



GLOBAL ORGANIZATION  
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ADVANCEMENT

# Syrians' Priorities for Recovery and Development



## Thematic Report

20 May 2025



## **Advancement of Civil Society (GLOCA)**

*It is a non-profit organization registered in Syria with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (No. 1368 of 2025). It is headquartered in the city of Aleppo. Registered in Turkey (2022) and Switzerland (2024), it works to promote the roles of youth and women, and defend human rights, through education, community participation, urban planning, reliance on technology and achieving sustainable development.*

 [www.gloca.org](http://www.gloca.org)

 [facebook.com/gloca.org](https://facebook.com/gloca.org)

 [info@gloca.org](mailto:info@gloca.org)

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### **Executive Summary**

This research paper outlines the pressing priorities of Syrian men and women in the coming phase, based on a comprehensive multi-dimensional analysis covering the social, political, legal, and economic aspects, in addition to the concerns of vulnerable groups. The study aims to provide an integrated vision for building a cohesive and stable society, with a focus on strengthening trust between the authorities and the community, ensuring transitional justice, and fostering sustainable development.

A study was conducted to identify the Syrians' core priorities and challenges across the five main domains. The results unanimously indicated that rebuilding social cohesion through safe community dialogues and improving economic conditions are currently of utmost importance. Respondents linked social stability and solidarity to improved living conditions and job creation. Citizens expressed a profound awareness of the need to launch inclusive dialogues encompassing various groups and sects, especially considering increasing societal divisions in recent years.

Participants also stressed the urgent need to restore and enhance education and healthcare services, viewing the reconstruction of these vital sectors as a key entry point to restoring trust between citizens and institutions, as well as an opportunity to empower younger generations to contribute to development. Politically, participants expressed a broad popular desire for political participation despite security and organisational challenges, emphasising the importance of legal reform and the promotion of good governance and transparency to ensure effective participation and fair representation.

Opportunities should also be made available for youth and women to engage in political life, through legal reforms that facilitate their inclusion and strengthen legislative and executive institutions. The study also highlighted the importance of transitional justice and the establishment of mechanisms to hold perpetrators of violations accountable and ensure the fundamental rights of all citizens, as pillars for lasting stability, redress for victims, and restoring institutional trust.

Participants emphasised the need to focus on vulnerable groups such as women, people with disabilities, and internally displaced persons, by addressing their specific service needs, empowering them politically and socially, and ensuring their representation in decision-making processes. These groups clearly voiced the necessity for tailored support programmes to address the challenges they face, such as providing employment opportunities for women, integrating people with disabilities, and securing livelihoods for displaced persons. In light of these clearly expressed priorities, the study underscores the need for immediate support to comprehensive recovery programmes and the promotion of fair governance and sustainable development.

These recommendations come at a time when Syrians are calling for increased international support to meet these urgent needs, which would enable policymakers and donors to take swift and effective actions aligned with citizens' aspirations and enhance the chances of building a stable and inclusive future for all.

### **Introduction**

Syria is undergoing profound transformations after more than a decade of conflict that has left deep impacts on the social, political, and economic structures of the country. Restoring Syria to a path of peace and prosperity is therefore essential for long-term regional stability. This research emerges from the need to explore the priorities of Syrian men and women during the reconstruction phase, based on the necessity of developing a shared vision that addresses the complex legacy of the conflict and lays the foundations for a stable future. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)<sup>1</sup>, Syria was a steadily growing middle-income country in 2010 when the conflict began. Since then, the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>2</sup> has dropped to a level comparable to that of five decades ago. The current per capita GDP has fallen to just

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<sup>1</sup> [The impact of the conflict on the Syria](#)

<sup>2</sup> Human Development Index HDI is an index created by the United Nations that indicates the level of well-being of people in the world. It has issued an annual report since 1990, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) aims to develop countries and improve the conditions of citizens in different countries. The Human Development Index is measured according to three data: average life expectancy at birth, average expected years of schooling, and individual purchasing power

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25% of its 2010 level and now hovers just above the poverty line. With severe income disparities, approximately 50% of the country's infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged. Today, 75% of the population rely on some form of humanitarian aid, compared to just 5% in the first year of the conflict. Many businesses have shut down or relocated to more stable environments abroad, and nearly half of Syria's population is either internally displaced or has sought refuge outside the country.

This report is based on a comprehensive understanding of the needs of Syrians after years of war. Our research relied on real input from Syrians through field surveys, in addition to a thorough review of current policies. The study focused on four key areas: Socially, how to rebuild bonds among people after such extensive fragmentation. Politically, the need to reform government institutions to improve their effectiveness. Economically, the reconstruction of roads, hospitals, schools, and factories destroyed by the war. And in terms of human rights, addressing past injustices and holding those responsible to account.

The report does not overlook the vulnerable groups in society, such as displaced families and women, who have suffered greatly during the crisis. The core idea is that the solution must come through cooperation between the government, local organizations, and activists.

The ultimate goal is to provide a roadmap for effective policy decisions and a practical plan that supports decision-makers in taking real action based on the voices of Syrians themselves—those who best understand their suffering and needs.

### **Theoretical framework**

This research is grounded in a set of concepts and theories that contribute to understanding the priorities of Syrian men and women in the post-conflict phase, focusing on five main pillars: the social, political, legal, and economic aspects, as well as issues related to vulnerable groups.

### **1. Social Dimension**

Syria is undergoing major shifts in its social structure after many years of war. The crisis has left deep scars in the fabric of society and undermined trust among people. From a theoretical perspective, there is an emphasis on transitioning from familial and tribal relations to a more structured institutional system. Bourdieu (1986)<sup>3</sup> discussed social capital and how it helps reinforce trust among individuals. Syrian society is in urgent need of strong institutions—ones capable of rebuilding bridges of trust.

The crisis is evident in the weakening of interpersonal connections. Some studies suggest that ongoing divisions are gradually eroding these relationships. Callahan (2010)<sup>4</sup> observed in his research how prolonged conflicts affect social cohesion. Younger generations are also struggling to form a clear identity under such circumstances. Erikson, in his 2015<sup>5</sup> study, highlighted this challenge, noting that growing up amid instability makes identity formation difficult. Trust between people and institutions has become fragile, as Lucas (2018)<sup>6</sup> also observed, arguing that persistent repression and corruption erode this trust. Radical reforms in institutional functioning are needed. Trust, like air, often goes unnoticed until it is lost. When errors accumulate without accountability, systems begin to collapse. Transparency and meaningful public participation may aid in reconstruction, but the road ahead is long.

Media and religious institutions play a central role in shaping national identity. Some research, such as Hardy's 2012<sup>7</sup> study, emphasises the need for a fundamental shift in both media and religious discourse. This discourse must move away from divisive language and focus instead on promoting human dignity. Civil society is also expected to adopt narratives that uphold the values of citizenship and justice.

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<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. (1986). "The Forms of Capital."

<sup>4</sup> Callahan, T. (2010). Social ties and conflicts: a case study of Syria

<sup>5</sup> Erickson, Helen. (2015). "Youth and national identities in Syria

<sup>6</sup> Lucas, Ian. (2018). "Trust between individuals and institutions after wars  
Hardy, Julian.

<sup>7</sup> (2012). "Media and Citizenship in the Middle East." I want links to previous studies.

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Kutschmann (2013)<sup>8</sup> and Ackerman (2005)<sup>9</sup> both stressed in their research the importance of clear legal frameworks. Such frameworks ensure governmental accountability, particularly after long periods of authoritarianism and lack of transparency. However, there are warnings about the risks of exclusionary policies. Coleman (1990)<sup>10</sup> and Silver (1994)<sup>11</sup> warned that the persistence of these policies undermines social cohesion. A society cannot be built on solid foundations if large segments of its population continue to feel marginalised. It is not an easy task—but not an impossible one either. Change requires time and collective will. Every stakeholder has a role to play, whether media, religious institutions, or governments.

Analysing Syrians' social priorities requires an integrated model that combines institutional reform, trust-building, and strengthened cohesion through distributive justice and inclusive participation. Such an approach can pave the way for genuine national reconciliation that overcomes the legacy of years of conflict.

### **2. Political Dimension**

The political context in Syria following the fall of the regime represents one of the main challenges facing any future political transition. The issue is not merely about changing the individuals in power but about reshaping the entire state from the ground up. It is akin to demolishing a dilapidated house and constructing a new one with solid foundations. The constitution and institutions in Syria suffer from deep distortions. For many years, the system operated in an imbalanced manner: the security apparatus held overwhelming control, as did the executive branch, and people lost faith in the political process altogether.

Genuine political participation and national reconciliation are not merely theoretical concepts, but complex processes that require real will from all sides. This process must touch the everyday lives of citizens and restore their hope in true justice. Accountability must be a core element of this process, not just slogans for media consumption.

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<sup>8</sup> Coachman, M. (2013). "Accountability and transparency in post-authoritarian political systems

<sup>9</sup> Ackerman (2005) Social Accountability Theory

<sup>10</sup> Coleman, James. (1990). "Social belonging and sense of citizenship.

<sup>11</sup> [Silver \(1994\) Social exclusion.](#)

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The former regime left behind a heavy legacy of public distrust in civic engagement. Years of repression led people to fear participation in any societal or political activity. This has been described by Freire (1970)<sup>12</sup> as a “culture of silence”, where communities under authoritarian rule become hesitant to express their opinions. This is clearly evident in the Syrian reality, where public life has become a perilous space. A United Nations report (2022)<sup>13</sup> points to a concerning phenomenon: in post-authoritarian societies, there is often a pervasive sense of futility regarding civic participation. Hederman’s study (2018)<sup>14</sup> offers a critical perspective on how the Syrian regime turned public engagement into a hazardous endeavour.

