SYRIA
Data and analysis ecosystem

Thematic Report
28 January 2026

OVERVIEW

Despite the governance and access changes that followed the fall of the Al Assad Government in December 2024, Syria's humanitarian data and analysis ecosystem in 2025 continued to face similar challenges to that presented in the 2023 report, reflecting a combination of both structural and transitional dynamics. The previous data ecosystem report identified fragmented coordination, politicised data access, weak information-sharing practices, and insufficient anticipatory analysis as defining features of Syria's information landscape (ACAPS 18/08/2023). Structural constraints such as fragmented data production, limited forward-looking analysis, and incentives for short-term, proposal-driven assessments remain largely unchanged and aggravated by funding cuts, further reducing comparability and analytical coherence. At the same time, challenges related to coordination and data governance are increasingly shaped by the transitional context.

While coordination structures have formally shifted from a multi-hub, cross-border model toward a centralised country-level architecture, this centralisation refers primarily to institutional design instead of functional coordination capacity. In practice, national-level coordination has introduced new administrative bottlenecks, with system-wide ambiguity around geographic mandates, procedural frameworks for data management and information exchange, and uneven subnational implementation (KII 11/12/2025). As a result, increased access and centralisation has not yet translated into consistent or effective coordination capacity for data and analysis (KII 23/01/2026).

The 2023 report highlighted key operational recommendations: improve coordination, reduce survey fatigue, strengthen anticipatory analysis, and encourage greater Syrian-led research. Lack of incentives and clear governance, financial, and organisational capacity remain the main barriers to the full implementation of these recommendations. Given the structural nature of these constraints, the recommendations are likely to remain valid for 2026 and beyond. While political fragmentation, access constraints, and parallel coordination systems affected data collection and analysis prior to the change in government, political and humanitarian transition and funding constraints characterise this current period.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents an updated assessment of Syria's data and analysis ecosystem, examining the direct and systemic effects of the political transition that began in December 2024 on data collection, information sharing, analysis, and evidence-based decision-making. The information collected to inform this report has been analysed through the lens of ACAPS's ideal data and analysis ecosystem.

Methodology

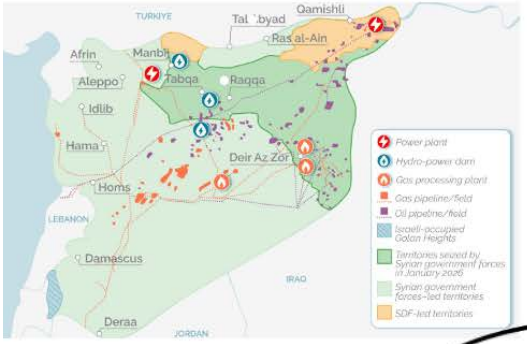
Findings from an in-person workshop held in Damascus in November 2025 with primarily representatives from Syrian-led organisations, alongside several consultations with donors and INGO and UN programmatic staff conducted throughout the fall of 2025, were used to build an understanding of the context. For the purpose of this report, ACAPS also conducted 12 key informant interviews (KIIs) with a range of international NGO staff in Syria. Interviewees included information management officers and coordinators, humanitarian advisors, monitoring and evaluation officers, data and context analysts, and network coordinators, reflecting depth of insight more than representativeness across the board. ACAPS used secondary data to inform the contextual overview and triangulate findings where possible.

Limitations

Interview fatigue was prevalent when speaking with national and local NGOs, mainly resulting from the rapid political developments and escalations in Syria. Diverging priorities resulted in fewer interviews with people at community- and national-level organisations. It should be noted, however, that the vast majority of attendees at the workshop in Damascus were Syrian humanitarian workers, and their views were captured during the group discussions and integrated into this report. This helped to balance the limited representation in the KIIs and complement the findings. ACAPS also experienced an increasingly closed and competitive information environment, particularly as some UN organisations were not available for interview or meetings without formal data-sharing agreements at the leadership level.

As the objective of this report is to analyse gaps, not directly intervene in them, ACAPS decided not to develop a metadatabase, as this would have filled a gap highlighted by some KIIs and, as such, fallen outside the scope of this work. The absence of a metadatabase was partially mitigated by asking key informants about their perception of sectoral and geographic information gaps.

DATA AND ANALYSIS ECOSYSTEM OVERVIEW



Source: ISPI (28/01/2026)

Physical and geographic access improved, but uneven due to localise conflict and lack of clarity on institutional roles and mandates.

Fragmented data collection, limited comparability. Duplication and survey fatigue persist.

Humanitarian system transition from multi-hub, cross-border model to centralized country level operation.

CONTEXT

DATA COLLECTION

Syria data and analysis ecosystem

EVIDENCE - BASED DECISION MAKING

Under-representation of Syrian-led organisations in coordination and decision-making; limited integration of contextual knowledge.

ANALYSIS

Analysis remains central to evidence-based decision making, although largely descriptive and reactive.

Project-driven and descriptive analysis is predominant; insufficient forward-looking analysis.

USE OF DATA

Competitive funding environment incentivizes data ownership and narrative control; it reinforces short-terms, proposal driven assessments.

COLLABORATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

Access to datasets and information often constrained by data governance, protection protocols, and organizational procedures.

Analytical asymmetries between data producers and data users.

