



# Data Tells Us Why Cross-Line Cannot Replace Cross-Border Operations

Analysis Report

June 2021

 **NEXUS**  
ACTION

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## Overview

On July 10, 2021, UN Security Council resolution UNSCR 2533 (2020) will be voted on in the Security Council for renewal, which currently provides authorization for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners to use the Bab al-Hawa border crossing to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need throughout Syria. Failure to renew Security Council resolution 2533 (2020), and the resulting closure of Bab al-Hawa border crossing to UN humanitarian assistance will have a devastating impact on the well-being of millions of Syrians in northwest Syria, including children and displaced persons. Redirecting UN humanitarian assistance through Damascus and placing increased dependence on national capacity to distribute assistance throughout northwest Syria in an effective and timely manner is **infeasible**.

According to the data of the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 (HRP 2021), which is a process led by OCHA, Damascus-hub partners and national NGOs would need to scale up their capacity 249% to meet the required humanitarian needs in northwest Syria. Based on this data, such a short-term remobilization dependent on cross-line operations is not possible to meet the needs of at-risk Syrians in 2021.

Nexus Action joins voice with UN agencies and a myriad of international and national NGOs to call upon the members of the Security Council to unanimously vote to renew Security Council resolution 2533 (2020) to sustain the delivery of humanitarian assistance through the most direct routes and ensure humanitarian emergency assistance is delivered on the basis of need, devoid of any political prejudices and aims, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2139 (2014).

## Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) Analysis

If UNSCR 2533 (2020) is not renewed on July 10, 2021, the Bab al-Hawa border crossing will be closed to humanitarian assistance via the UN and its implementing partners, obliging the redistribution of humanitarian assistance to northwest Syria through the Damascus hub via cross-line operations. To evaluate the possibility of such a redistribution, data of the implementing partners in both hubs need to be examined, and potential gaps in response capacity need to be assessed.

This analysis utilized the raw data found in the final version downloaded from the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) platform<sup>1</sup>, where only projects approved by the clusters were analyzed. It also is important to note that the UN agencies are submitting most of their program at Whole-of-Syria level, thus it is not showing the hub distribution of their projects. For this reason, the projects of UN agencies are not included in this analysis.

Nexus Action’s analysis of the HRP 2021 looked at the following: 1. the size of NGO response capacity as per their approved projects, 2. comparison of the capacity of national NGOs in Syria across different hubs, 3. identification of the number of OCHA-partners and the operational capacity as per approved budgets, and 4. the budget value of individual clusters, based on needs, categorized by hub.

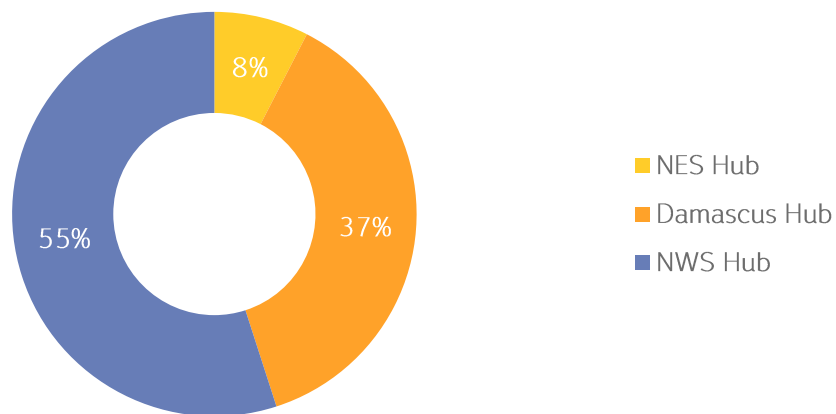


Figure 1 Budget value of all approved projects based on needs, HRP 2021 Data

The first finding of the total projects size shows that the NGO community at Damascus hub is currently proposing projects with capacity of 37% of the total NGO response in Syria, while NGOs at Northwest Syria hub (NWS) are proposing projects