Horowitz (2003)<sup>15</sup>, in his theory, stated that the legitimacy of any political system depends on its responsiveness to citizens’ aspirations. Syria presents a stark example of this concept, as Syrians no longer see value in participating in institutions that do not genuinely represent them. In a 2023<sup>16</sup> study by the International Crisis Group (ICG), more than 60% of Syrians reported that they do not feel represented by current institutions. This sense of alienation pushes people to retreat from public affairs.

The real danger is that this dynamic perpetuates the authoritarian model—participation becomes a mere formality, while real decisions are made in closed circles. People lose faith in the possibility of change through official channels. The natural consequence is a widespread disengagement from politics. When people see no impact from their participation, they simply stop trying.

Transitional societies often experience clear tensions and a deep-rooted fear of power being monopolised and marginalisation of specific groups. This sentiment is not new; it has historical roots, as noted by Hassan in his (2009)<sup>17</sup> study, and it contributes to a lack of trust among different social and political segments.

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<sup>12</sup> [Culture of Silence Paulo Ferrire \(1970\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [United Nations report](#)

<sup>14</sup> Heydemann, S. (2018) . "Authoritarianism in Syria

<sup>15</sup> Horwitz, D. (2003). Political legitimacy and authoritarian regimes.

<sup>16</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG) (2023). "Syria: The Crisis of Representation"

<sup>17</sup> Hassan, M. (2009). Political exclusion and monopoly of power in the transition phase.

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A shift towards a pluralistic civil governance system appears vital for a diverse society like Syria. When the doors are opened for everyone to participate, we can begin to talk about genuine justice. Hand (2012)<sup>18</sup> pointed out that political pluralism helps strengthen social cohesion and allows all groups to be represented in political institutions. However, the absence of such a model increases the risk of exclusion and leads to greater social tensions.

One of the major challenges our societies face is the absence of a democratic dialogue culture—both at the societal level and within the family unit. The issue is not solely political; it is tied to ways of thinking and upbringing. A study conducted by Sawah in (2019)<sup>19</sup> revealed that most Syrian families prevent their children from discussing political matters, with the figure reaching 70%. Furthermore, a 2020 UNICEF report indicated that authoritarian parenting practices contribute to a decline in dialogue and communication skills.

Many of us face the dual challenge of desiring participation while lacking political and intellectual tools. Some studies suggest that the gap between political enthusiasm and the absence of structured frameworks may lead to political chaos. Smith (2015)<sup>20</sup> addressed this point in his research, explaining how certain forces can exploit such a vacuum for narrow interests. Therefore, it is essential to create political platforms that allow individuals to express their views and participate in decision-making.

Reliance on the state for decision-making has long been a chronic issue in our societies. People seem to have grown accustomed to waiting for directives from above, as if they have lost the capacity for initiative. In his important study, Peterson (2008) notes that this mindset reinforces a clear imbalance in power distribution. Political transformation requires a redefinition of the relationship between citizen and state—where the citizen becomes an active partner in decision-making.

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<sup>18</sup> Hand, M. (2012). Pluralistic civil governance and sustainable development.

<sup>19</sup> Sawah (2019) study in *"Journal of Syrian Studies"*

<sup>20</sup> Smith, J. (2015). Political organization and community participation in troubled societies.

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### 3. Economic aspect

At the beginning of the new millennium, the former regime attempted to introduce gradual reforms by adopting what was referred to as a “social market economy.” However, the practical reality differed significantly. The benefits of these policies were limited to a small segment of investors and businessmen closely connected to the centers of power. As a result, the class divide widened considerably, and the ability of the middle and lower classes to cope with economic changes declined sharply.

The economic situation in Syria has become extremely difficult after all these years. Since 2011, the Syrian economy has lost more than 60% of its gross domestic product, and the country’s infrastructure has severely deteriorated. People’s purchasing power has plummeted alarmingly, and international sanctions—particularly the “Caesar Act”—have contributed to an increased reliance on the informal economy.

Pointer	Value
<b>Gross Domestic Product</b> <sup>21</sup>	Down to less than 6 billion \$ from 60 billion\$ in 2010
<b><i>Inflation Rate</i></b> <sup>22</sup>	46.7% from February 2024 to January, which is lower than the 119.7% rate calculated during the same period of the previous year.
<b>General unemployment</b> <sup>23</sup>	14 % while among young people it reaches more than 40%
<b>Extreme poverty rate</b> <sup>24</sup>	28% of the population.
<b>Economic Contraction</b> <sup>25</sup>	Real GDP declined by 1.5% in 2024.
<b>Purchasing power</b> <sup>26</sup>	Deterioration by more than 80% since 2011

*table 1: Economic indicators in 2024*

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21 Syrian Ministry of Finance. (2024). Official statements about GDP.

22 Al Jazeera Economic Channel. (2024). Inflation Reports in Syria.

23 Trading Economics. (2024).

24 Omran Center for Studies. (2024). Shattered Syrian Society

25 World Bank. (2024). Poverty Report in Syria

26 Syrian Economy Reports 2024: Approaches and Policies

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### **4. The Legal and Human Rights Dimension**

Syria has experienced a multifaceted humanitarian and human rights crisis, resulting in severe violations of human rights and the displacement of millions of Syrians both internally and abroad. There is an urgent need to define the human rights priorities of Syrians, which reflect a complex blend of immediate demands and long-term needs.

Transitional justice is considered the cornerstone of building sustainable peace in Syria. Genuine community reconciliation cannot be achieved without holding perpetrators of violations accountable and providing redress for victims—an approach affirmed by United Nations reports<sup>27</sup> and organizations such as the International Centre for Transitional Justice<sup>28</sup>. Although institutions such as this are attempting to provide solutions, the challenges are immense. Reconciliation requires time and trust built on solid ground—not empty promises. The Syrian society needs to address the root causes of the crisis, not merely its symptoms.

In addition, the rights to security, health, and dignity are fundamental to human existence. The absence of these essential rights obstructs any meaningful engagement with issues of freedom and political participation<sup>29</sup>. Reports from the Middle East Studies Centre<sup>30</sup> indicate a serious deterioration in military organization—the situation has come to resemble a ship without a captain. Conversely, the right to protection and equal citizenship is fundamental to building an integrated civil state that ensures equality without discrimination based on religion or sect<sup>31</sup>.

One of the core problems lies in the conflation of religious and political discourse when it comes to minority groups. This unhelpful overlap creates clear discrimination in treatment. If citizenship<sup>32</sup> were reinstated as the foundation of rights and duties, the situation would be markedly different. Moreover, transparency is not simply a slogan for governments to

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations - Report on transitional justice

<sup>28</sup> International Transitional Justice Centre

<sup>29</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – Human Rights Report

<sup>30</sup> Center for Middle East Studies

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch - Reports on Syria

<sup>32</sup> Endowment for Peace

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parade. Ordinary citizens need to understand how their affairs are being managed. A lack of transparency kills trust between people and the state. Reports from organizations such as Transparency International<sup>33</sup> confirm that corruption thrives in darkness. This is not just theoreticality, it is a lived reality for many. When basic rights become the subject of political bargaining, everything falls apart. We need a clearer vision for addressing these issues.

Civil society is considered the primary force in claiming rights, as rights are not granted, they are won through sustained popular mobilization<sup>34</sup>. Oversight is not optional; it is an essential safeguard for preserving hard-won gains. Syrians have endured much, and their aspirations are simple: a dignified life, free from fear. All these elements come together to form a human rights roadmap that reflects the Syrian people's hopes for a future that protects their dignity and secures their fundamental rights after years of suffering.

### **5. Vulnerable issues**

According to reports from UN agencies and recent research studies, vulnerable groups—such as children, female-headed households and girls, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as religious and ethnic minorities—face compounded challenges in accessing their basic rights, including legal protection, food security, healthcare, and education. Recent statistics indicate that approximately 16.7 million Syrians, including 7.5 million children, need humanitarian assistance<sup>35</sup>. Among the total number of people in need, around 2.8 million individuals, or 17%, are people with disabilities<sup>36</sup>.

According to a report by UNICEF, 3,700 schools have been destroyed or damaged, and around 7.2 million children and education staff require continued access to vital and sustainable educational services. This includes 3.3 million girls affected by poverty, more

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<sup>33</sup> Transparency International

<sup>34</sup> Strategic studies center

<sup>35</sup> [UNICEF calls for immediate protection of children amid escalating crisis in Syria](#)

<sup>36</sup> [reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2024-humanitarian-needs-overview-february-2024-enar](https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2024-humanitarian-needs-overview-february-2024-enar)

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than 2.45 million children out of school, and over one million children—particularly those with disabilities—at risk of dropping out<sup>37</sup>. Statistics from the Syrian Network for Human Rights, in its 13th annual report on violations against females in Syria, state that 29,064 females have been killed in Syria since March 2011, including 117 who died under torture, and 11,268 who remain detained or forcibly disappeared. In addition, there have been 11,553 documented cases of sexual violence. The following figures illustrate the annual distribution of female victims and the geographic distribution of detainees, prisoners, or forcibly disappeared women across Syrian governorates<sup>38</sup>.

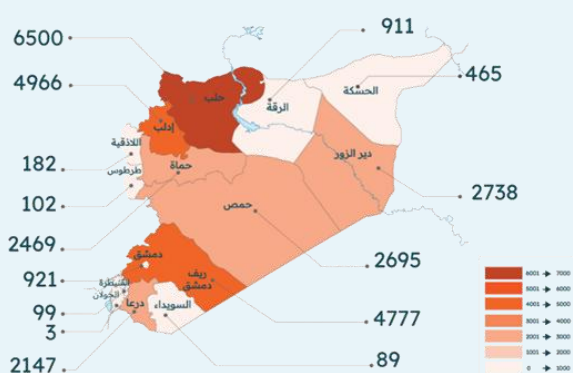


illustration 1: Female freed/detained or forcibly disappeared in the Syrian provinces



illustration 2: Number of female victims during the years 2011 and even 2024

Female-headed households face significant psychological pressures<sup>39</sup>, with psychological experts noting that such women are more vulnerable to mental health issues, which impairs their capacity to adapt. Among refugee women, conditions such as depression and anxiety are widespread.

