



INTEGRATED SDG INSIGHTS SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

PREPARED FOR UN USE



HOW TO READ THIS REPORT



Integrated SDG Insights provides an overview of a country's economic growth trajectory, highlighting potential conflicts between growth, environmental concerns, and societal well-being (referred to as the **SDG Moment**).



It builds from the foundation of national SDG progress through the lens of the 5Ps and uses machine learning to analyse national development ambition with an SDG lens (**SDG Trends & Priorities**).



Combined, these insights are mapped against SDG interlinkages to define policy choices that accelerate SDG progress, tailored to national context (**SDG Interlinkages**).



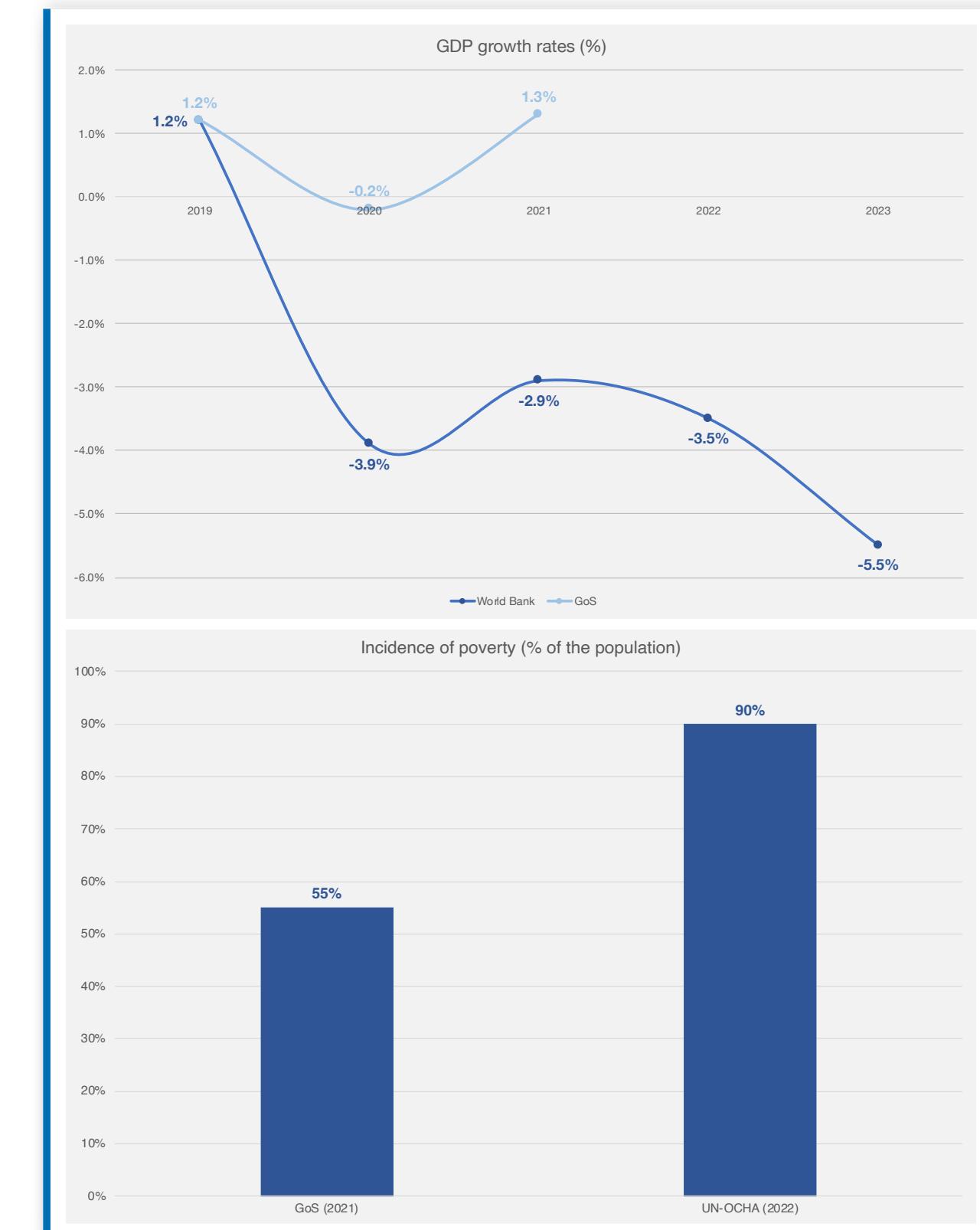
These policy choices are made against fiscal constraints and opportunities for stimulus to ensure choices translate to development impact and leave no one behind (**Finance & Stimulus**).

SDG MOMENT: SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

While economic growth is a key element in achieving the SDGs, many countries are intent on moving beyond growth as a yardstick for progress. In the short run, growth enables the SDGs; but in the long run, the SDGs aim to transform the pattern of growth itself.