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KEY FINDINGS

Humanitarian access has improved, but operating arrangements remain in flux

Following the fall of Al Assad's rule in December 2024, humanitarian access has comparatively improved, especially in previous Government of Syria-controlled areas. Access remains uneven, however, and constrained by localised conflict and administrative requirements related to permissions, registration, and data collection authorisations. The humanitarian response is simultaneously undergoing a major transition, with coordination structures being reconfigured and centralised into a single, country-level operation led from Damascus, replacing a multi-hub, cross-border model. This shift, alongside the establishment of a new national humanitarian framework, has reshaped access dynamics. These changing aspects directly affect data collection and analysis, particularly in areas affected by armed escalations, where security concerns, population movements, and access volatility limit consistent information gathering, disrupting longitudinal monitoring.

Fragmentation of data collection and limited comparability

Data collection and analysis remain geographically and methodologically fragmented and largely project driven. Organisations apply different methodologies, sampling approaches, and indicator definitions, limiting data comparability and aggregation. Lack of timely coordination or data-sharing agreements (as a result of both procedural limitations and lack of incentives) mean that multiple responders often collect similar data simultaneously, contributing to duplication and survey fatigue. Funding shortfalls have intensified this trend, encouraging isolated, short-term, and proposal-driven assessments instead of coordinated, strategic data collection. These issues typically arise across large humanitarian responses and, as such, are not necessarily unique to the Syrian context.

Uneven geographic coverage and coordination gaps

Data availability and coordination capacity vary significantly across Syria largely as a result of the legacy of previous operational divisions, current localised conflict, and transitional uncertainties. Northwest Syria benefits from relatively stronger data coverage, as there are a larger number of organisations in the area working in long-standing cross-border operations, while other regions remain under-assessed. In northeast Syria, the faltering of coordination following the disbandment of working groups has created a transition gap. Diverse regional contexts and drivers of needs in different regions (conflict and displacement dynamics, environmental hazards, and governance capacity) further complicate data availability across the country.

Fragmentation is increasingly driven not only by coordination gaps but also funding timelines and proposal-driven incentives. In practice, organisations often conduct parallel assessments because existing datasets are not released in time to inform funding decisions. This dynamic reinforces duplication, short-term data collection, and limited comparability, particularly under compressed donor cycles.

Restricted data access and information sharing

Access to existing data is shaped by protection, validation, and coordination requirements, as well as organisational procedures and, at times, political considerations within coordination structures. In practice, these constraints cumulatively reduce the ability of non-owning responders to independently analyse, triangulate, or contextualise findings. Multiple NGO respondents highlighted that data governance practices within UN organisations and clusters, including publication timelines and data-access arrangements, can limit the availability of raw or analysis-ready data for independent use. This reinforces analytical asymmetries between data producers and data users and constrains collective and independent analytical capacity, which can reflect in poorly informed decision-making. These dynamics are further influenced by funding structures that may incentivise more territorial approaches to information management and narrative ownership, contributing to a competitive (instead of collaborative) information environment in which data is, at times, leveraged to gain advantage in funding processes.

Data politicisation has evolved not disappeared

Although physical and geographic access for humanitarian responders has comparatively improved since late 2024, governance-related constraints affecting data collection and analysis persist. These constraints increasingly manifest through administrative and procedural mechanisms, such as permissions, approvals, and data ownership requirements, instead of outright denial of access.

These constraints are shaped in part by regulatory frameworks and institutional roles, with the Syria Planning and Statistics Commission (PSC) retaining primary responsibility for household-level data and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinating data access with the PSC and relevant line ministries depending on the data type. This transitional period remains characterised by institutional fragmentation, as ministries apply differing approaches and mandates remain yet to be settled, resulting in delays, duplication, and increased administrative complexity. This shift has reduced the visibility of politicisation while continuing to affect data timeliness, independence, and analytical use (KII 23/01/2026).

Limited analytical depth and forward-looking capacity

Data analysis remains predominantly descriptive instead of forward looking, especially among non-analysis-focused organisations reporting against project outputs to meet donor requirements. Organisations report insufficient real-time data, time, and analytical capacity to integrate forward-looking or contextual analysis into planning. Access to anticipatory analysis and the use of anticipatory frameworks for potential assessments by operational stakeholders are associated with improved capacity to contextualise risks and support a shift from emergency response to early recovery.

Limited participation of Syrian-led organisations

Despite policy-driven localisation commitments, Syrian-led organisations continue to face barriers to meaningful representation and participation in coordination and decision-making structures. Informal exclusion from sector leadership roles limits the integration of community perspectives into response planning and analysis.

The limited participation of Syrian-led organisations in analytical and coordination processes does not primarily reflect technical capacity gaps. Instead, this exclusion is closely linked to governance arrangements, informal power dynamics, and representation norms within coordination structures, which limit the systematic integration of locally generated data and contextual knowledge. This has implications for the relevance, accuracy, and contextual grounding of collective analysis and response planning.

OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN SYRIA'S HUMANITARIAN DATA AND ANALYSIS ECOSYSTEM

The following opportunities have been identified based on analytical implications derived from the key findings.

Establish national standards for data collection and comparability

Implement endorsed national guidelines for data collection methodologies, indicators, and sampling approaches developed between humanitarian coordination bodies and relevant authorities, such as the PSC. The feasibility and effectiveness of such collaboration, however, are shaped by governance arrangements, levels of institutional trust, and clarity of mandates, which may affect both uptake and implementation in practice. To support implementation, these standards should be complemented by clear arrangements for data hosting, coordination, and access, including response-wide rapid needs assessment tools, shared standard operating procedures, and publicly accessible datasets where appropriate, taking into consideration sensitivity concerns. Findings on fragmentation and limited comparability indicate that the absence of minimum common standards constrains data quality, hinders aggregation and cross-regional comparison, and contributes to duplication and survey fatigue. While standardisation is relevant, its effectiveness is likely contingent on accompanying institutional, donor-driven incentives or enforcement and accountability mechanisms.