Few studies have focused on Syrian female breadwinners. One such study is a field-based master's thesis by “Mona Hedayah,” titled “Refugees: On the Adaptation of Syrian Female-Headed Refugees in Istanbul, 2011–2018.” The study aimed to shed light on the

<sup>37</sup> OCHA, Overview of Humanitarian Needs in the Syrian Arab Republic 2024 Out-of-school children are particularly affected, especially adolescents, who are exposed to protection threats and gender-based violence such as child labor (particularly for boys) and child marriage (particularly for girls)

<sup>38</sup> [Report of the Syrian Network for Human Rights: 13 years of violations against Syrian women](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Article: Women who are breadwinners: pressures and challenges - the Syrian Women's Political Movement](#)

reality of female-headed households and draw greater attention to funding livelihood projects and improving the forms of support available to refugee women. It documented the mechanisms developed by Syrian refugee women under difficult conditions and explored the patterns and strategies of economic adaptation. The researcher found that the livelihood sector is largely neglected and suffers from significant underfunding and lack of humanitarian support. She also noted that not all coping strategies are positive and harmful, including rising rates of child marriage, child labor, and denial of education, which further erodes the human capital of these families and perpetuates cycles of poverty.

Returning refugees and internally displaced people face enormous challenges related to livelihood and social reintegration. Long-term assistance will be necessary to restore access to essential services, housing, and livelihoods. more than 617,000 people remain displaced as of late November 2024<sup>40</sup>. While over half a million individuals—most of them in Aleppo and Hama—have returned, many continue to live in unstable conditions. In northeast Syria, over 24,000 people are still housed in 200 collective shelter centers, most of which lack adequate access to water, sanitation, and privacy<sup>41</sup>.

Syrian refugees in neighboring countries face similarly dire conditions: over 90% rely on humanitarian aid in Lebanon, 93% of Syrian households in Jordan are in debt, and 90% of Syrians in Turkey are unable to meet their monthly expenses<sup>42</sup>.

According to an Amnesty International report (2021), ethnic and religious minorities in Syria have suffered from forced displacement, arbitrary detention, and the denial of cultural and religious rights<sup>43</sup>. Despite international efforts to provide protection and support, most of these communities remain in urgent need of targeted protection—whether inside Syria or in host countries—in order to safeguard their fundamental rights and future.

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<sup>40</sup> [Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 \(As of 12 February 2025\) \[EN/AR\] - Syrian Arab Republic | ReliefWeb](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 \(As of 12 February 2025\) \[EN/AR\] - Syrian Arab Republic | ReliefWeb](#)

<sup>42</sup> [Syria Refugee Crisis Explained \(unrefugees.org\)](#)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>

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## Syrians' Priorities for Recovery and Development

Within this theoretical framework, the paper offers a multidimensional analysis that combines academic concepts with practical applications drawn from international reports, conferences, and field research. The goal is to present a comprehensive vision for addressing the challenges of Syria's transitional phase.

### Analytical methodology

#### Data sources and tools

This report employed a multi-source qualitative and quantitative analytical methodology aimed at identifying Syrians' priorities in the post-conflict phase. Data was collected using a set of complementary tools, including the organization of dialogue sessions that brought together Syrians from diverse social, regional, and religious backgrounds to extract qualitative insights on daily challenges and potential solutions. In parallel, surveys were distributed to a varied sample across all Syrian governorates to measure public opinion trends regarding key priorities.



*illustration 3: Photographs from the panel discussion organized by GLOCA in Aleppo on 20 May 2025, addressing Syrians' priorities for recovery and development*

The report also relied on a critical and analytical review of recent UN reports issued by international organizations—such as OCHA, UNDP, and UNHCR—as well as academic research studies. The data was processed using both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools to trace the interlinkages among the five key dimensions (social, economic, political, legal, and vulnerable groups). It further identified areas of convergence and divergence between elite and public perspectives, allowing for the development of an integrated vision on priority issues from the Syrian point of view. This enabled the formulation of balanced recommendations that reflect the complex reality and align with sustainability criteria.

### **Survey data collection methodology**

This survey was conducted to identify the priorities and needs of Syrians after years of conflict. The methodology was based on direct data collection from participants, according to the following principles:

- **Number and distribution of participants:** The survey included **442 participants** from various Syrian regions.
- ✓ **Demographics characteristics of participants:** The sample maintained a diversity to ensure representation of different groups
- ✓ **Gender:** Both male and female participants took part in the survey.
- ✓ **Age group:** A wide age range was represented, with a majority from youth and middle-aged categories.
- ✓ **Educational level:** Most participants held a high level of education, indicating the involvement of an informed and socially aware demographic.
- ✓ **Marital Status and Disability:** Participants came from varied social backgrounds, and around 4% reported having a disability, ensuring the inclusion of their perspectives.

- ✓ **Employment status:** There was noticeable variation in participants' economic conditions, reflecting the harsh economic reality and high unemployment levels within the sample.
- **Survey implementation method:** A semi-structured questionnaire was used, combining multiple-choice and evaluative questions. Data was collected between [1 May and 8 May] through a secure and widely distributed online form, in addition to collaboration with local field networks to ensure access to participants across different regions inside Syria. The questionnaire was designed with clarity and neutrality in mind, and participants' responses were kept anonymous to ensure freedom of expression.
- **Data processing and analysis:** After responses were collected, the data was cleaned up and validated for reliability. It was then statistically analyzed to extract key findings. The analysis relied on calculating percentage distributions of responses and ranking priorities and challenges based on their frequency. The results were classified into core themes aligned with the survey's structure to facilitate the presentation of priorities by sector

## Syrians' Priorities for Recovery and Development

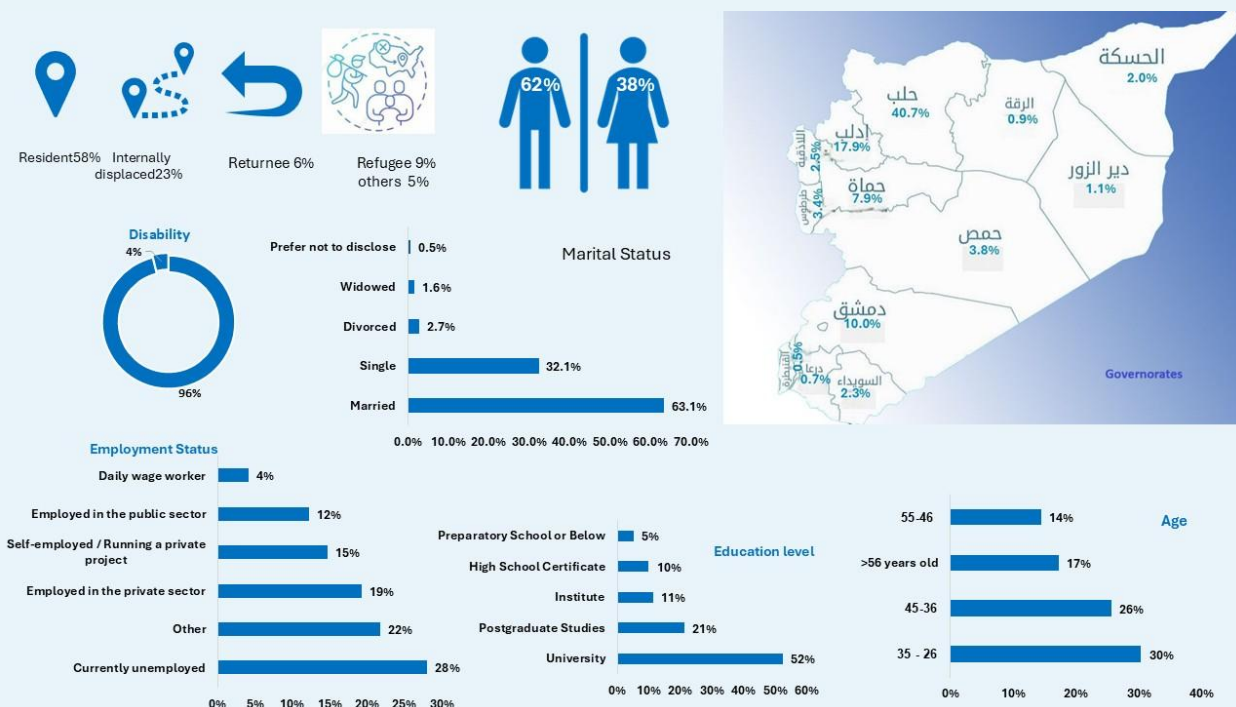


illustration 4: Information of survey participants

## Results and analysis

This section presents the key findings derived from the main thematic areas (social, political, economic, legal, and vulnerable groups). These results offer a comprehensive picture of the priorities and challenges facing Syrians today.

### First: Social priorities – Rebuilding Trust and Social Cohesion

Reconstructing social cohesion stands at the top of the list of priorities for Syrians in the coming months. The most urgent current need is to initiate multi-level, inclusive community dialogues overseen by professional national actors. The aim of these dialogues is not to analyze the current situation or revisit past experiences, but rather to create safe spaces for dialogue that seek to establish a shared understanding among Syrians.

The core objective is active listening, understanding motivations and fears, and reaching common ground upon which to build. This priority requires experienced, committed

national actors capable of initiating and sustaining such efforts across the entirety of Syrian territory.