According to the World Bank, Syria's economy has remained trapped in a cycle of contraction, which started in the first year of the pandemic when the GDP plunged by almost 4%, and is expected to worsen by the end of this year: the annual rate of contraction will increase from between 3% and 4% over 2020-2022 to 5.5% in 2023. The statistics from GoS for the period 2019-2021 portray a relatively better performance of the economy in those years, though insufficient as an enabler of the SDGs.

Accordingly, the SDG policy space is severely restricted to mitigate the adverse effects of the persistent downturn, especially among the most vulnerable and poorest households. This is particularly salient as between 55% and 90% of the population lives in poverty –depending on the estimates.



SDG TRENDS

Understanding how Syrian Arab Republic performs against the SDG targets provides a baseline landscape against which to build integrated SDG pathways. SDG progress tracking follows [UN Stats](#) standards and [methodology](#), and is aligned with country profiles.



Trends in detail:

<https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SYR/sda-trends>

SDG PRIORITIES

UN(DP) Syria's priorities are analysed using machine learning to reveal the most prominent SDGs referenced in national policy documents. This analysis uses a custom-built model for SDG classification. It considers 100k+ terms, including phrases and expressions.



Key documents for analysis:

1. 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview
 2. Civic Engagement Brain Storming Discussions Summary
 3. NDC 2018
 4. Participatory Community Recovery Plan (PLERP)2022-2025
 5. PLERP – Aleppo
 6. PLERP - Aleppo - Gap Analysis
 7. PLERP - Hama - Gap Analysis
 8. Round table discussions MoM- Civic and Private Sector
 9. Syria 230 Strategy
 10. VNR 2023

Priorities in detail:

<https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SYR/current-priorities>

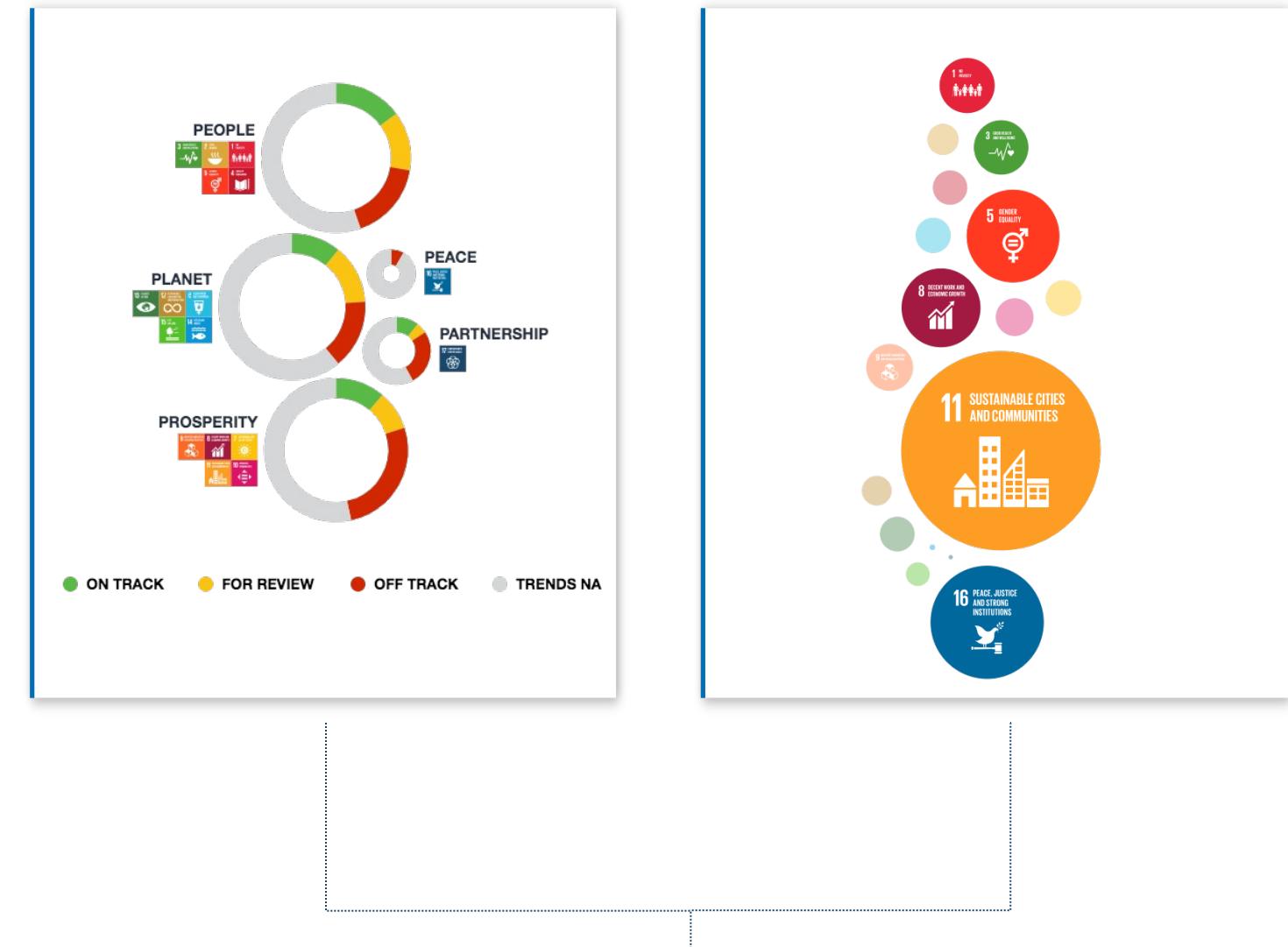
SDG INTERLINKAGES

SDG Interlinkages reveal how actions directed towards one SDG can impact others. Uncovering and understanding these interactions can help Syrian Arab Republic to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and navigating trade-offs.