Improve data access and information-sharing mechanisms

Findings on delayed data release and fragmented coordination suggest that the implementation of enhanced data-sharing protocols across coordination structures – such as OCHA and the Syria NGO Forum – would increase collaboration and analytical coherence. The analysis also suggests that, if datasets were more systematically shared alongside analytical products and with transparent publication timelines aligned with funding cycles, this would enable greater scope for independent analysis and more robust evidence-based decision-making. At the same time, politicisation, data sensitivity, and protection considerations remain key factors shaping what information can feasibly be shared, with whom, and at what level of disaggregation. These constraints reflect the trade-offs between enabling analytical access and safeguarding individuals, organisations, and operational relationships, underscoring the need to balance information availability with protection and risk mitigation considerations.

Beyond technical data-sharing protocols, improving access will likely require changes in incentives. In the current funding environment, data is frequently treated as a competitive asset during proposal processes instead of a shared public good. Without donor-backed expectations, minimum disclosure standards, or agreed publication timelines, voluntary data sharing is unlikely to scale in a sustainable manner across organisations, sectors, and regions. In practice, donors are well positioned to influence these dynamics indirectly, including by encouraging transparency through funding requirements, supporting shared information platforms, or recognising collaborative data practices within reporting and accountability frameworks.

Invest in anticipatory and forward-looking analysis capacity

Analysis indicates that limited donor allocation of dedicated resources for analytical capacity, both in terms of volume of funding and issues of prioritisation, particularly for the development of anticipatory analytical frameworks (such as early warning systems, climate risk analysis, or displacement forecasting), constrains the shift beyond descriptive reporting. The gap in anticipatory analysis reflects not only limited resources but also institutional prioritisation. Where analytical capacity exists, it is often absorbed by operational reporting and proposal support, leaving limited space for forward-looking or scenario-based analysis. Addressing this gap requires both dedicated funding and a clearer separation between analytical functions and short-term reporting demands.

Strengthen localisation and representation of Syrian-led organisations

Analysis from KIIs suggests that where meaningful localisation and community leadership engagement is constrained, including through informal exclusion from coordination or sector-level decision-making, analysis tends to remain centralised with limited incorporation of locally generated perspectives. This creates a risk that analytical products insufficiently reflect local dynamics and rapidly evolving conditions, particularly at the subnational level, which in turn may weaken contextual responsiveness in response planning and programme design.

CONTEXT OVERVIEW

Fall of Al Assad and the new Transitional Government

On 8 December 2024, a coalition of armed opposition groups led by and mostly comprising Hayat Tahrir Al Sham (HTS) fighters, together with Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) factions, ousted President Bashar Al Assad after over 50 years of his family's rule, including over 14 years of civil war (BBC 09/12/2024). The coalition then formed the Syrian Transitional Government on 29 March 2025 led by Ahmad Al Sharaa, the head of HTS (Reuters 30/03/2025).

Following the January 2025 Victory Conference, transitional authorities initiated early-stage implementation of a security restructuring process aimed at integrating more than 60 armed factions into a centralised national army under the Ministry of Defence (MEI 12/06/2025). While most major opposition factions involved in the capture of Damascus agreed to merge under a phased and hierarchical command structure, many former Syrian Arab Army factions either disbanded or were expected to undergo gradual integration (The New Arab 03/02/2025). Several stakeholders, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Al Sweida militias, and other smaller factions, opted out of the initial integration framework, however, pending political and security arrangements related to autonomy and regional governance (MEI 12/06/2025). Despite a preliminary agreement between the SDF and the Transitional Government in March 2025, progress toward unified command structures has remained limited (Reuters 11/03/2025).

These unresolved integration challenges contributed to renewed insecurity and localised conflict. Sectarian and localised violence intensified in early 2025, reflecting divergent conflict dynamics across regions. In Syria's coastal areas, particularly Lattakia governorate, clashes occurred primarily between transitional government security forces and armed groups linked to remnants of the former regime (The Guardian 09/03/2025). These confrontations resulted in civilian casualties, displacement, and heightened humanitarian needs. In southern Syria, conflict in As-Sweida governorate involved Druze-aligned armed groups and Sunni Bedouin fighters, with fighting in July 2025 significantly disrupting services and humanitarian access (HRW 22/07/2025). Israeli airstrikes and incursions were also reported in southern Syria during this period, framed by Israeli authorities as measures to protect minorities or prevent the re-emergence of Iranian-backed militias, contributing to further instability and displacement (BBC 14/07/2025). In early 2026, tensions escalated again in northern Syria, particularly around Aleppo, where clashes between the SDF and government forces followed attempts to reassert territorial and security control, underscoring the continued fragmentation of Syria's post-transition security environment (Reuters 07/01/2026).

The emerging national army faces major challenges, including rebuilding destroyed military infrastructure caused by Israeli airstrikes in December 2024 and balancing political cohesion (The New Arab 03/02/2025). More broadly, the Transitional Government remains in the early stages of developing administrative and governance systems capable of ensuring service delivery, managing local grievances, and enabling inclusive sociopolitical representation. These institutional capacity constraints continue to shape governance outcomes, including challenges related to data governance, coordination, and information management across sectors (USIP 10/03/2025; Global Voices 19/03/2025).