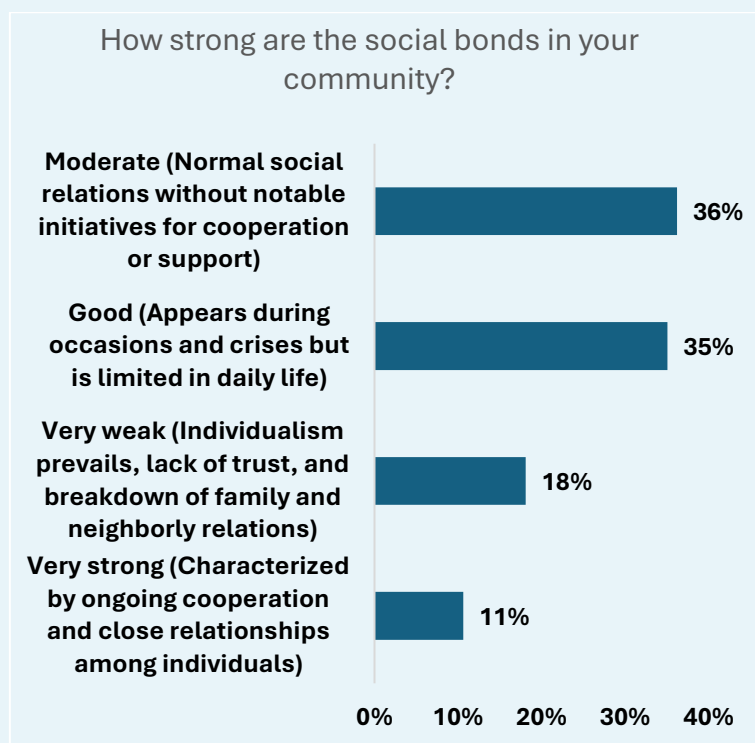


Illustration 5: Percentage of how strong social cohesion is in society

Survey results indicate that social ties within the community are most often described as **moderate (36%)** or **good but limited (35%)**, suggesting the presence of social cohesion during certain occasions but not on a regular basis. In contrast, **18%** described these ties as very weak—reflecting fragmentation and isolation—while only **11%** considered them very strong, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen trust and cooperation among individuals through community and economic initiatives.

When asked about the best ways to strengthen social cohesion in the future, **approximately 66%** of participants identified **improving economic conditions** as the most effective approach. This reflects an understanding that living pressures are a major source of division, while economic well-being supports social solidarity. In addition, around **20%** of respondents supported other measures such as involving individuals in local development projects, holding regular community dialogue sessions to promote mutual understanding, and launching community-led initiatives that encourage collaborative problem-solving.

The activation of citizens' roles in decision-making emerged as an important step from the perspective of a broad segment of society, through involving the community in both local and national decisions and giving greater voice to youth, women, and various social groups. Some considered the activation of a responsible national media to be a supporting



factor, by providing space for free and professional journalism to uncover the truth and monitor institutional performance. Taken together, these proposals reflect the public's aspiration for a new social contract based on transparency, accountability, and partnership between the state and society, as essential pillars for restoring trust and strengthening social cohesion in the long term.

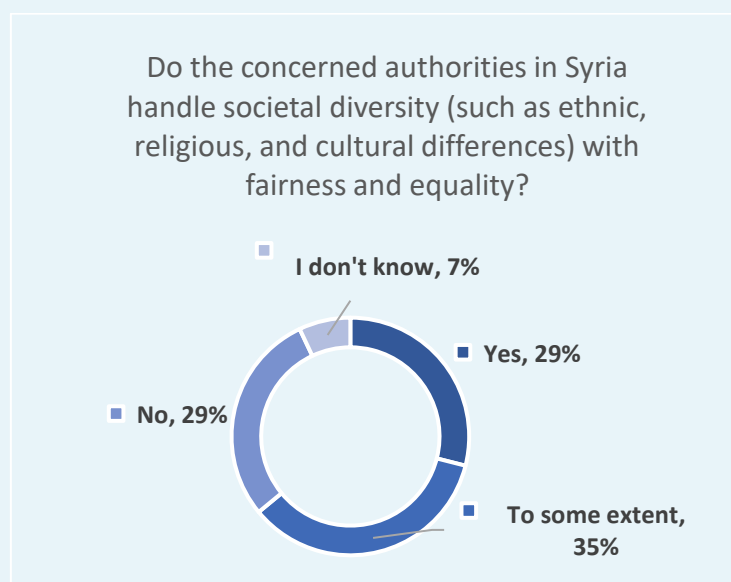


illustration 6: Percentage of respondents' views on community diversity

In a related context, participants' views varied regarding the extent to which relevant authorities (governmental and others) treat Syria's societal diversity—ethnic, religious, and cultural—fairly. This distribution highlights a clear division in public opinion: while a significant portion of respondents feel that efforts are being made toward equality, a nearly equal proportion perceive a lack of justice in how social differences are addressed,

possibly due to discrimination or insufficient representation of certain groups. This indicates the need for greater trust-building and the adoption of inclusive policies that guarantee equal rights for all components of society.

Regarding trust between individuals and institutions, which is a cornerstone of any social contract, the most prominent demand was the accountability of officials for any wrongdoing or corruption—this was the most frequently mentioned factor for restoring trust. Many also emphasized the importance of enhancing transparency and public disclosure of information by official bodies to allow citizens access to oversight and scrutiny.

Many respondents also believed that improving basic services, particularly in education and healthcare—would directly contribute to increasing public trust, as the provision of such services reflects a responsible government responsive to citizens' needs. As such, issues in education and health emerged as among the top-priority needs mentioned by participants.

In the field of education, participants gave a realistic evaluation of the current situation. Despite the challenges, most confirmed continued access to schools in their areas, though this access varied. Some reported regular schooling, while others indicated partial or complete disruption due to security and economic conditions, or distance. The most prominent challenges were the shortage of qualified teaching staff and the high cost of education (according to 50% of participants), reflecting a dual crisis of human resources and financial burden. Other factors—such as lack of safety, distance to schools, and cultural barriers—also deepened the challenges, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

In contrast, participants proposed a set of solutions that reflected strong community awareness of the need for comprehensive reform—starting with teacher training, rebuilding damaged schools, integrating technology into education, and finally, providing free education to ease the financial burden on poor families and ensure broader inclusion.

In the health sector, there was a clear disparity in the availability of services. While some residents had access to health centres or hospitals, others had to rely on basic clinics or mobile units, and some lacked access to any form of care. According to participants, the biggest challenge was the high cost of treatment, followed by limited equipment, medicine shortages, and poor medical service quality or distance to healthcare facilities.

The lack of basic services hampers social interaction and reduces the potential for collective action and civic participation, both of which are fundamental components of building cohesive communities. Therefore, providing basic services is not merely a humanitarian or economic response, but a fundamental condition for rebuilding trust between citizens and institutions, enhancing national belonging, and preparing a stable and secure environment that encourages reconciliation and social integration.

### **Voices from the community**

"Safety and equality, no one can guarantee their rights except the state, and the collective identity will contribute significantly to guaranteeing these rights, because of its role in bridging the social divide in society."

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● A voice that points to the importance of inclusive national identity as a condition for building a new social contract that guarantees equality and addresses marginalization and sectarian or regional divisions.

### Second: Political Priorities – Building New Legitimacy and Transparent Institutions

There was a notable level of interest among Syrians in political participation and governmental reform, despite their preoccupation with daily livelihood concerns. When participants were asked about their current level of interest in political affairs, the responses were distributed as follows:

Approximately 52% stated that they are very interested and follow political issues closely, while about 27% said they are somewhat interested. This indicates that nearly four-fifths of the sample demonstrate some level of political engagement, reflecting a heightened awareness and a desire for change despite prevalent frustrations

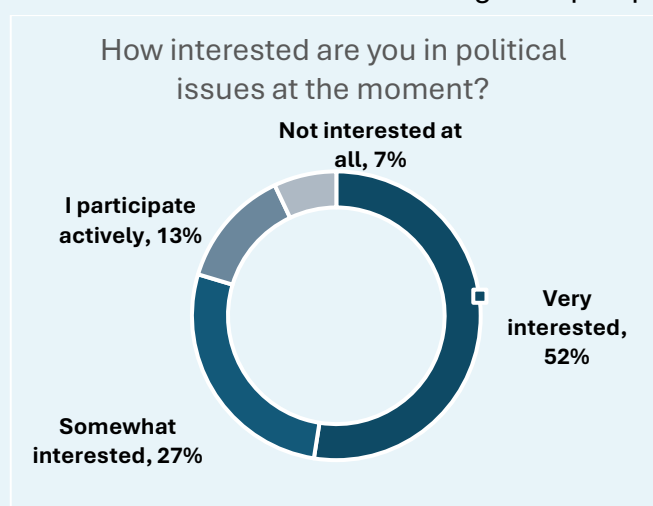


illustration 7: Percentage of respondents' views on interest in political issues

In contrast, only around 7% said they are completely uninterested in politics. A relatively small figure that suggests political apathy is not widespread, even under current circumstances. Additionally, about 13% described themselves as actively engaged—possibly as activists or as members of civil or political entities. These numbers point to a public eagerness to participate, if the right conditions were in place.

When examining the factors that influence political participation, whether positively or negatively, the deteriorating economic and living conditions emerged as the leading constraint preventing people from engaging in public affairs. This was followed by fear and security-related risks associated with political expression or civic activism.

Another major factor was the absence of credible political parties or forces. After decades of political repression, organizational and political options have become severely limited, leaving people with no clear framework through which to engage, nor leadership they trust to represent their aspirations—thus weakening their motivation to participate. Social influences, such as family, friends, and the local community, also played a role in either encouraging or discouraging political interest. Furthermore, many respondents expressed a general sense of disillusionment and futility, driven by negative past experiences or the slow pace of change.