Based on a global framework for interlinkages, Syrian Arab Republic's SDG progress is color coded at the target level.

Building from national priorities, the following pathways reflect policy investments with the most potential to accelerate the SDGs for Syrian Arab Republic:

- Target 8.3: Promote policies to support job creation and growing enterprises
- Target 9.1: Develop sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructures
- Target 11.3: Inclusive and sustainable urbanization
- Target 16.1: Reduce violence everywhere
- Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions



ACCELERATION PATHWAYS



SDG INTERLINKAGES

8.3: Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

To face this challenge, Syria needs to leverage macroeconomic policies, while stimulating and supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises with financing and procedural facilities, creating their work environment on sustainable bases, and making optimal use of the comparative advantages of the Syrian regions and governorates based on the concept of balanced development. It needs to develop business incubators and enhancing entrepreneurial skills and skilled labour, especially for the unemployed, according to the requirements of the labour market.

By the implementation of guiding policies to improve social and physical infrastructure to revive the economy and livelihood and ensure balanced and sustainable development for all citizens and regions, Syria can provide a fundamental building block for increasing social cohesion, reduce the risk of extreme violence, while leveraging regional and national economic and social development.

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Explore the interlinkages at:

<https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SYR/synergies-and-tradeoffs>

SDG INTERLINKAGES

9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all

War severely damaged the infrastructure necessary to support the economy, but also to provide basic services to the population across Syria

To restore and improve livelihoods, reconstructing service infrastructure across the country according to the needs and the available capabilities is critical. Rebuilding essential services will allow the return of internally displaced people. The focus needs to be on developing and rehabilitating infrastructure and services of five sectors: energy, transport, housing, communication, water, and sanitation. It also needs to develop the necessary infrastructure to attract and expand investment in medium and high technology industries and support the technology industry for all sectors.

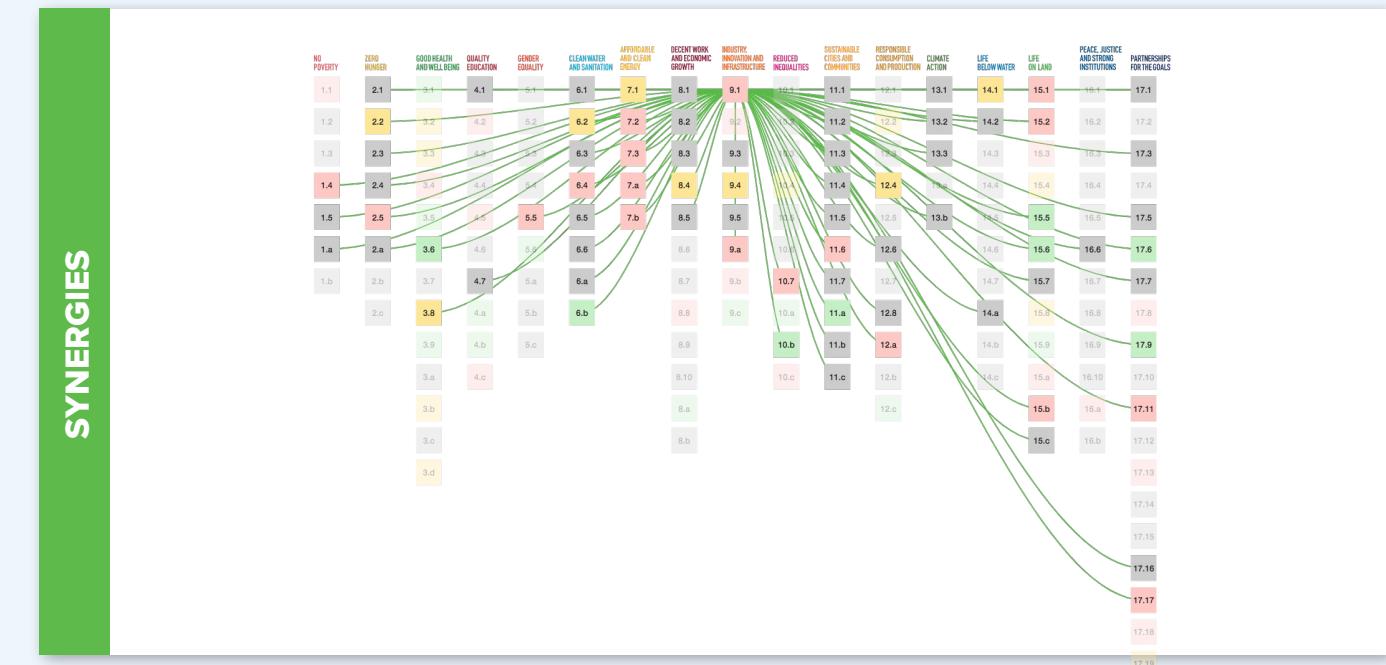
infrastructure reconstruction is the core of building back better and drawing the roadmap for a balanced and sustainable development in Syria on the institutional, national, and regional levels. It is also aligned with the three priority areas of the UN Strategic framework of: (i) Capacity development and support for institutions, (ii) Restoring and expanding more responsive essential services and infrastructure, and (iii) Improving livelihood opportunities, including economic recovery and social inclusion.