Humanitarian situation

While the situation is still evolving, the consolidation of most geographies under a single governing authority has generally improved operational and administrative humanitarian access in terms of expanded operational presence. The security situation remains fragile, however, with periodic conflict escalations triggering displacement and constraining humanitarian access (Health Cluster 01/09/2025). This, in turn, disrupts data collection through reduced monitoring coverage and limited enumerator access, reducing data quality and frequency.

At the same time, communities continue to face the impacts of environmental hazards, especially drought, increasing the demand for timely data, early warning, and anticipatory analysis to inform preparedness and response (REACH 22/09/2025). The protracted crisis – upwards of 14 years – has had long-lasting effects on the population's livelihoods (UNHCR 24/12/2025). Around 16.5 million people across Syria are estimated to have been in need of humanitarian assistance in 2025, a slight decrease from 16.7 million in 2024. Since the political transition, around 1.1 million Syrians have returned to the country from abroad, while 1.91 million people have been registered as IDP returnees since December 2024 (IOM 15/01/2026). This report's analysis shows that return dynamics are a main driver of new data needs and coordination challenges. The most recent multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) highlighted the critical need for integrated data systems, cross-sector analysis, and interventions that address these simultaneous shocks. This requires focusing on community engagement, inclusion, and resilience-building (IFRC 19/12/2025). The evolving context – including new displacements, return dynamics, localised conflict escalation, transitional governance, and a restructured humanitarian architecture – alongside recent funding shortfalls have further complicated the operating environment for data collection and analysis.

CURRENT RESPONSE ARCHITECTURE

Following the change in governing authorities in December 2024, the humanitarian response framework was reassessed and restructured to reflect the new access and governance reality. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed on a phased transition plan that was initiated in early 2025 and focused on simplifying coordination arrangements, adapting resources to current needs, and consolidating what had been a multi-hub, cross-border response into a centralised country-level operation. Under the new arrangement, strategic oversight will be provided by a Humanitarian Country Team supported by national and subnational inter-sector coordination, sector working groups, and area-based coordination across seven hubs. This new coordination structure is expected to have an uneven implementation modality, dependent on access. Humanitarian organisations are simultaneously adjusting longstanding delivery models, with operations previously managed from neighbouring countries relocating to Syria (OCHA 02/07/2025). The timeline for this new coordination model to be fully functional is still unclear, as transitional structures are also struggling with uncertainties around financial resources and institutional capacities (KII 11/12/2025).

As the UN-led coordination model is reconfigured, Syria's caretaker authorities are simultaneously working to establish a new national humanitarian framework. Humanitarian leadership appears to be shaped by figures from the former Syrian Salvation Government based in Idlib, who are now part of the Transitional Government. At the beginning of 2025, the Transitional Government designated the Humanitarian Action Coordination office as the primary national aid coordinator across most of Syria, excluding the northeast, as a continuation of the existing structure in Northwest Syria, where the Syrian Salvation Government had been ruling (UKHIH et al. 16/04/2025). By January 2026, the Humanitarian Action Coordination office had been replaced by Information Cooperation Offices that sit under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates (MoFAE). At the time of writing, ACAPS could not confirm if this process had been formalised and completed.

INGOs appear to be subject to different policies, such as mandatory partnerships with national aid bodies, and sometimes face challenges including temporary licensing (Refugees International 02/05/2025). In 2025, numerous international and community-level NGOs completed their formal registration, were licensed by the MoFAE and Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and relocated their headquarters to Damascus, easing challenges related to remote monitoring and increasing avenues for improved coordination. By January 2026, more organisations were operating nationwide, expanding operations into Damascus or other governorates, unlike their previous restriction to specific geographic areas depending on the political control of de facto authorities (Refugees International 02/05/2025; KII 23/12/2025). Despite this, several organisations continue to face bureaucratic and administrative hurdles, such as differing registration policies between ministries and regional authorities impeding the ability to scale up operations, as some laws regulating NGO registration and operation date back to the 1950s (HRW 12/05/2025; KII 23/12/2025). More importantly, several structural reforms have yet to be introduced, such as formalised permission for data collection and registration of new NGOs (KII 16/12/2025 a).

In September 2025, the Northwest Syria NGO Forum, Northeast Syria NGO Forum, Damascus-based INGOs, the Partnership Coordination Group, and the Syria Regional INGO Forum merged into one unified national NGO coordination and representation platform, the Syria NGO Forum (Syria NGO Forum 18/12/2025; KII 23/12/2025). While reduced fragmentation should be considered beneficial to increased information sharing, KIIs suggest that this transitional phase still carries uncertainties around mandates, focal points, and overall coordination systems. As part of the humanitarian operational transition, OCHA created a centralised fund by merging the Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund with the Syria Humanitarian Fund (OCHA 18/01/2026 and 08/12/2025).