Regarding the evaluation of existing governmental systems and administration, participants expressed clear criticism and a strong call for reform. It was evident that the current governmental frameworks require improvement across several core areas. For instance, many respondents pointed to the lack of clarity and transparency in existing laws and stressed the need for simplifying and making legal frameworks more accessible to the general public. There was also a clear demand for fairness in penalties and judicial enforcement, so that citizens can feel that the law is applied equally to all, without favouritism or injustice.

The need to accelerate the issuance of new legislation to keep pace with current changes was also highlighted, along with improving the practical applicability of laws and procedures, as people frequently complained of complexity, excessive bureaucracy, and the difficulty of implementing decisions on the ground.

A survey published by the official account of the National Dialogue Conference on platform X revealed the top concerns of Syrians. According to the poll, 80% of respondents placed institutional reform at the top of their priorities, followed by attracting investments (74%), and holding former officials accountable (73%)<sup>44</sup>.

As for the barriers to political participation and how to strengthen public involvement in decision-making, the main ideas can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>44</sup> [National Dialogue Conference survey](#)

## *Syrians' Priorities for Recovery and Development*

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- The deterioration of economic and living conditions is the primary obstacle, as citizens are preoccupied with securing basic needs at the expense of public engagement.
- The absence of party life and political organization, resulting from decades of security restrictions, has led to a political vacuum and the lack of channels for expression and participation. Therefore, reviving political pluralism is essential for public engagement.
- Fear and insecurity, whether from state repression or threats under general instability—prevent many from participating or even expressing their opinions. Hence, promoting security, the rule of law, and freedom of expression is fundamental to encouraging engagement.
- • There is a lack of political awareness due to the absence of civic and political education for decades. This calls for awareness campaigns and political education initiatives to fill the gap and build public understanding of political rights and responsibilities.
- Marginalization and exclusion of certain groups, whether based on geography, social status, gender, or religion—further erode trust and leave these groups feeling unheard and disempowered. This requires inclusive and equitable policies to restore confidence and encourage participation.
- Finally, some participants highlighted the issue of power monopolization by ruling authorities, and the closing of the public sphere to genuine democratic competition. Therefore, there is a strong call for political openness and injecting new energy into governance structures, to enable broader societal participation in decision-making.
- **Voices from the community**

" To be honest, I find any talk of justice laughable—it borders on madness. Every time someone mentions it, I can't help but laugh. How can transitional justice be applied when the judge himself is a former—and current—criminal? If it's ever implemented, it will be incomplete, because no one will hold themselves accountable for their own crimes. That said, regardless of my view, its application must begin by holding accountable those

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who arrested, killed, and tortured the Syrian people—from the biggest criminal to the smallest—through fair and transparent trials that restore some rights to the oppressed."

● A candid opinion that reflects deep frustration with the existing judicial reality, while firmly affirming that justice and accountability remain inalienable rights that do not expire with time.

### Third: Economic Priorities – Livelihoods and Infrastructure

The economy and livelihoods represent the most pressing concern for Syrians at the present stage. Unemployment was identified as the greatest economic challenge facing people today. This is particularly significant in light of the sharp rise in poverty levels and the lack of opportunities, especially among youth and recent graduates.

In addition to unemployment, skyrocketing prices and inflation emerged as a suffocating crisis, driven by the collapse of the Syrian pound and the erosion of household purchasing power. The weakness of essential services and infrastructure further exacerbates economic hardship—damage to electricity, water supply, transport, and other public services causes a near paralysis of daily economic activity.

Another major challenge is administrative corruption and the widespread practice of bribery, which is seen as a significant obstacle to development. Corruption squanders resource and undermines any serious attempt to revive the local economy.

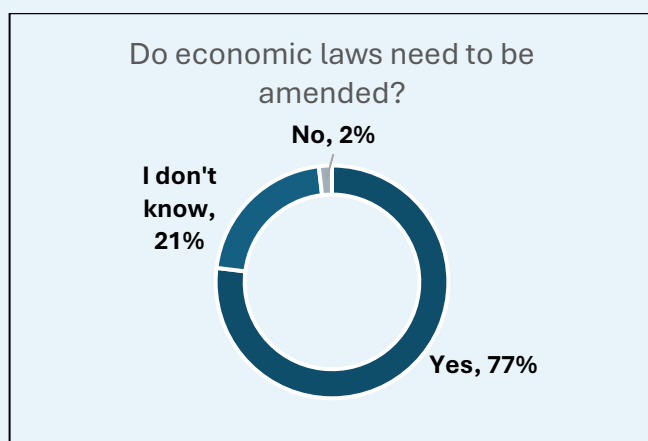


illustration 8: Percentage of respondents' views on amending economic laws<sup>9</sup>

Given these challenges, it is unsurprising that Syrians view reforming the economic system as a necessity. This was confirmed in the survey, where approximately 77% of participants agreed that the current economic laws and regulations need revision and modernization. Only about 2% believed the laws were adequate and did not require change.

This near consensus on the need for economic reform reflects a general sense that existing legislation and policies no longer correspond to the changing reality and crisis conditions, whether in terms of consumer protection, price regulation, investment promotion, or job creation. When participants were asked to identify priority sectors that should be focused on to improve people's livelihoods in the current period, agriculture and food security ranked first. Around 51% of respondents selected support for agriculture and securing food supplies as their top priority—an indication of the importance of strengthening local agricultural production to ensure basic sustenance and control price inflation.

Next came a focus on the justice sector and legal institutions (approximately 37%)—perhaps pointing to the idea that reforming the judiciary and enforcing the rule of law are also essential for economic stability and safeguarding economic rights.

Infrastructure followed in third place (32% prioritized it), with many participants stressing the need to rehabilitate critical facilities such as roads, electricity, and water systems to enable economic activity and daily life. Similarly, the health sector received comparable attention (31% supported urgent investment in it), reflecting how livelihood and healthcare concerns are intertwined, particularly after a prolonged pandemic and ongoing crisis.

The industrial sector and the need to support economic recovery through industry were also mentioned.

Local production was selected by 29% of participants as a priority sector, followed by the energy sector (27%) to address the ongoing fuel and electricity crisis. Humanitarian and relief services were cited by around 18%, which is understandable given the ongoing need for aid in severely affected areas. Commercial sector revitalization (10%) and technology and telecommunications (9%) were mentioned to a lesser extent, yet they remain essential for building a modern economy in the future.

This distribution of sectoral priorities indicates that food security, service and industrial reconstruction, and basic service improvement are seen by Syrians as the urgent foundations for improving their living conditions.

Regarding the economic challenges, it became clear that the economic crisis is deeply intertwined with security and political conditions. The absence of security and political stability deters investment and paralyzes economic activity. Thus, improving stability is considered a prerequisite for economic recovery.

International economic sanctions have further worsened the situation by restricting imports and capital flows. This highlights the need to explore legal ways to mitigate or bypass these sanctions. At the same time, it is crucial to support local production, both in agriculture and industry, to reduce reliance on imports. The decline of these sectors has left the economy vulnerable.

Combating corruption and addressing the lack of transparency in economic institutions are also essential to restore public trust and improve the investment climate.

As for economic reconstruction priorities, there is an emphasis on creating sustainable employment opportunities by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), offering affordable loans, and providing vocational training for youth and the unemployed—measures that simultaneously address both unemployment and poverty.

Rehabilitating vital infrastructure—such as electricity grids, water networks, and roads—is also crucial, as no economic sector can recover without effective basic services. Furthermore, reforming monetary and economic policies, stabilizing the exchange rate, and enhancing a secure investment environment are vital to attracting both domestic and foreign capital. These steps require political and legal stability.

The lack of vocational training and professional development programmes for people with disabilities increases their economic marginalization. Women with disabilities, in particular, face additional challenges due to the intersection of gender and disability, which limits their access to education and employment<sup>45</sup>. Hence, there is a clear need to empower vulnerable groups—such as women, youth, and rural populations—by involving them in development programmes and ensuring fair access to jobs and funding.

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<sup>45</sup> [reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2024-humanitarian-needs-overview-february-2024-enar](https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2024-humanitarian-needs-overview-february-2024-enar)

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## *Syrians' Priorities for Recovery and Development*


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Among the proposed solutions, there was a strong emphasis on supporting local agriculture and industry by providing necessary facilitations and incentives to help these sectors recover and meet domestic market needs. Moreover, building transparent international partnerships to attract investment and aid was highlighted, as was engaging the Syrian diaspora to encourage their contribution to reconstruction efforts through the transfer of expertise and capital.

Overall, achieving genuine economic recovery is impossible without establishing a safe and just environment that safeguards right and includes all segments of society. Transitioning from conflict to peace requires serious political will, translated into equitable development programmes that distribute the benefits of recovery fairly. It also demands the involvement of Syrian citizens in economic decision-making through elected and transparent institutions that work to rebuild trust between the state and society.

### Voices from the community

"There is no security, and this creates genuine fear among capital holders when it comes to investing. The economic policies of the central bank are a failure, especially in regard to liquidity restrictions. We rely on imported goods while local factories and workshops are marginalized. Foreign currency is being drained by buying old cars that won't last two years, while the real economy is frozen. The problem is not just in resources, but in the mindset managing them."

 A voice representing a segment of Syrians calling for a productive and disciplined economy, rather than one based on consumption and depletion.

## **Fourth: Human Rights Priorities – Transitional Justice, Justice, Accountability and Legal Reform**

Survey results indicate that the issue of rule of law and guaranteeing rights commands significant public attention and is closely linked to other key priorities such as reconciliation and stability. Regarding public awareness of the concept of transitional justice and its

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mechanisms (as a framework for justice in post-conflict contexts), there is a notable level of understanding.