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TRENDS NA



SDG INTERLINKAGES

11.3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

Rehabilitating infrastructure is a fundamental pillar for building peace and social cohesion in Syria. To enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization, the infrastructure development and rehabilitation needs to focus on five sectors: energy, transport, telecommunication, housing, water, and sanitation. It needs to go hand in hand with an improvement of the land use management on the local, institutional, and regional levels. This will also allow to upgrade informal settlements and slum areas, providing adequate housing and accessible services for all.

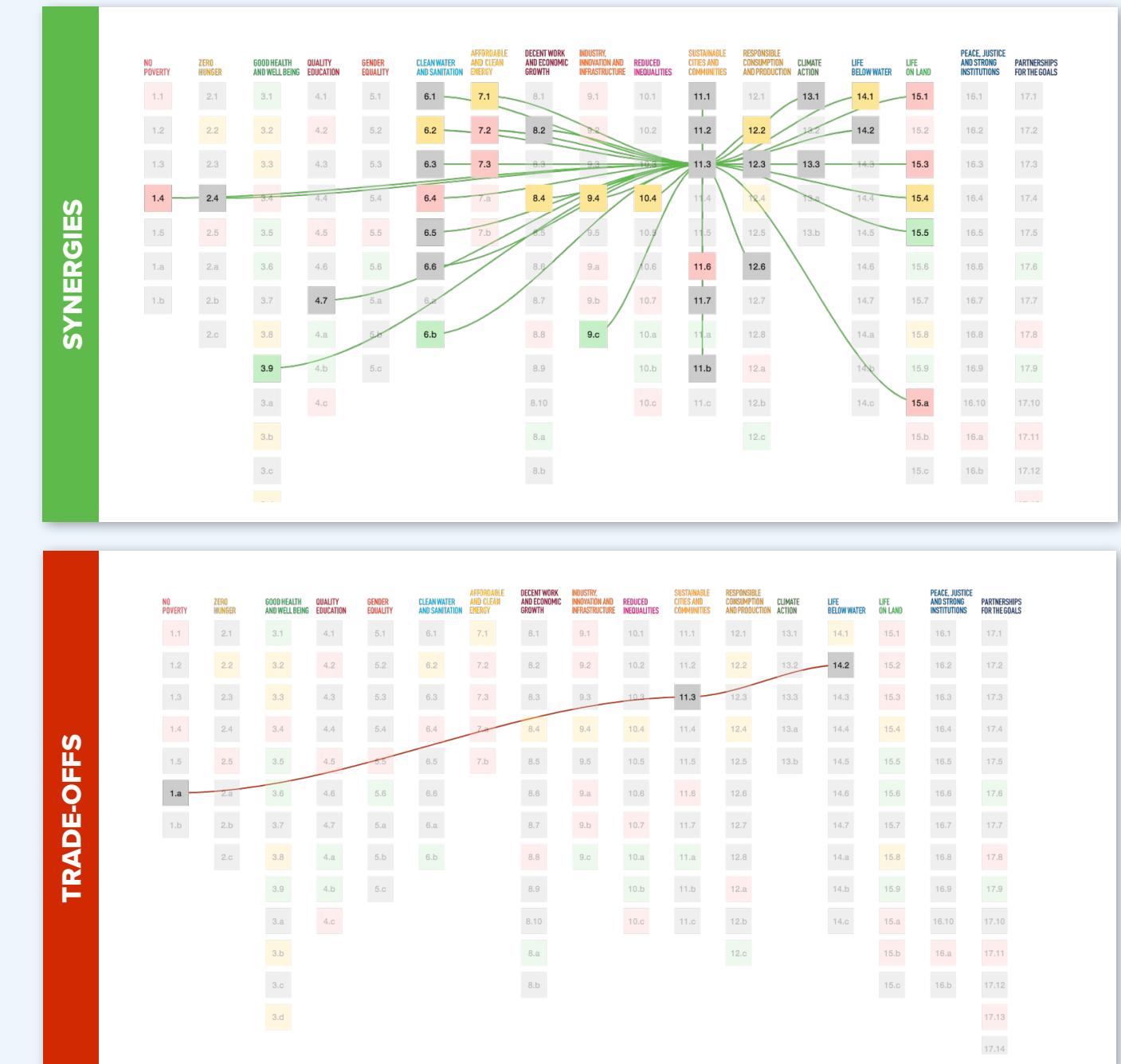
The promotion of a balanced and sustainable social, economic, and environmental development, needs to have a special focus on the balance between rural-urban development, and needs to have citizen's participation in its design and implementation.