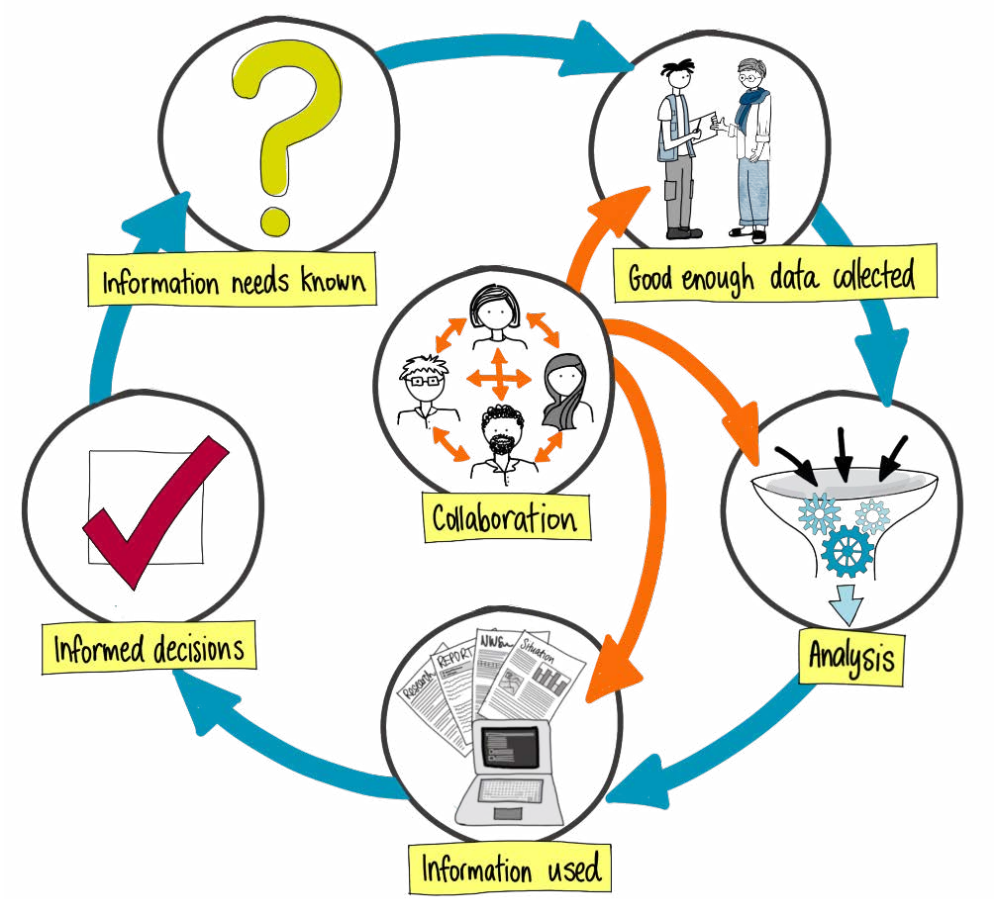
ACAPS 'IDEAL' HUMANITARIAN DATA AND ANALYSIS ECOSYSTEM

ACAPS has identified five key elements of an 'ideal' analysis ecosystem (involving both data collection and analysis processes) to function effectively in the humanitarian sector, and it is through this lens that the interview questionnaire and overall report were structured. The illustration below shows the information flow cycle in an ideal analysis ecosystem, where data informs analysis that informs decisions and response, which then in turn inform further data collection, with collaboration becoming an enabling factor for the system to function. ACAPS recognises that full independence is often difficult to achieve in highly politicised or resource-constrained contexts, where institutional, funding, and access constraints shape the degree of separation feasible in practice, depending on the context and funding model.

As a reference point, evidence-informed humanitarian systems are those in which strategic, operational, and funding decisions are guided by robust analysis. Stakeholders involved in data collection and analysis (such as civil society organisations, NGOs, the UN, governmental bodies, and donors) are interconnected and exchange data and information on a regular basis, both formally and informally. In such contexts, improvements in the quality and comprehensiveness of humanitarian databases are shaped not only by interconnectedness but also the presence of shared standards, aligned incentives, and sufficient trust to enable the effective use of both formal and informal information streams for complementarity, crosschecking, and validation.

Humanitarian crises are inherently volatile, with rapidly changing conditions increasing the need for timely data, adaptive analysis, and flexible methods to support decision-making in fast-moving environments.

Figure 1: ACAPS 'ideal' humanitarian data and and analysis ecosystem



As contexts evolve, analytical ecosystems are expected to adapt accordingly. The findings from this report suggest, however, that this adaptive capacity remains uneven in Syria, with different components of the ecosystem facing different constraints: data collection is shaped by access limitations, insufficient coordination, and fragmentation; analytical production is constrained by limited capacity and delayed data release; and data use in decision-making is influenced by donor requirements, competition, and trust deficits across stakeholders.

As a benchmark condition within evidence-informed humanitarian systems, data and analysis functions maintain a degree of separation from operational delivery and funding decision-making, such as through distinct governance arrangements, analytical mandates, or safeguards that help preserve analytical objectivity while remaining operationally relevant. Such separation is intended to reduce the influence of programmatic incentives, political pressures, or donor priorities on data production while still allowing information needs to be identified and communicated through coordination forums, engagement with decision makers, and structured feedback mechanisms (#KeepCounting 05/06/2025).

The following sections examine how Syria's humanitarian data and analysis ecosystem aligns with, or departs from, this ideal ecosystem flow.

SYRIA'S DATA AND ANALYSIS ECOSYSTEM IN 2025

Good enough data collected

Data collection environment

While organisations require prior ministry approval to conduct primary data collection, many interviewees reported that data collection processes face fewer constraints, especially in previous Government of Syria-controlled areas, and less politicisation compared to before. This is largely the result of improved humanitarian access in some areas, with NGOs expanding their reach to new governorates and regions. As a result, organisations report having better onsite supervision (including enumerator oversight, training, and spot checks) over field offices, which may improve data quality (KII 14/12/2025; KII 23/12/2025).

The MoFAE approvals process redirects large-scale assessments to the PSC, a practice reported to be congruent with previous practices (KII 16/12/2025 a). Experiences vary, however, with permissions granted at Information Cooperation Offices, central MoFAE, or PSC levels underscoring continued ambiguity regarding institutional authority and the absence of a standardised, clearly defined permissions pathway.

