate stakeholder participation in this effort, and raise awareness among policy-makers and civil society regarding appropriate disaster risk reduction actions
- Overall and specific objectives are to enhance risk reduction capacities to deal with natural disaster and conflict situations.

##### **Expected Results**

- A risk reduction strategy and legislation
- A team of risk management personnel
- Increased capacity for conflict resolution

##### **Activities**

- Develop a national disaster reduction strategy and institutional framework for the implementation of the strategy
- Support the inclusion of disaster reduction concerns into the tenth national five-year development plan (2006 – 2010) being prepared by the State Planning Commission
- Design and implement disaster mitigation projects
- Mainstream disaster reduction into the CCA

##### **UNDAF Process**

- Finalize GIS-based multi-hazard mapping
- Carry out earthquake risk-mapping and seismic data interpretation
- Strengthen disaster committees at governorate level with basic disaster management training
- Train disaster agencies in basic disaster preparedness and emergency response
- Organize earthquake risk awareness campaigns for the general public and in particular a programme for earthquake preparedness and awareness in schools
- Participate in the Arab states sub-regional initiative for disaster reduction
- Organize Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) workshops
- Assess the potential for conflict through the application of a conflict development assessment tool

#### **4.2 Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Agency Contact List**