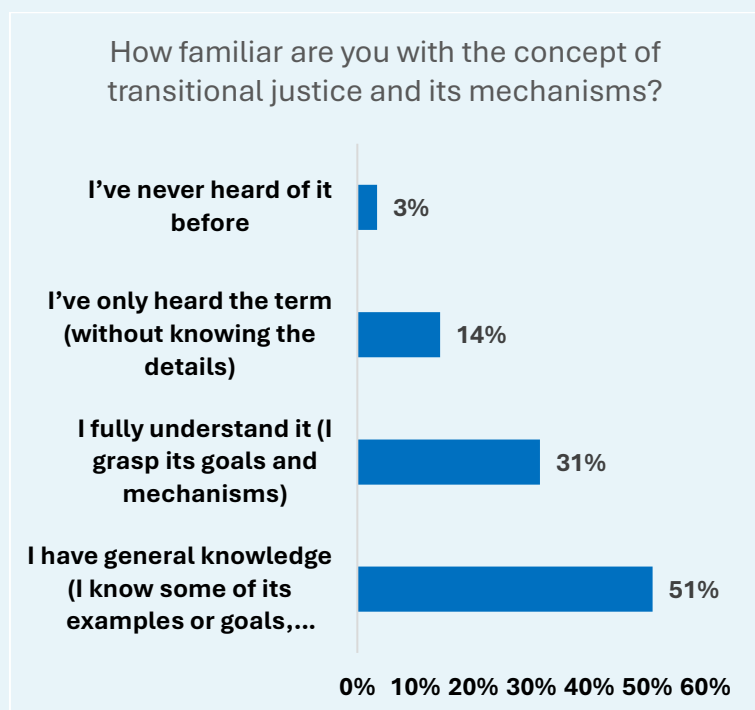


illustration 10: Percentage of respondents' views on the concept of transitional justice

From the preceding chart, we observe that nearly four-fifths of the sample have varying degrees of familiarity with the concept. In contrast, around 14% reported having heard of the term without knowing the details, while only about 3% stated they had never encountered it before. This broad awareness of transitional justice—even among non-specialists—reflects a high level of human rights consciousness.

As shown in Figure (9), approximately 73% of participants believe in the importance of transitional justice as a pathway to achieving stability and justice for victims. People clearly understand that ignoring past crimes and violations by all sides will leave wounds unhealed and hinder any prospects for genuine reconciliation.

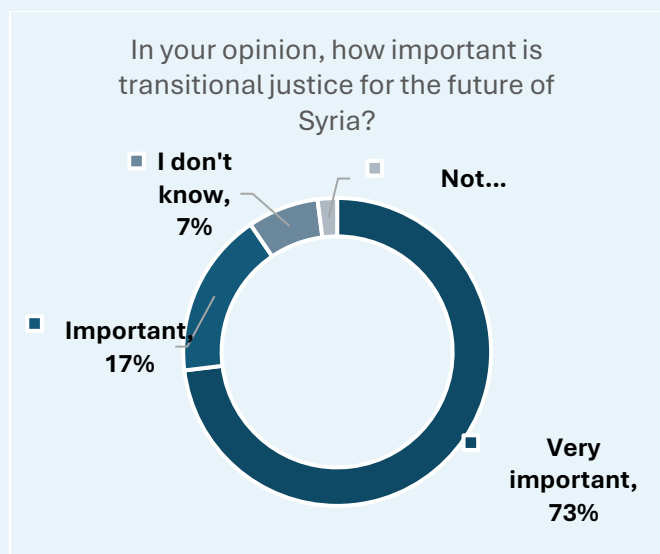


illustration 11 Percentage of respondents' views

When asked about appropriate mechanisms for implementing transitional justice in Syria, participants expressed a comprehensive and multifaceted vision. Rather than supporting a single approach, they advocated for a combination of actions, beginning with the legal accountability of those responsible for violations. This is followed by restructuring the security and judicial institutions, which is seen as a precondition for rebuilding public trust.

Participants also emphasized the importance of reparations and compensation for victims, along with community reconciliation, truth-telling, and the return of refugees. These findings reflect a broad understanding of transitional justice that encompasses criminal justice, institutional reform, victim recognition, reconciliation, and rights restoration, indicating an advanced grasp of the transitional phase's requirements.

Turning to the implementation of basic rights in daily life, the survey revealed a significant gap between what is stipulated in law and what citizens experience. More than half the respondents identified the right to political participation as the most neglected in terms of enforcement, followed by freedom of expression.

Notably, the rights of persons with disabilities and women also showed wide implementation gaps, pointing to deficiencies in equal opportunity and social inclusion. While education and healthcare are theoretically guaranteed as basic rights, they received relatively lower concern—perhaps due to their formal availability, yet the degradation of both sectors has made accessing quality education or adequate healthcare a major challenge for many. So, what rights or legal issues do Syrians view as the top priorities today? And how can justice be promoted and guaranteed?

The ideas raised through the survey results and dialogue sessions can be summarized as follows:

1. Transitional justice: Holding perpetrators accountable from all sides, uncovering the truth, and ensuring non-repetition
2. Freedom of expression: As a fundamental right to ensure civic participation and expose corruption.
3. Accountability for Criminals: Public and fair trials for all those involved in crimes.
4. Rights of Detainees and the Forcibly Disappeared: Revealing their fate and releasing the innocent.
5. The Right to Work and a Dignified Life: Providing job opportunities, fair income, and improved living standards.
6. Political Participation: Enabling all citizens to take part in decision-making without discrimination.
7. Rights of Women, Children, and Vulnerable Groups: Empowerment, protection, and equality.
8. Judicial Independence: Reforming the justice system to ensure transparency and autonomy.
9. Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: In a safe and dignified manner, with legal and economic safeguards.
10. Education and Healthcare: Recognized as basic rights for all citizens.
11. Fighting Corruption: Through effective and transparent oversight mechanisms.
12. Guaranteeing Religious and Sectarian Freedoms: While countering incitement and sectarian discourse.
13. Reparations and Compensation: Especially for those whose homes were destroyed or who lost their sources of livelihood.

## *Syrians' Priorities for Recovery and Development*

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As for the means to promote justice, participants proposed the following:

- ✓ Establishing independent courts and an effective transitional justice system.
- ✓ Enforcing and updating laws to ensure equality before the law.
- ✓ Empowering civil society to engage in oversight and accountability.
- ✓ Enhancing transparency across all state institutions.
- ✓ Organizing awareness campaigns and workshops on citizenship and human rights.
- ✓ This series of priorities proposed by participants outlines a comprehensive roadmap for rebuilding a state governed by the rule of law in Syria—one in which human dignity is respected, rights are upheld regardless of identity, and justice for all becomes the foundation for a stable and prosperous future.

### Voices from the community

"Every person has the right to a fair trial—regardless of who they are or what crime they may have committed. We have the right to see our security and military institutions governed by the rule of law, not turned into lawless enclaves of violence. We are still suffering from enforced disappearances. We don't even know our charges or where we're being taken. Why do security personnel hide their faces? How can we tell if they're an official authority or a criminal gang?

We refuse to be treated as second-class citizens—for any reason. We don't want a new generation of VIPs like before. Syrians who remained in their homes should not be marginalized or labelled as collaborators. We want justice that holds everyone accountable—without selectivity."

● A voice that boldly expresses deeply rooted grievance, calling for a security and judicial system built on transparency and equality, not on a legacy of fear and abuse.

### **Fifth: Vulnerable Groups – Towards Inclusivity and Social Justice**

The survey also addressed the conditions of vulnerable and marginalized groups in Syrian society, such as displaced families, returnees, refugees, persons with disabilities, and female-headed households, among others. It sought to explore participants' views on the challenges facing these groups and the priorities for supporting them.

- **Challenges Faced by Vulnerable Groups**

There are multiple difficulties affecting vulnerable populations, including IDPs, widows, people with disabilities, and others. The most frequently cited challenge, according to over 60% of participants, was the lack of financial and social support. These groups often lack sufficient material assistance or social protection networks.

Another major concern was the lack of representation in decision-making. These groups often have no voice in local councils or governance structures, even when policies directly affect their lives, thus deepening their marginalization. This was followed by limited access to essential services, due to either discrimination, poor infrastructure, or physical isolation in remote areas. Other challenges include gender-based violence, particularly affecting women and girls in certain regions, and social or legal discrimination against certain groups—such as ethnic minorities or people with disabilities.

- **Ways to improve the Conditions of vulnerable groups**

Survey results suggest that the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation is seen as the most important step toward improving the situation of vulnerable groups, indicating a strong awareness of legal protection as a foundation for justice and equality.

Next in importance was ensuring representation in decision-making and raising societal awareness, reflecting the dual need for institutional inclusion and cultural change.

Also highlighted—though to a lesser degree—was the importance of economic and social empowerment programmes, and improved care services. This suggests that a

comprehensive response is needed—one that combines legal empowerment, institutional integration, and community

- **Priorities for IDPs and Refugees upon Return**

Returning families often find their homes, roads, and farmland unsafe, with minimal or no-clearing efforts in many areas. In December 2024 alone, the number of landmine victims tripled compared to previous months, with children accounting for nearly 50% of the casualties. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by destroyed infrastructure, scarce access to healthcare, and low awareness of landmine risks.

One alarming statistic shows that 8 in 10 agricultural fields in Syria are contaminated with landmines, directly impacting livelihoods in a country where many rely on agriculture for survival. Security and stability were identified as the most urgent needs for returning IDPs, whether in the form of a ceasefire, clearance of war remnants, or a general sense of safety from persecution or retaliation. The second most important priority was access to employment, as many returnees come back to destroyed homes and lost livelihoods and thus require opportunities to rebuild their lives.

In third place came the restoration of basic services such as water, electricity, schools, and hospitals—since returning to an area lacking these essentials would be nearly impossible or unsustainable.