With the recent geographic expansion, some organisations are proactively trying to broaden their reach by conducting their own assessments (KII 15/12/2025 b). Financial constraints and overstretched capacity mean, however, that such is becoming more challenging, so NGOs are combining efforts and conducting joint MSNAs outside formal Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan initiatives (KII 15/12/2025 b). This shows adaptive collaboration on the one hand, and the possible fragmentation of formal coordination mechanisms and the negative impact of timely data sharing on the other.

Mixed-method approaches remain the main method of data collection in Syria, signalling a form of strength in the ecosystem. Organisations often rely on primary sources as their most reliable source of information, linked to trust issues resulting from a lack of knowledge of methodological approaches, timeliness of other available data, and issues with data quality (KII 09/12/2025). Organisations collect qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, KIIs, and focus group discussions, complemented by secondary information when needed (KII 15/12/2025 b). Data collection is mainly done for needs assessments, evaluations, and post-distribution, activity, and implementation monitoring (KII 15/12/2025 b).

Secondary sources are used to understand the general operating landscape or validate findings from primary data sources, but are insufficient alone for informed decision-making (KII 16/12/2025 b). INGOs tend to triangulate and validate data through implementing organisations or UN contacts or reports, while community-level NGOs often validate secondary data through primary sources (KII 07/12/2025 24/12/2025; KII 09/12/2025). This pattern reflects underlying asymmetries in data access within the Syrian context.

Community-level NGOs often face greater barriers to engaging with formal coordination and information-sharing mechanisms, limiting their access to data and institutional reporting. At the same time, these NGOs' closer proximity to affected communities enables timelier, ground-level validation of information. When these context-specific perspectives are not systematically integrated into collective analysis, available evidence may lack nuance or timely verification. When secondary data does not adequately address operational questions, organisations frequently undertake parallel primary data collection, contributing to fragmentation and increased survey fatigue (KII 15/12/2025 a).

Challenges collecting data

Two interviewees reported, however, that different line ministries take different approaches to facilitating or rejecting permissions, reflecting institutional fragmentation (KII 16/12/2025 a; KII 23/12/2025). Other respondents mentioned that obtaining permissions for area-based assessments at the local level is easier, likely because of proximity and informal relationships, given that community authorities are embedded in the process (KII 16/12/2025 a).

Some organisations perceive these permissions as government interference in the independent data collection and analysis process, especially in relation to enumerator control, data ownership, and publication freedom. A few respondents reported that the PSC hosts household-level data – particularly data containing personally identifiable information – on its servers, reflecting practices inherited from the previous regime. In practice, this requirement appears to be applied flexibly, on ad hoc basis, with exemptions granted when data does not include such personal information (KII 23/12/2025; KII 16/12/2025 a). Ambiguity around permission pathways and institutional authority continues to affect data collection planning and consistency. Experiences vary across ministries and geographic areas, with local-level permissions often perceived as more accessible than national processes. This variability creates uncertainty and complicates efforts to standardise data collection approaches across regions (KII 23/02/2026).

The Transitional Government is also pushing to employ its own enumerators, which is seen as a bias and data integrity risk to independent data collection (KII 16/12/2025 a). Some organisations are resisting this interference, particularly requests for data on the people they support (KII 07/12/2025). The lack of personal data protection legislation in Syria is compounding these issues (KII 23/12/2025).

Data quality and availability

Issues with data quality, accuracy, and timeliness are widespread, as Syria is a fast-paced operating environment with rapid population movements and shifting access and governance (KII 23/12/2025). Multiple respondents highlighted how the issue of data availability in Syria is less pronounced than that of data quality and accessibility, as accessibility is limited by scarce data-sharing agreements and differing formats.

While there is a wealth of data available in the Syrian context, the data collection process is highly fragmented and poorly coordinated. This is mainly because various stakeholders are collecting the same data, sometimes at the same time, and not sharing it, especially when data is used for new funding proposals and/or staff capacity is overstretched (KII 16/12/2025 a; KII 23/12/2025). This has resulted in significant survey fatigue, which is affecting data reliability.

These issues can arise from the design of data collection methodologies and tools, such as long surveys, sampling methods, and inadequate enumerator training on technical indicators, especially among smaller organisations that lack technical support (KII 11/12/2025; KII 15/12/2025 b; KII 23/12/2025). As a result, cognitive biases can emerge around selection, subsequent response planning, and challenging data consolidation and analysis (KII 23/12/2025). Organisations rely on standardised data collection tools within their organisation or sector, which aim to minimise errors and ensure data integrity (KII 07/12/2025). Lack of standardisation across organisations and the absence of national standards mean, however, that even similar indicators may not be comparable as a result of differing sampling methods and survey design (KII 23/12/2025).

Sectoral coverage through MSNAs is generally not identified as a gap, as MSNAs are widely conducted and supported across sectors and intended to inform sectoral priorities as reflected in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP). Respondents noted, however, that MSNA findings may not always provide sufficient granularity or

timeliness for programme design purposes (KII 07/12/2025). As a result, while MSNAs serve as a common analytical reference point, they typically need to be complemented by organisations' own assessments and analysis to address specific operational and organisational information needs (KII 15/12/2025 b; KII 11/12/2025). Organisations usually fill in information gaps, especially those related to new geographies, by contacting organisations working in those areas or conducting their own analysis through researchers (KII 09/12/2025). At the same time, respondents highlighted a decision-making bottleneck caused by data gaps. For example, it is difficult for organisations to expand operations to new areas when no information is available, but organisations are also unable to gather this data themselves to decide whether to start operating in new locations.