<sup>1</sup> <https://projects.hpc.tools/>



with capacity of 55% (see Figure 1). If it is the case for crossline to accomplish this redistribution in capacity replace the cross-border, the Damascus hub would need to scale up its capacity of implementation from 37% to 92%. To put this redistribution into perspective, it means that the Damascus hub would be required to work at 249% of its current capacity in order to meet the needs of Syrians under its purview, according to the available data. Therefore, dependence on cross-line operations into northwest Syria from the Damascus hub to reach the needs of at-risk Syrians is currently insufficient from both the context of humanitarian aid agencies and the Syrian people.

The cessation of cross-border operations would also highlight the disparity between the capacity of local organizations working in different geographic areas. In comparison to the planned projects in the HRP 2021, there are 68 partner organizations operating cross-border in northwest Syria, while there are only 16 partner organizations operating from Damascus (see Figure 2).

In terms of institutional capacity, the 68 national organizations in northwest Syria cover 90% of total humanitarian assistance funding in Syria, while national organizations in Damascus cover only 8% of the funding (see Figure 3). The Government of Syria has announced that it only works with NGOs registered in Damascus. Then, with this logic, the NGOs in Damascus hub require to scale up to cover for gap resulting form the cessation of cross-border operations. This required scale up in capacity for the Damascus hub is unfeasible and risks the collapse of the quality and access of current humanitarian assistance.

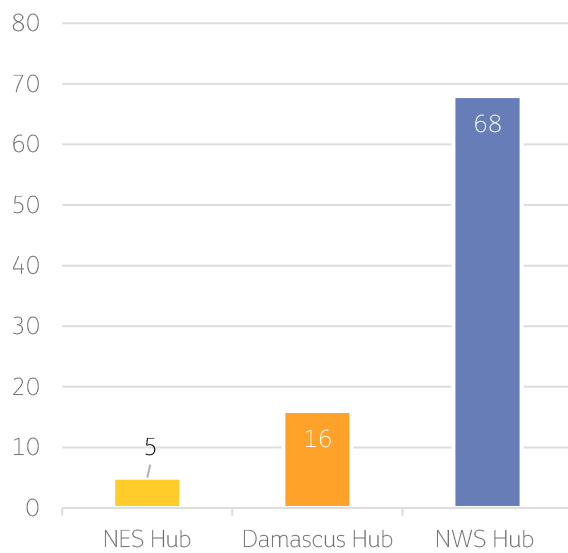


Figure 2 Active NNGOs participating

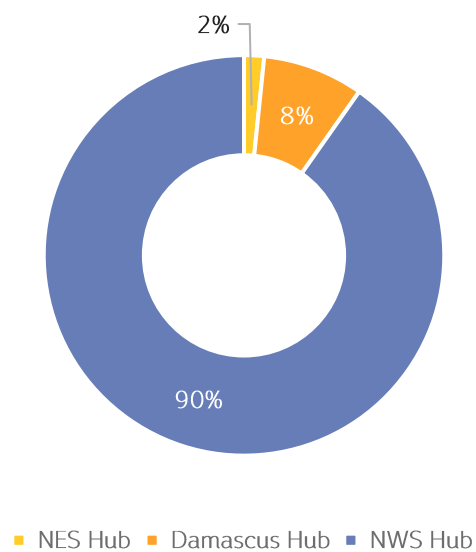
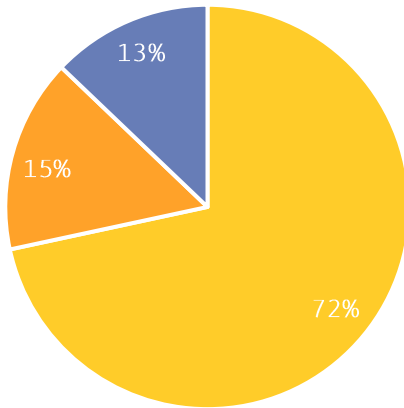


