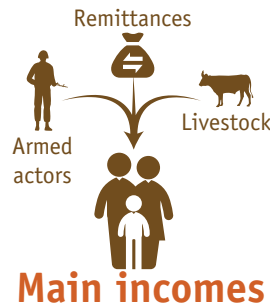
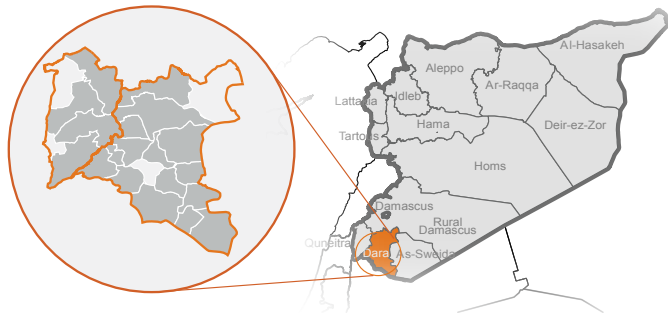


THE FORGOTTEN SOUTH

Food Security and Livelihoods in Southern Syria

Survey Results in brief | January 2016



6.5 Average household size

Average income of **42,000** SYP

23% HH engaged in livestock sector

43% Internally Displaced Persons*

87% are food aid dependent

10.4% HH engaged in agriculture sector

17% Female headed households

20% head of HH with disability

18% HH with a University Degree

INTRODUCTION

This assessment of Dar'a and Quneitra was conducted by CARE in partnership with NRC, and RFSAN/FAO (iMMAP) from August to October 2015, and reveals the impact of the crisis on rural and urban communities in southern Syria and the subsequent needs of the people affected. The survey was conducted at the household level, collecting details from farmers, livestock herders, and owners of small businesses. Special attention was given to more vulnerable households such as internally displaced people, people with disabilities, large families, and single/female headed households. Access was at times difficult as the active engagement between fighting parties runs through both governorates and posed a security threat to enumerators.

1,212 Interviews

63 Key informants

25 Focus Group Discussions



MAIN FINDINGS

- **Livelihoods** have been severely eroded by conflict.
- **Local economy** in southern Syria has suffered heavily and in some areas is threatened with collapse.
- Almost 90 percent of people rely on **food aid** and other coping strategies.
- Only 10 percent of households are **engaged in agriculture** compared to an estimated 70 percent, pre-crisis, (including agro-related businesses).
- **Cost of fuel/lack of electricity** a major barrier for many income generating opportunities
- **Average income** has dropped to US\$123/household/month (lower for the internally displaced), while the average is only US\$90/month for female-headed households
- 88 percent of households **fall under extreme poverty line**, although food aid has offset the short-term impacts of this.
- More than 80 percent of households are using **stress coping strategies**, 36 percent are using more severe crisis coping strategies, with many doing whatever is needed to get by.
- **Engagement with armed actors** provides the primary source of income for 17 percent of households, and for as many as 23 percent of displaced households. Primary sources of income also include remittances (15 percent) and livestock (12 percent).
- More than 10 percent of households have resorted to **child labor**.
- 54 percent of households have **incurred debt** in the last year.
- **Government services have collapsed**, people are fully dependent on private sector and assistance.
- **Opportunities for strategic investments exist** that could restore livelihoods or support coping strategies of the affected population.

*Source: OCHA, Aug 2015

GENERAL CRISIS EFFECTS

General needs

- Energy/Fuel
- Food
- Water

Main livelihood coping strategies

- Spent Savings
- Borrowing money
- Food on Credit

Crop challenges

- Fuel unavailable /expensive
- Inputs unavailable /expensive
- Lack of water /irrigation

Livestock challenges

- Expensive vet services
- Expensive feed
- High water costs

RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus on livelihood interventions, not only distribution of goods

- 1. Support services and better governance.** The conflict has brought a completely new situation for society. Agriculture, as well as small businesses, have been heavily affected and many people involved in those and other sectors have had to change occupations. Developing capacities and supporting local initiatives can help stabilize affected communities to get back on track and become more resilient in these difficult circumstances.
- 2. Promote local markets.** By providing access to agricultural inputs, processing facilities and markets, the heavily affected rural economy can be improved and growth can be generated. Since the import of many of the required inputs is limited due to high prices and lack of fuel and electricity is a major challenge, it can be beneficial to invest into alternative sources of energy (e.g. solar) and inputs (e.g. conservation farming). The easing of cross-border trade restrictions for certain inputs and products should be considered to support local economies.
- 3. Encourage small business development in complementary sectors,** thus supporting processing, marketing, and demand through appropriate cash-based programming (when conditions allow).
- 4. Consider the use of cash and vouchers for future assistance, and the effects of long term food aid** on an agricultural society. When food is available for purchase from retailers, a cash and voucher based response could be more efficient than free distribution of goods. It would likewise boost the economy and enable people to repair and reinvest in livelihoods.