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SDG INTERLINKAGES

16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

In Syria, with more than 10 years in civil war, achieving peace is crucial to accelerate the path to sustainable development, reducing humanitarian need, and building strong institutions. It is the founding block to build social cohesion.

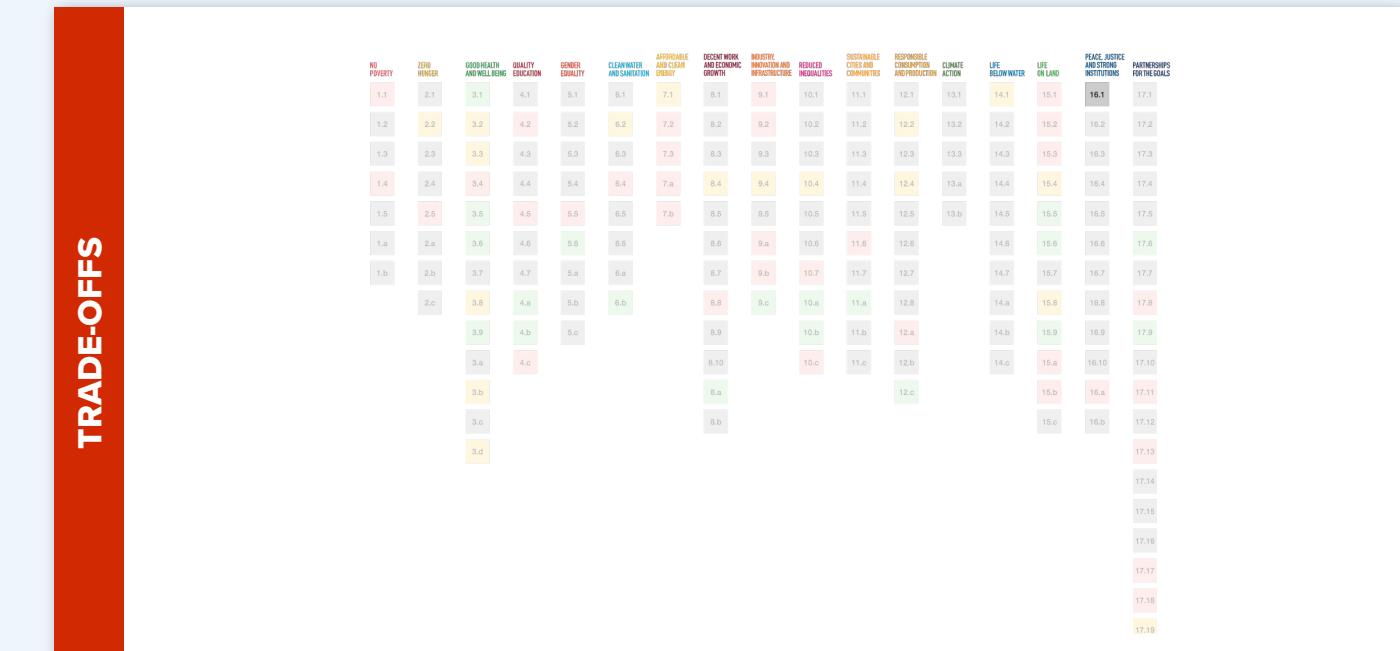
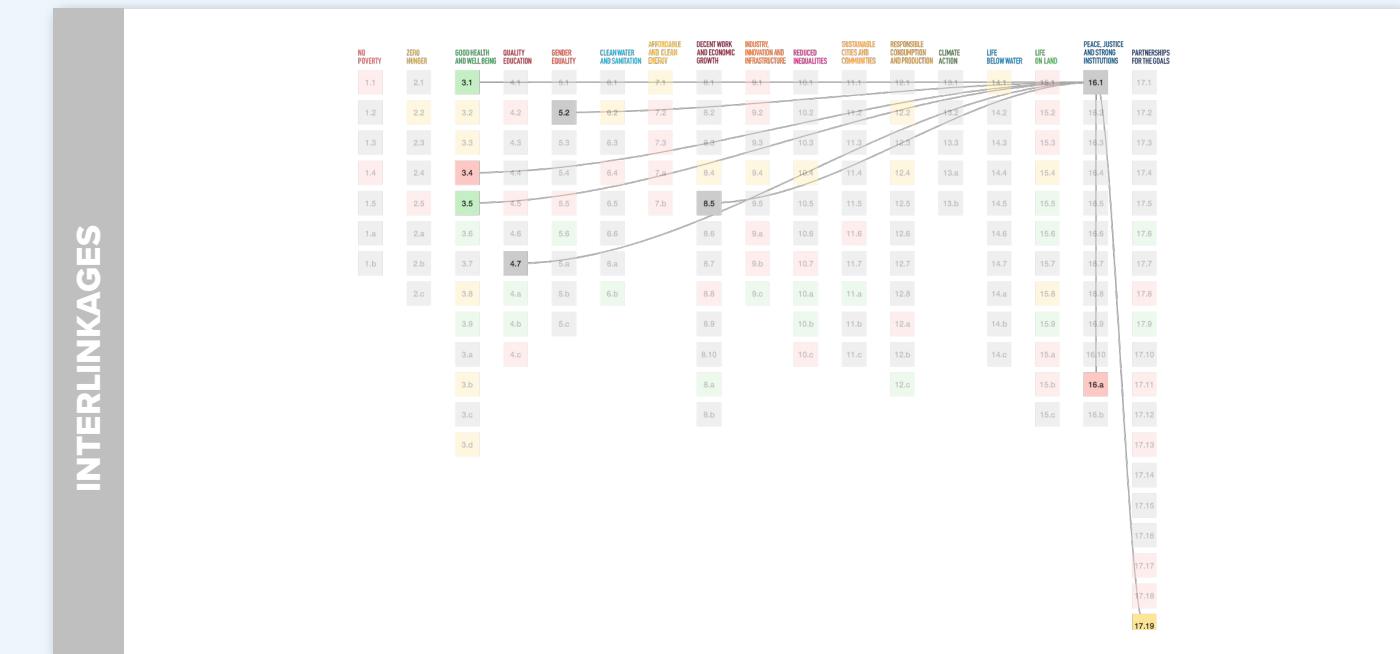
To achieve this Syria can develop programmes to promote support to the families of the war-affected population in all aspects; enhancing attention and providing support to the families of deceived individuals, settling the conditions of those involved in hostilities or forced by circumstances to support armed groups, and enhancing mental health and social care through rehabilitation programs, reintegration into society, and awareness-raising.

