

# Children in the Syrian Civil War

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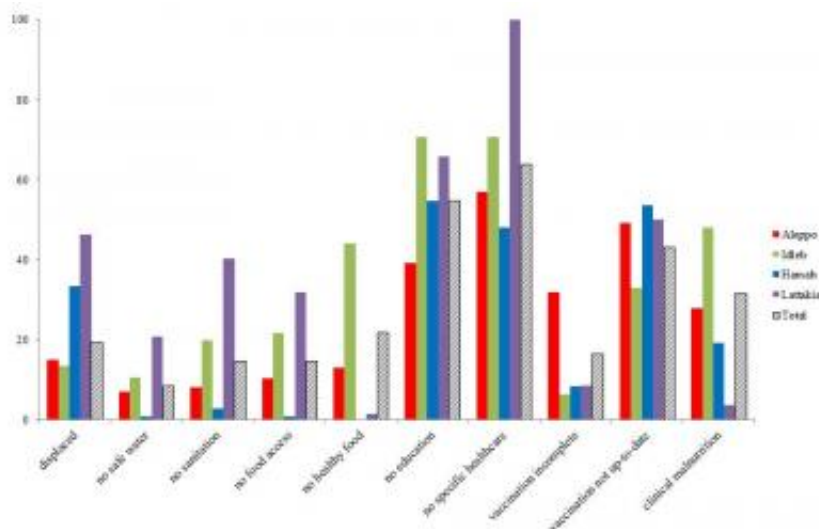


Figure shows the proportion of problems and unmet needs encountered among Syrian children (percentage). Credit: SDMPH

In any conflict children are among the worst affected groups, and in the Syrian Civil War the long term health and welfare of children will be greatly impacted due to the lack of access to immunization programs, little or no formal education, and in many cases missing both parents.

A study by Elsafti et al, details the problems currently experienced by the children and raises concerns about the long term impact these problems will have not only on children within the Syrian border, but also on surrounding countries.

According to the corresponding author, Gerlant van Berlaer, emergency pediatrician of the disaster research group in Brussels, the current critical situation of the Syrian children will leave its traces in the coming decades. One in five children does not have a home anymore, but is forced into temporary shelters, with insufficient access to safe drinking water, to proper sanitation, lacking healthy food needed for their physical and mental growth. There are literally no pediatricians left to watch over the children's immunizations and health. In the last five years, more than 300000 Syrian children have been born as IDP's or refugees, and most of them are not vaccinated at all. Two thirds of the children examined in our study showed signs of infectious diseases. Our findings, in line with UNICEF and WHO reports, raise serious concerns about the protection of Syrian children against malnutrition, preventable infections and epidemics in these austere circumstances. Not only inside Syria, but also in the surrounding and Western countries, where millions are in search for the refugee status today.

Syrian children - the nation's last hope for a better future - are among the most vulnerable victims of the war: they have lost loved ones, suffered injuries, missed years of education, and witnessed violence and brutality. With more than half of them having no access to education, two thirds not having access to pediatric health care, the future of Syria will be jeopardized for decades to come.

**More information:** Abdallah Mohamed Elsafti et al, Children in the Syrian Civil War: the Familial, Educational, and Public Health Impact of Ongoing Violence, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* (2016). [DOI: 10.1017/dmp.2016.165](https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2016.165)

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