In assessing urgent needs across Syria, the Whole of Syria Rapid Needs Assessment (WoS RNA) conducted by OCHA in February 2025 covered approximately 2,600 communities and IDP sites, ensuring representative coverage across both camps and host communities. 73% of the total population in the assessed areas (from a population of 23.7 million), and 78% of IDPs residing in camps (2.3 million), participated in the assessment. A total of 7,617 surveys were conducted, collecting the views of 114,255 key informants (61% male, 39% female) across various sectors.

The assessment provided a comprehensive analysis of humanitarian needs, covering all sectors while integrating cross-cutting themes such as inter-sectoral priorities,

accountability to affected populations, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, gender, and access.

Data collection took place between 5 and 15 February 2025, reflecting the evolving humanitarian landscape since 8 December 2024. The findings constitute a critical evidence base for response planning, identifying urgent gaps and informing strategic humanitarian interventions across Syria.

Shelter was reported as the most urgent need among the assessed communities. In 37% of all the communities evaluated, the majority of people were living in unfinished or abandoned buildings, damaged residential structures, or non-residential shelters such as garages, or emergency shelters, especially tents.

Among communities in Aleppo, 40% reported that their primary shelter type was unfinished or abandoned buildings, while 14% stated they were residing in destroyed structures.

Therefore, any plan for the return of displaced persons must address the provision of housing, security, infrastructure, and employment opportunities as an integrated package in the areas of return, in order to ensure stability and sustainability.

- **People with disabilities**

The challenges facing the education of children with disabilities are multifaceted, including lack of physical access to schools, absence of specialized educational resources, and deeply rooted social stigma. As outlined in the Rapid Needs Assessment, the absence of inclusive education policies and practices not only denies children with disabilities their right to education, but also limits their future ability to achieve independence and participate economically



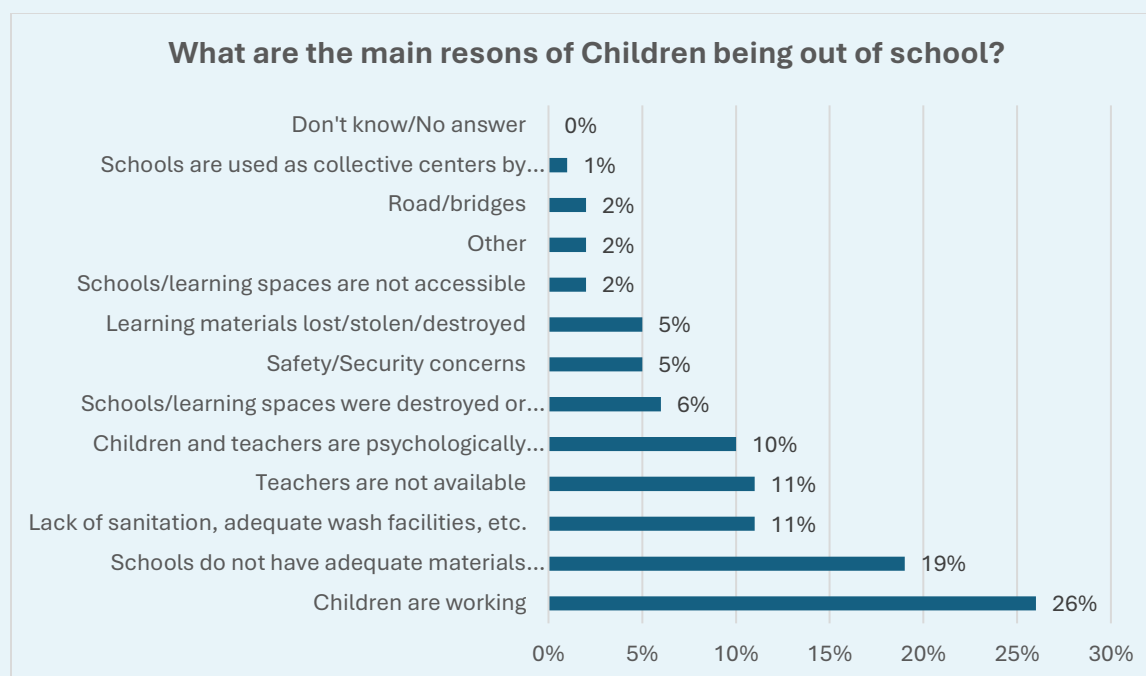


illustration 12 Represents the most important concerns in children with disabilities

For women and girls with disabilities, the feeling of insecurity is further intensified by physical challenges and the structural inaccessibility of shelters and protection services. This leaves them with very limited or no options when they face abuse or neglect.

### • Role of Local and International Organizations Towards Vulnerable Groups

According to participants, emergency humanitarian assistance should be the top priority for organisations (58.8%), reflecting the immediate need to meet basic survival requirements. In second and third place, nearly a third of respondents highlighted the importance of the organisations' role in documenting violations (31.7%) and advocating for legislative reform (29.4%), showing awareness of the need for accountability and a fair legal environment.

The construction of shelters ranked last (21.7%), suggesting that it is seen as less urgent compared to direct humanitarian response.

These findings reveal that priorities are centered around immediate relief, followed by human rights and legal advocacy, while structural interventions such as shelter construction are viewed as less pressing from the perspective of the participants.

The condition of vulnerable and marginalized groups represents a true test of the seriousness of any future recovery effort. How the country chooses to deal with returning IDPs and refugees, families of victims and detainees, women who bore a disproportionate burden during the war, and youth who are the backbone of the future, will significantly determine the success of the recovery and reconstruction process.

People stressed the importance of prioritizing these groups, ensuring their integration, and addressing their suffering, to guarantee that the recovery process leaves no one behind.

Furthermore, tackling the issues facing these groups—such as housing, employment opportunities, and social care—is considered a benchmark of the states and its international partners' commitment to building a just and inclusive future for all citizens.

### **Practical Recommendations and Proposals**

These recommendations outline a roadmap for Syria's upcoming phase and can be summarized as follows:

#### **Recommendations Directed to the Syrian Government**

##### **1. Enhance Community Security**

- Train police in human rights, support demining initiatives, combat corruption, and establish independent oversight bodies.

##### **2. Strengthening the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice**

- Implement comprehensive judicial reforms, fight corruption, support accountability, and reinforce the principle of equal citizenship.
- Establish an agency for the missing and forcibly disappeared and provide financial compensation to affected families.

##### **3. Promote Good Governance and Political Participation**

- Empower civil society, develop political party laws, support youth and women's participation, and activate elected local councils.

#### **4. Support Vulnerable Groups**

- Establish support centers for women, launch economic empowerment programmes, provide youth training, and implement inclusion projects for persons with disabilities.

#### **5. Improve Economic Conditions and Livelihoods**

- Create job opportunities, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), control inflation, and curb rising prices.
- Implement "cash-for-work" programmes for infrastructure rehabilitation.

#### **6. Rebuild Basic Services and Infrastructure**

- Rehabilitate water and electricity networks, hospitals, schools, roads, and waste management systems.

#### **7. Support Renewable Energy Projects** in affected areas.

#### **8. Improve Healthcare Services**

- Equip hospitals with necessary medical devices, support medicine funds, and provide incentives for doctors in rural areas.

#### **9. Support the Education Sector**

- Train and qualify teachers, build and rehabilitate schools, and support digital learning.

### **Recommendations Directed to Supporting Entities and International Partners:**

#### **\_1. Supporting community dialogue and trust-building through:**

- Facilitating dialogue sessions between citizens and officials, promoting transparency, and supporting free media.

### **2. Improving information–sharing systems through:**

- Empowering local partners in decision–making, and building platforms for communication and knowledge exchange.

### **3. Funding projects with direct impact through:**

- Cash–for–work projects, infrastructure, health, education, transitional justice, and empowerment programmes.

### **4. Strengthening local partnerships through:**

- Reviewing partnership models, sustainable investment in capacity–building, and recognizing non–financial assets of partnerships.

## **Additional Practical Proposals for Fundable Projects by Donor Entities**

Below is a set of practical proposals that can serve as a basis for projects and programmes eligible for funding and implementation by donor entities, particularly United Nations organizations and their specialized agencies:

• **Enhancing community security and the rule of law:** Based on people’s concerns regarding security, international actors should support the government and the local community in measures that reassure residents and establish stability through:

- **Police and internal security reform:** Training local police personnel in dealing with civilians, managing community conflicts, and maintaining order fairly, with a focus on respecting human rights. Emphasis should be placed on involving the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and the Supreme Judicial Council to ensure institutional coordination.
- **Community initiatives for local security:** Establishing local committees that support police personnel in monitoring and peacefully resolving security issues before they escalate, with an emphasis on the participation of youth and vulnerable groups in these committees.

- **Mine clearance and war remnants project:** Supporting these projects to ensure the safe return of people and reduce injury incidents.
- **Awareness programs on security sector governance:** Implementing awareness campaigns to inform citizens about the concepts of accountable security governance and the role of security institutions in serving the community and respecting human rights.
- **Combating corruption and promoting transparency:** Establishing an independent oversight body with UN technical support to review public spending and ensure the integrity of aid distribution and state resources, thereby guaranteeing that support reaches those who deserve it and enhancing public trust.

This package of measures—reforming security and justice institutions and addressing the causes of disorder—serves a primary goal:

That every citizen feels safe regarding their life, livelihood, and future in their homeland.