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TRENDS NA



Explore the interlinkages at:

<https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SYR/synergies-and-tradeoffs>

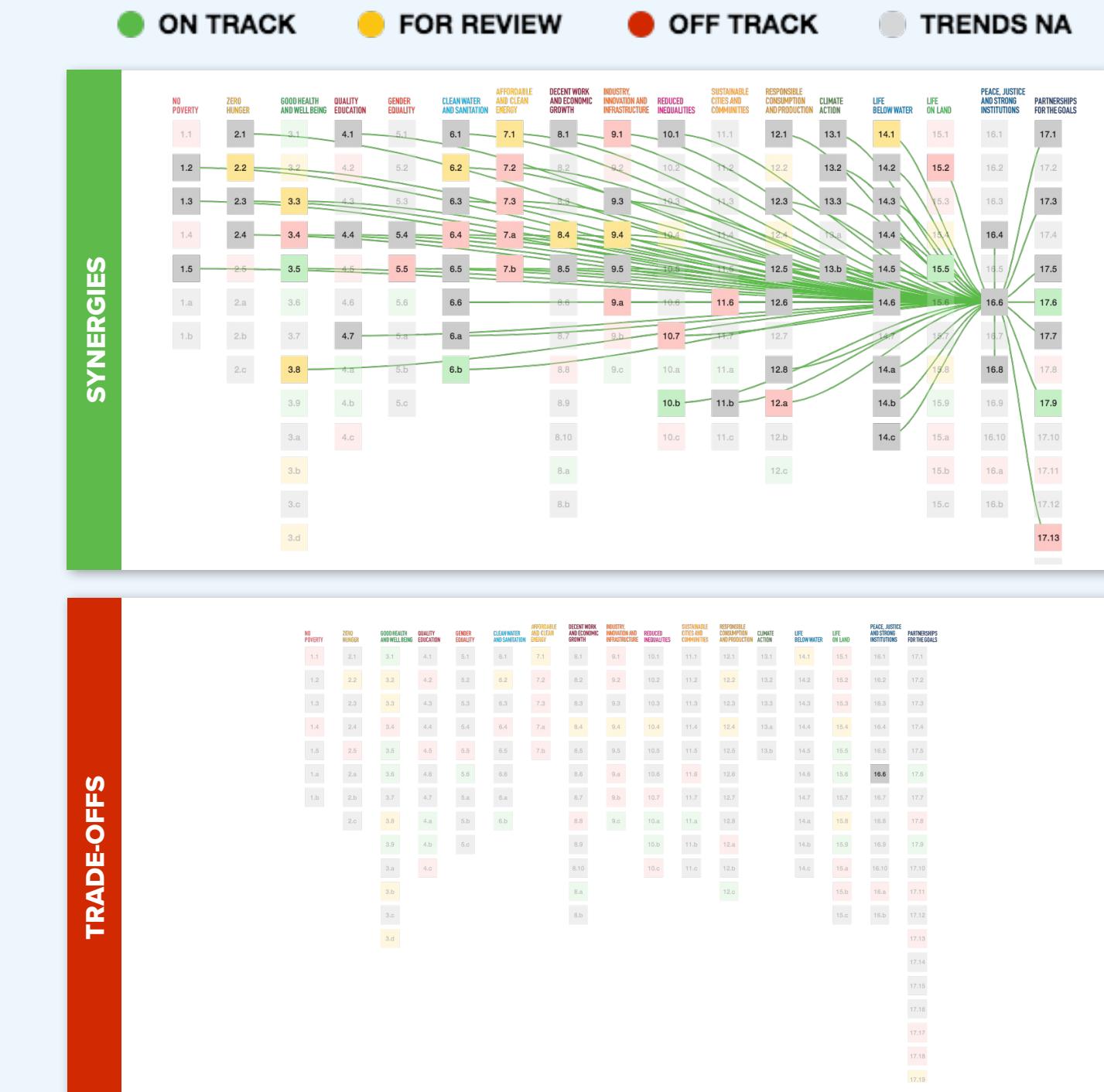
SDG INTERLINKAGES

16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Highlight challenge of corruption, lack of trust in institutions addressing this is crucial to enhance and promote trust within social actors on the will to combat corruption.

Key policy interventions in this area, as highlighted in the Syria 203 guiding policies are:

- Update the services of the judicial administration and oversight institutions and their openness to the citizen through the website of the courts and oversight institutions
 - Improve infrastructure for courts and oversight institution according to quality and operational suitability standards and speed up the rehabilitation of destroyed buildings.
 - Develop mechanisms to combat administrative corruption and enhance accountability and transparency mechanisms.
 - Improve the quantity and quality of government services provided to citizens and reduce their costs to deliver interactive services.
 - Expand citizen participation and enhance the role of media in combatting corruption.



Explore the interlinkages at

<https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SYR/synergies-and-tradeoffs>