Figure 3 Budget value of projects by NNGOs based on needs

Regarding the budget value of individual clusters, related to the needs, the northwest Syria hub in Health, Food Security, and Emergency Shelter/NFI are significantly higher than in the Damascus or northeast Syria hubs. For example, in the Health cluster, the budget for Northwest Syria is 78% larger than the Health cluster budget in the Damascus hub. In the Emergency Shelter and Food Security clusters, the Northwest Syria budgets are 58% and 35% larger, respectively, than the Damascus hub. The number of OCHA-partner organizations within the clusters of Health, Food Security, and Emergency Shelter/NFI also highlight an imbalance in capacity, in which 144 organizations work in the northwest Syria hub, while only 63 work in the Damascus hub.

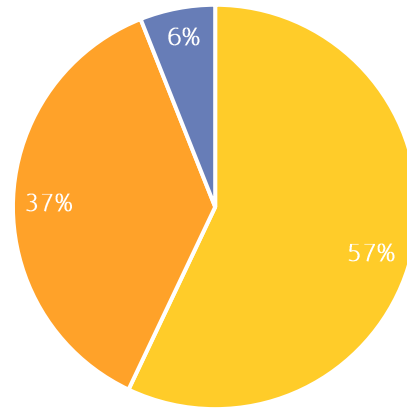
### Health

■ NWS Hub ■ Damascus Hub ■ NES Hub



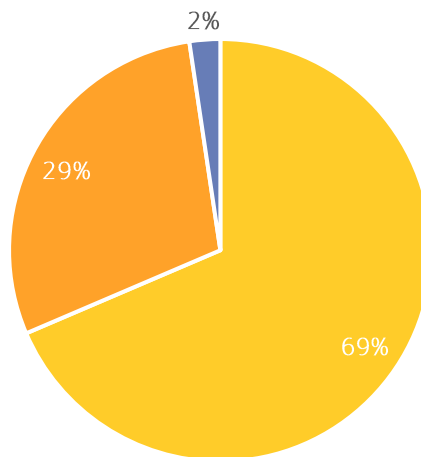
### Food Security

■ NWS Hub ■ Damascus Hub ■ NES Hub



### Emergency Shelter and NFI

■ NWS Hub ■ Damascus Hub ■ NES Hub



According to this analysis, it is clear the scale up cannot be realized, and cross-line operations cannot replace cross-border operations. This means that the humanitarian assistance needs of millions of Syrians in northwest Syria will not be met in 2021, pending the non-renewal of resolution 2533 (2020). If these needs are not met, it is highly likely that the humanitarian crisis for at-risk Syrians in northwest Syria will deteriorate, leading to an exacerbation of irregular migration and the potential for violence, which could be exploited by violent extremists to undermine peace and security.

The Security Council, in authorizing UNSCR 2533 (2020), agreed to renew the decision in paragraph 2 of UNSCR 2165 (2014) to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in Syria through the most direct routes. Redirecting assistance destined for northwest Syria through Damascus and placing increased dependence on national NGOs to distribute humanitarian assistance will likely be viewed by the international community as an act done in violation of the spirit of the UN Charter and prior UNSC resolutions pertaining to Syria.

## **Conclusion**

Nexus Action's analysis of the data of the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 has highlighted the discrepancies associated with the potential non-renewal of UNSCR 2533 (2020) and the implementation of humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of Syrians in the northwest of the country, as well as the risks involved. The current composition of the humanitarian assistance modalities cannot cope with the shift of resources from northwest Syria cross-border operations to the Damascus hub, which will lead to elevated risks for aid agencies and the Syrian people. Nexus Action calls on Security Council members to unanimously vote to renew UNSCR 2533 (2020), and at the very least, maintain the status quo, or scale up capacity that allows the provision of humanitarian needs for Syrians through the most direct routes possible, including through cross-border modality.