This situation is symptomatic of the varying NGO presence across different geographical areas, resulting in data availability imbalances. As there has historically been better access from Türkiye, there is relatively better data on the northwest and limited data on the rest of the country, necessitating independent data collection. The political transition and funding cuts have also severely affected coordination in the northeast, where the disbandment of former working groups has created a challenging coordination environment (KII 11/12/2025).

The cost and lengthy process required to carry out a regular nationwide assessment, as well as donor timelines and competition, often lead humanitarian responders to run their own assessments to fill gaps instead of strategic prioritisations creating a patchwork of different assessments, resulting in fragmentation and comparability issues (KII 15/12/2025 b; KII 16/12/2025 a). Data collection, mainly assessments, is seen at times – mostly for smaller organisations – as a high-risk investment, with no expectation that it can cover its own cost, highlighting an equity issue (KII 23/12/2025). Respondents highlighted how better coordination and collaboration, particularly planning, communicating, and sharing data among Assessment and Analysis and Information Management enablers, is needed to overcome limitations resulting from the challenging funding environment (KII 11/12/2025; KII 23/12/2025). The sudden withdrawal of US funding in 2025 resulted in the immediate cessation of numerous information management, assessment, and analysis services, affecting the methodologies used for data collection in many assessments and leading to decreased data quality (KII 11/12/2025).

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Collaboration and data sharing

Humanitarian data sharing in Syria remains weak, amid a lack of formal data-sharing protocols and practices, highlighting a major ecosystem gap. Data sharing is mostly represented in information sharing during sector or cluster meetings, where organisations share meta-information – such as who is collecting what and where – rather than actual datasets (KII 07/12/2025). Other forms of data sharing include NGO coordination on specific data collection tasks, such as drafting terms of reference documents and conducting training for participating NGOs (KII 15/12/2025 b). Respondents shared that data sharing often requires prior internal approvals, for legal and risk management reasons (KII 09/12/2025; KII 15/12/2025 b; KII 16/12/2025 a). Different data-sharing approaches exist within the same organisation depending on the type of data requested and its sensitivity – such as data on crisis-affected people or data collected in politically sensitive areas – highlighting challenges related to internal governance (KII 15/12/2025 a). The process remains relatively voluntary, informal, and relies primarily on the responsible person's willingness, capacity, and availability, resulting in inconsistent uptake and sustainability (KII 15/12/2025 a; KII 23/12/2025). Within the current funding climate, organisations also feel incentivised to retain control over data and deploy it strategically in grant applications instead of share (KII 16/12/2025 a; KII 23/12/2025).

Amid a lack of standardised data-sharing protocols and practices, reporting on more detailed data is a laborious process, including formatting, approval-seeking, and validation, that most organisations struggle with (KII 07/12/2025). Further, the lack of national data collection methodology standards across organisations means that even when data is shared, differing sampling approaches and indicator definitions can render it difficult to meaningfully aggregate, compare, or report against a unified structure (KII 23/12/2025).

Since most organisations collect project-related data, some data may be perceived as less useful for others and, as such, the data-sharing process becomes limited in perceived value (KII 23/12/2025). The perception of risk aversion and limited understanding of data protection policies, whether internal or broader, by some organisations is also hindering data sharing with other parties (KII 23/12/2025).

Respondents generally described data sharing between organisations as limited, with several perceiving UN organisations, particularly OCHA, as a key constraint because of delays in releasing MSNA data until after the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) publication and the limited sharing of underlying datasets, complicating independent analysis (KII 16/12/2025 a; KII 11/12/2025). A number of respondents reported that these practices are shaped by institutional concerns around narrative consistency and coordination, which may be affecting the extent of collaborative, evidence-based analysis (KII 16/12/2025 a).

Data analysis

Predominance of descriptive and operational analysis

Across humanitarian responders, analysis is overwhelmingly data driven and descriptive, designed to support immediate operational planning, prioritisation, and donor reporting. Decision-making, particularly around proposal design, geographic targeting, and resource allocation, is rarely undertaken without reference to available data, indicating a high degree of data integration within these processes (KII 14/12/2025; KII 07/12/2025).

Donors and senior management consistently request actionable analysis aligned with logframe-driven indicators and short funding cycles to justify funding decisions and demonstrate results. This contributes to a focus on documenting needs, vulnerabilities, and outputs instead of generating predictive or forward-looking insights, reinforcing a system in which analysis is primarily used to explain what is happening now instead of what is likely to happen next, resulting in gaps in anticipatory analysis (KII 07/12/2025).

Several organisations apply a mix of quantitative descriptive analysis, statistical testing, and risk analysis, particularly when internal capacity – including technical skills and time – allows. These analytical efforts are often undertaken in house, potentially affecting comparability across organisations, although external consultants may also be engaged depending on context and organisational capacity (KII 15/12/2025 b).

Respondents highlighted that annual MSNAs are especially influential because of their wide endorsement and donor reliance. MSNAs serve as a core evidence base for donor engagement, cluster discussions, and strategic planning, and are frequently referenced by donors and coordination platforms in annual planning processes – such as the HRP and Humanitarian Implementation Plans – increasing pressure on timing and scope (KII 15/12/2025 b). When inter-agency or endorsed assessments such as MSNAs are delayed or misaligned with operational timelines, however, organisations often undertake their own ad hoc assessments as an adaptive response to meet internal prioritisation and planning needs, which in turn contributes to assessment duplication. This is particularly evident when responders need to make rapid operational decisions and cannot wait for coordinated analytical products (KII 16/12/2025 a). While often necessary to address immediate information gaps, this practice contributes to the proliferation of assessments and reflects a broader systemic tension between analysis produced for funding justification and that intended to inform operational decision-making (KII 16/12/2025 a).