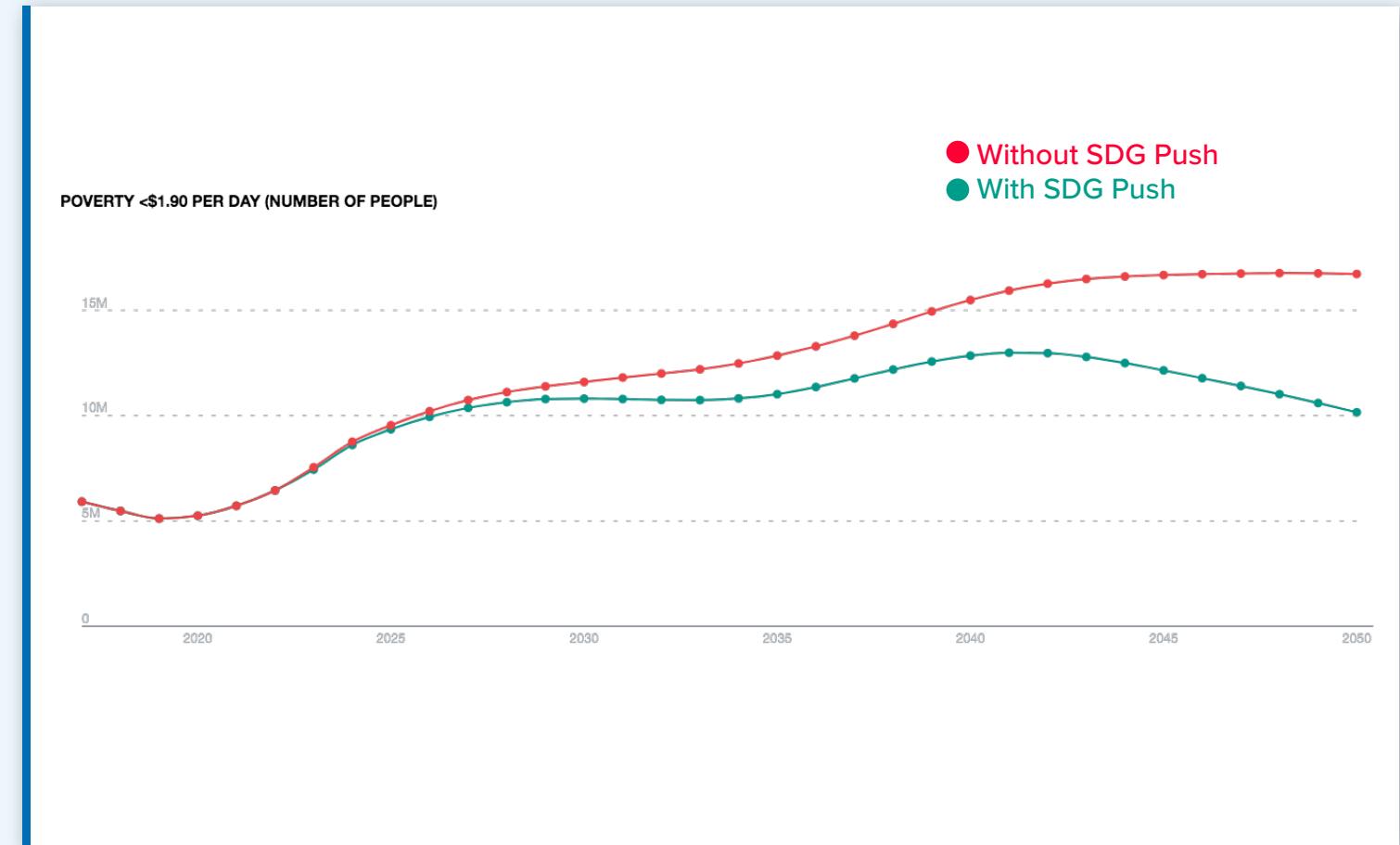
THE SDG PUSH - FUTURES SCENARIOS

Achieving the SDGs is possible.

The ‘SDG Push’ is a futures scenario based on 48 integrated accelerators in the areas of Governance, Social Protection, Green Economy and Digital Disruption. It uses national data to explore the impact on human development in 2030 and to 2050 across key SDG indicators.

Incorporating ‘SDG Push’ accelerators into development interventions in Syrian Arab Republic can reduce the number of people living in poverty over time.

People living in poverty	By 2030	By 2050
Without the SDG Push	12M	17M
With the SDG Push	11M	10M



Explore SDG Futures Scenarios at:

<https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SYR/future-scenarios>

FINANCE & STIMULUS

The country's fiscal position was already critical before the earthquake, with tax revenues declining by 85% between 2011 and 2021. In response to the revenue shortfall, the authorities cut government spending by 83% (in USD) over the same period. Despite the global shock experienced by many countries following the war in Ukraine, the Syrian authorities have maintained the decline in public spending by removing subsidies for 15% of the population. The aim of this continuous reduction is to better control inflation by reducing the pressure on the reserves of the central bank, which is the state's main lender. Given this situation and the possibility of higher inflation following the earthquake, it is expected that the government will struggle to increase public spending further in the short-term.

Before the earthquake, Syria's trade deficit was estimated at around 20% of GDP in 2022, marked by a significant decline in exports and a slight increase in imports. The earthquake is likely to further increase Syria's trade deficit, mainly due to the loss in agricultural infrastructure given the agricultural sector contributed 36% of Syria's GDP in 2020. Moreover, there might be a great need for materials for rehabilitation, which to some extent are going to be imported into Syria. The World Bank's Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) 2023 estimated an increase in trade deficit from 24.6 to 26.0% of GDP. On the income side, it is likely that remittances and foreign aid to affected households will increase, helping to improve the income balance. However, the overall impact on the balance of payments will depend on the ability of financial flows to offset the trade deficit, which is already large.

