

Inadequate shelter in NW Syria makes the risk of GBV severe

“...tents are too close to each other, no safety, no doors to close, poor lighting conditions. We have no electricity until now, and going out at night in the darkness exposes us to violence.” — Older woman, Al Asyaneh camp, Aleppo (Voices from Syria).

BACKGROUND

After ten years of conflict, over 1.7 million people live in c. 1,400 spontaneously settled, unplanned sites. These are emergency sites whose poor planning, lack of lighting, security, and WASH provision underpins high levels of gender-based violence.

Inadequate shelter, overcrowding, lack of privacy and facilities have led to severe risks of gender-based violence. This includes high rates of child marriage.

Key figures



- **548,000** people accessed GBV support services in 2021.
- **900,000** people live in tents, impoverished and makeshift shelters.
- **22%** of people living in Internally Displaced People (IDPs) sites are women and **58%** are children.
- **83%** of IDPs living in critically over-crowded conditions.
- **1,185,100** people living in IDP sites with no lighting on the main roads.

“When we live in 3X3 tent with 5 or 6 children, the tent becomes very congested ... lack of sleep at night, agitation and high temperatures in summer makes it difficult to go outside. So a man would resort to screaming and shouting in order to release the stress he feels” —

Adult man, Al Asyaneh camp, Aleppo (Voices from Syria).

SAFE AND DIGNIFIED SHELTER

Gender-based violence can be reduced with Dignified Shelter. Lighting, lockable and secure shelter, safe access to WASH facilities all create safer and more secure environments.

Sadly, humanitarian action in NW Syria over the last 10 years has failed to deliver safer communities. Almost a million people, mainly women and children, still live in tents. It is essential that their needs, experiences and voices are properly reflected in humanitarian programming.

Dignified Shelter provides physical protection. GBV risks, already severe in NWS, can be reduced by investing in more robust structures that are connected to wider community infrastructure. If humanitarian action is to be accountable, investment in safe and dignified shelter is crucial.



Photo courtesy of Better Shelter

SIMPLE SHELTER SOLUTIONS

Simple solutions in the way shelters and settlements are designed can have a real impact on people's safety and security:

- Consult the community, especially women and girls, throughout programming.
- Include basic services within shelters where possible.
- Improve shelter unit safety through resilient materials and door/window locks where possible.
- Ensure adequate lighting in shelters and communal areas.
- Select site locations that don't exacerbate GBV vulnerabilities (access livelihoods/ resources).

“I want to live in peace and have a small land and a house to shelter me and my children from the cold in the winter and the heat in summer. I want to make a decent living so that I can avoid asking people or organizations for assistance”

— Sara, a woman living in Raqqa, Syria (UNFPA/WoS, Advocacy Brief).