Challenges in data analysis

Data analysis remains weak and fragmented as a result of inconsistent formats and effective collaboration, with limited opportunities for in-depth comparative and predictive analysis that could benefit the wider humanitarian response or generate meaningful feedback loops (KII 11/12/2025; KII 15/12/2025 b; KII 23/12/2025). Most analytical efforts remain project based, prioritising documentation of implementation, activity reporting, and resource mobilisation, reflecting the continuing trade-off between meeting accountability and fundraising requirements and investing in analysis that supports broader strategic understanding (KII 11/12/2025; KII 15/12/2025 b; KII 23/12/2025).

Even within organisations, especially UN organisations and larger INGOs, different data sources are tracked by different individuals or units, reflecting organisational silos. This leads to unsystematic analytical processes with missed linkages, limiting the ability to generate integrated insights across sectors or programmes (KII 15/12/2025 b). Across the sector, the lack of standardised data collection tools and methodologies is identified as one of the biggest barriers to conducting robust, in-depth analysis (KII 23/12/2025). This challenge is compounded by Syria's highly diverse operational context: each geographic area faces distinct humanitarian realities and drivers of needs, making data comparability and aggregation extremely difficult (KII 15/12/2025 b).

The funding crisis has further constrained analytical capacity. Assessment and analysis functions, in terms of staffing and/or scope of analysis, are often among the first to be reduced or eliminated when resources contract, highlighting a tension between short-term cost pressures and the role of analysis in supporting evidence-informed decision-making (KII 11/12/2025). These pressures reinforce a cycle in which analysis remains reactive, limiting the sector's ability to invest in more strategic, forward-looking analytical approaches.

Critical gap in anticipatory and predictive analysis

Syria's data ecosystem continues to reveal a significant gap between early warning and early action, extending beyond health surveillance to environmental and climate-related hazards, particularly drought. While systems such as the Early Warning, Alert and Response Network in Northwest Syria demonstrate technical maturity in disease surveillance, few comparable anticipatory frameworks exist for recurrent climate shocks. The 2024–2025 drought, which was forecast in advance but failed to trigger systematic anticipatory action, illustrates this disconnect clearly (ECHO 19/07/2025; UNICEF 30/08/2025).

Previous analyses have highlighted limited access to pre-positioned and anticipatory financing mechanisms, including those facilitated by networks such as the Start Network. These barriers are primarily related to eligibility criteria, activation thresholds, and governance arrangements rather than physical access or technical capacity alone. In practice, complex eligibility requirements, decision-making timelines, and centralised governance structures limit organisations' ability to trigger funding rapidly, respond proactively to shocks, and support more locally led decision-making processes (ACAPS 29/09/2023). The absence of sustained investment in in-depth and anticipatory analysis, particularly analysis focused on long-term strategies and prioritisation, also continues to restrict the sector's ability to transition from emergency response to early recovery and resilience-oriented programming (KII 23/12/2025; Syria NGO Forum 18/12/2025).

Analysis as a foundation for evidence-based decision-making

Short funding cycles and immediate programmatic horizons indirectly lead to analysis that remains largely confined to operational planning and funding decisions instead of longer-term strategic or anticipatory approaches (KII 07/12/2025).

Despite these challenges, analysis remains central to evidence-based decision-making across humanitarian responders, marking a strength of the Syrian analytical ecosystem. Severity scores, vulnerability indices, and sectoral analyses play a key role in narrowing priority locations, aligning interventions with organisational mandates, and meeting donor requirements (KII 07/12/2025; KII 14/12/2025). Analysis is also used to determine whether additional needs assessments are required or whether existing data is sufficient to proceed with programming decisions and reduce duplication (KII 07/12/2025).

Analytical outputs are routinely cited in proposals, donor reports, and coordination fora. Donors and clusters reference organisational assessments as part of their decision-making processes, reinforcing the importance of credible and timely data (KII 15/12/2025 b). For organisations positioning themselves as independent responders, reliance on internally generated data strengthens advocacy messages and reinforces trust with communities, particularly in contexts in which funding relationships may influence perceptions of bias (KII 15/12/2025 a). External analytical products are sometimes used to triangulate findings and enhance contextual understanding, but when raw data is not shared, triangulation based on secondary information has limitations (KII 07/12/2025).

Access to and influence over these analytical and decision-making processes are not evenly distributed, however. On a broader scale, Syrian community-level NGOs face persistent limitations to their formal participation in key decision-making structures, particularly national-level sector coordination platforms, where prioritisation and resource allocation decisions are often shaped (Syria NGO Forum 18/12/2025). This is more likely related to informal practices and power dynamics than specific rules and mandates, signalling an equity and governance issue. This exclusion constrains the extent to which locally generated data and contextual knowledge inform collective analysis and strategic choices.

Overall, the KIIs pointed to a Syrian humanitarian analysis landscape that is data-driven but largely descriptive, fragmented, and reactive. At the same time, at the operational level, analysis supports project-level adaptive programming, enabling organisations to adjust interventions as needs evolve and new information becomes available. While analysis plays a critical role in evidence-based decision-making, persistent challenges around data sharing, standardisation, funding, and anticipatory capacity limit its strategic value. Addressing these gaps by strengthening data-sharing protocols, investing in anticipatory analysis, and aligning donor incentives with longer-term analytical needs would likely enhance collective decision-making and support efforts to transition beyond emergency response.