Fiscal and financial constraints present gender challenges by reducing access to essential social services primarily used by women, deepening gender pay gaps through job losses and unequal economic impacts, limiting women's access to credit and capital, increasing unpaid care work as public services decline, and exacerbating gender-based violence due to economic stress. These constraints can widen education disparities, undermine healthcare accessibility, and compromise women's retirement security, requiring gender-responsive policies to mitigate these effects and empower women economically within constrained contexts.

Sources: World Bank, Syria Economic Monitor (issue 1, summer 2022; issue 2, winter 2022/23).

METHODOLOGY

Click [here](#) to view the Methodological Note for the Integrated SDG Insights



SDG MOMENT

Methodology

Assesses challenges and opportunities in national growth trajectories with insights on environmental sustainability and inclusiveness.

Data Sources

Future trajectories to 2025 are based on IMF-WEO GDP projections, distributions of per capita income or consumption from the World Bank, and CO₂ emissions from the Global Carbon Budget 2022 and EDGAR (JRC and IEA).



TRENDS & PRIORITIES

Methodology

SDG trends tracks progress from 2015 to date for the 231 indicators. National priorities are analysed using machine learning to reveal the most prominent SDGs referenced in national policy documents.

Data Source

Trends utilizes official [UN statistics](#) to assess [SDG progress](#), supplemented with national data when available. Priorities uses a custom-built model for SDG classification. The policy documents analyses are provided by Governments.



INTERLINKAGES

Methodology

Global target-level interlinkages are drawn from the [KnowSDGs Platform by European Commission](#). SDG interlinkages were retrieved through a structured literature review in Scopus and Google Scholar to tap both grey literature and peer-reviewed publications as a source of information.

Data Source

The exercise globally considered a total of 454 documents published from 2015 to August 2022. ([Miola et al., 2019](#) updated in [2021-2022](#))



FINANCE & STIMULUS

Methodology

Provides insight into indicators of fiscal and financial stress with options (INFF) for stimulus and other means to accelerate progress.

Data Source

Most recent resource data from UNU-WIDER GRD (between 2018 and 2021), debt and revenue from IMF WEO (between 2020 and forecasts for 2023), external debt from IDS (2023), yields from Haver Analytics (8 June 2023), credit ratings from S&P, Moodys and FITCH (2023), and DSA ratings from World Bank/IMF (31 May 2023).