- **Programmes to promote governance and political participation:** As a core priority in building a new Syria, their achievement requires integrated practical steps:
    - **Civic awareness programmes:** Promoting the concepts of active citizenship and participatory rights, with a focus on youth in universities and schools, women, and vulnerable groups who constitute the backbone of change.
    - **Project for empowering young and female cadres:** Funding projects to prepare them for participation in local councils and future elections, ensuring broader representation of vulnerable groups in decision-making.
    - **Review of legislative frameworks:** Conducting technical consultations to review laws on political parties and local administration, with the participation of Syrian experts and civil society to ensure alignment with democratic principles and human rights.
    - **Local dialogue forums:** Establishing UN-sponsored local dialogue forums that bring citizens together with their local officials on a regular basis to discuss community needs and response plans, with an emphasis on the inclusion of youth, women, and vulnerable groups.
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- **Community accountability mechanisms:** Establishing complaint boxes and local monitoring committees that enhance transparency in municipal work and ensure citizen participation in overseeing the performance of local institutions.
- **Supporting transitional justice and accountability programmes:** Transitional justice is a cornerstone in the recovery process, where accountability efforts intersect with the rebuilding of the social fabric through integrated steps:
  - **Documentation programmes for violations:** Supporting Syrian non-governmental organizations in preserving national memory as a foundation for future trials or truth commissions.
  - **National programme for community reconciliation:** Organizing dialogues at the village and town levels (particularly in areas that witnessed civil conflict) to break down barriers and build tolerance, while ensuring that there is no impunity for perpetrators of serious crimes.
  - **Judicial and security sector reform:** Providing expert consultations to restructure police institutions in a way that ensures respect for human rights, and training judges and public prosecutors on international standards of transitional justice and the prosecution of war crimes.
  - **Special unit for the missing and forcibly disappeared:** Establishing a unit to trace their fate in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, in response to the demands of detainees' families.
  - **Compensation fund for victims:** Establishing a fund with partial international financing to provide financial and psychological assistance to victims and their families, even before the judicial process is completed. These and other efforts will serve as the foundation for justice, proving to people that the international community stands with their right to redress and accountability as an integral part of the peace process.
- **Dialogue among Syrian communities:** It is essential to define the content of these dialogues so that they focus on:

- **Peaceful transition to a participatory democratic system:** Discussing the form of governance that meets the aspirations of the various participating groups and segments of Syrian society, with an emphasis on ensuring the participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- **Formulating Syrian visions:** Defining shared visions for Syria's political and social future, based on comparative experiences from countries that have undergone successful democratic transitions.
- **Engaging official entities:** Inviting the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Judicial Council to participate in these dialogues to ensure the integration of official and community efforts.
- **Dialogue for Partnership:** Aimed at:
  - **Security sector reform:** Redefining its roles, methods of operation, approaches, and structure in line with the vision, aspirations, and needs of Syrians, in a way that achieves an effective security sector built on the community's trust.
  - **Engaging decision-makers:** Inviting relevant ministries at the decision-making level to participate, rather than limiting involvement to current or former administrative officers only.
  - **Engaging the media sector:** Given its important role in raising public awareness, media outlets should be involved in this event to disseminate concepts of accountable security governance.
  - **Awareness on security sector governance:** Organising awareness sessions on the fundamental concepts of a security sector that is accountable, serves its community, and operates in a human-centred manner within a framework of respect for human rights and the rule of law.
  - **Informing the development of desired reforms:** Using the outcomes of the dialogue to design and formulate reforms related to the legal and regulatory frameworks, operational rules of the security sector, and its interaction with the community it serves and protects.



• **Empowering and Building the Capacities of Vulnerable Groups:** Empowering vulnerable populations is a **vital pillar** of inclusive recovery and a reflection of social justice principles.

- **Projects to establish support centres for women survivors of violence:** Funding projects that provide psychological and legal support alongside economic empowerment programmes for women (especially widows and female heads of households), through small business grants or vocational training in areas such as sewing, handicrafts, and marketing home-made products—offering them a sustainable source of income and independence.
- **Youth rehabilitation and training programmes:** Youth need opportunities that transform their energy into drivers of development by equipping them with skills suitable for the labor market (e.g., mobile phone repair, basic programming, solar energy), along with initial financial support to launch their own projects. This helps bridge the unemployment gap and engage them as positive contributors to society.
- **Support programmes for persons with disabilities:** Their inclusion requires removing physical barriers—such as improving access to buildings and institutions (wheelchair ramps)—and providing free assistive devices (wheelchairs, prosthetic limbs, hearing aids) through joint programmes between the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Additionally, tailored training and employment programmes should be developed to meet their specific needs.
- **Community awareness programmes:** To shift perceptions of vulnerable groups, UNESCO or human rights organizations could organize media campaigns, travelling theatre performances, and visual content that promote the values of equality, non-discrimination, and anti-bullying—thereby strengthening a culture of inclusion and solidarity toward these groups.

By supporting these areas, we ensure that the reconstruction process is inclusive and addresses the long-standing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the conflict.

• **Reviving the Economy and Creating Job Opportunities:** Achieving this requires a multi-level strategy.

- **Funding Cash-for-Work projects:** Supported by the United Nations, these projects employ youth in the rehabilitation of local infrastructure, contributing to reduced unemployment and improved public services.
- **Grant and microloan programmes to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs):** Particularly in the sectors of agriculture, food industries, and handicrafts, helping to enhance food security and create sustainable employment.
- **Vocational training projects for youth:** Building the capacities of young people to improve their skills and prepare them for the labour market, transforming temporary relief into long-term opportunities that promote self-reliance and ensure inclusive economic recovery by turning challenges into opportunities for development.

• **Rebuilding Basic Services and Infrastructure:** This requires donor funding for large-scale projects aimed at reconstructing and rehabilitating vital facilities.

- **Rehabilitation of electricity and water networks:** Focusing on the most affected areas, starting with the installation of solar panels in villages to supply electricity to hospitals and schools, and extending to equipping potable water stations and repairing pipelines through partnerships with UN agencies such as UNDP or UNICEF.
- **Reconstruction of damaged roads and bridges:** To improve connectivity between regions and boost internal trade. These large-scale projects not only restore essential services but also create local job opportunities and stimulate the economy. Waste management and sanitation initiatives should also be supported to improve public health.

**Investing in infrastructure serves as a tangible bridge to achieving social justice and demonstrates a concrete commitment from donors to improving the daily quality of life for the population.**

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• **Improving the Health Sector and Access to Medical Care:** This can be achieved by launching urgent health support programmes:

- Fund free or subsidized medicine funds to provide essential drugs to vulnerable populations, in partnership with the Ministry of Health or local NGOs.
- Support projects to re-equip hospitals and health centers with critical medical equipment (e.g. X-ray machines, intensive care beds, surgical tools), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Improve electricity supply by providing power generators to ensure uninterrupted operation of life-saving facilities.
- Address the severe shortage of medical personnel through financial incentive packages and intensive training programmes for doctors and nurses in marginalized areas.
- Additionally, they offer short, specialized training courses to fill skill gaps in rare medical fields.

To ensure inclusive healthcare, expand mobile field services, such as mobile clinics supported by UNICEF or the Red Cross, to reach remote areas.

In this way, emergency interventions evolve into a comprehensive and integrated healthcare system.

• **Supporting the Education Sector and Addressing Learning Loss:** Supporting education is a fundamental pillar for building a generation capable of leading the reconstruction process. This can be achieved by funding initiatives that ensure the continuity of education and improve its quality.

- Solutions begin with training and qualifying teachers in modern curricula and interactive teaching methods, while ensuring that educators in remote areas receive financial incentives.
- Investment should also go towards rebuilding and rehabilitating schools that have been destroyed or used as shelters, to provide a safe and appealing learning environment. This may include constructing prefabricated schools in displacement

camps to allow displaced children to continue their education and prevent further loss of school years.

- It is also essential to expand free education programmes and material support for students, such as providing free school supplies and backpacks through UNICEF projects or offering scholarships and transport assistance for students with disabilities to attend inclusive schools.
- The integration of technology also plays a key role in meeting educational needs—either by equipping classrooms with digital learning tools or providing remote learning solutions in areas suffering from a shortage of teachers or where child labor is prevalent.

Together, these measures form an integrated strategy that lays the groundwork for a comprehensive educational revival.

**These recommendations and proposals represent a practical roadmap for Syria's recovery phase, grounded in three core pillars: Dignified Living, Justice, and Participation.**

### **Conclusion**

This report represents the outcome of a broad participatory effort, reflecting the aspirations of Syrians—men and women—from diverse regions and backgrounds, at a critical juncture following years of suffering. The findings reveal a clear societal vision centred on comprehensive recovery, not only through rebuilding what the war has destroyed, but also by repairing the torn social fabric and restoring lost trust.

At the heart of these priorities lies the urgent need to improve living conditions, yet Syrians understand that stability will not be achieved without deeper reform. They aspire to a new social contract founded on justice and accountability, one that enshrines genuine political participation and true equality. Their vision includes transparent, accountable institutions capable of regaining public confidence by improving services and upholding the rights of the most marginalized.

The human and political dimensions of this vision are inseparable: the findings stress the need to address the deep wounds left by the conflict and build a sustainable peace rooted in reconciliation, not revenge. True recovery demands more than physical reconstruction—it requires fundamental reforms that prevent the repetition of past injustices and pave the way for a pluralistic future that excludes no one.

The greatest challenge now lies in translating these aspirations into implementable policies, grounded in a genuine partnership between the state and civil society, supported by international actors who place Syrians' priorities at the centre of their efforts. This roadmap is not merely a list of demands; it is a comprehensive vision for Syria's future—a future that restores security and stability and guarantees its people a life of dignity and justice.



## Advancement of Civil Society (GLOCA)

*It is a non-profit organization registered in Syria with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (No. 1368 of 2025). It is headquartered in the city of Aleppo. Registered in Turkey (2022) and Switzerland (2024), it works to promote the roles of youth and women, and defend human rights, through education, community participation, urban planning, reliance on technology and achieving sustainable development.*



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[facebook.com/gloca.org](https://facebook.com/gloca.org)



[info@gloca.org](mailto:info@gloca.org)

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