

COVID-19 Surveillance

Contact tracing EWARN's Experience from Northwest Syria

Online Consultation on Contact Tracing for COVID-19
Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN)
17 February 2021

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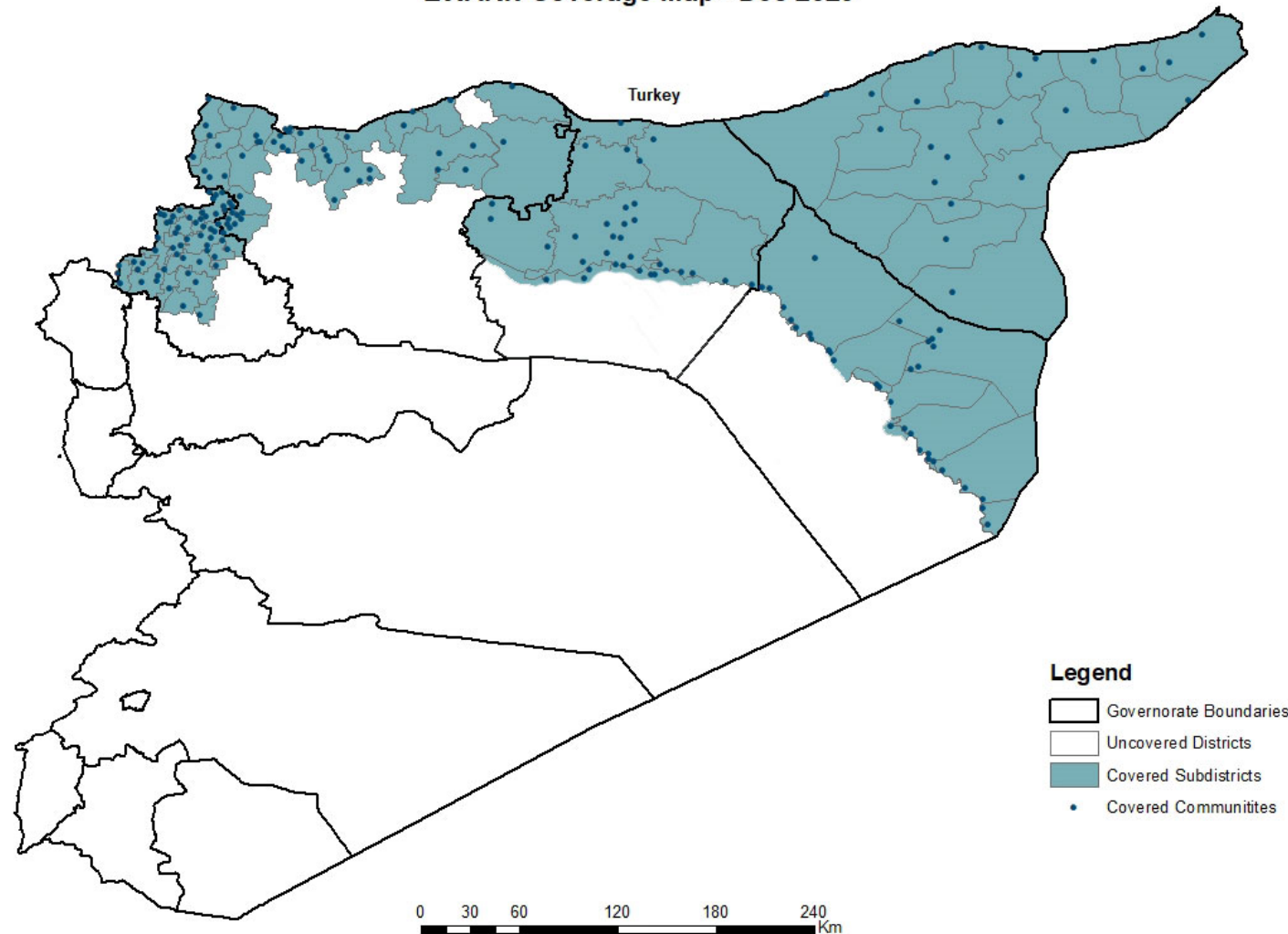
Outlines

- Context of EWARN-based surveillance and geo-demography of Northwest Syria
- EWARN organogram and responsibilities in COVID-19 PRP (epidemiological and laboratory pillars)
- COVID-19 outbreak in NWS - timeline and general overview
- Contact tracing processes and performance
- Mitigation measures and innovation
- Challenges
- Way forward

Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN)

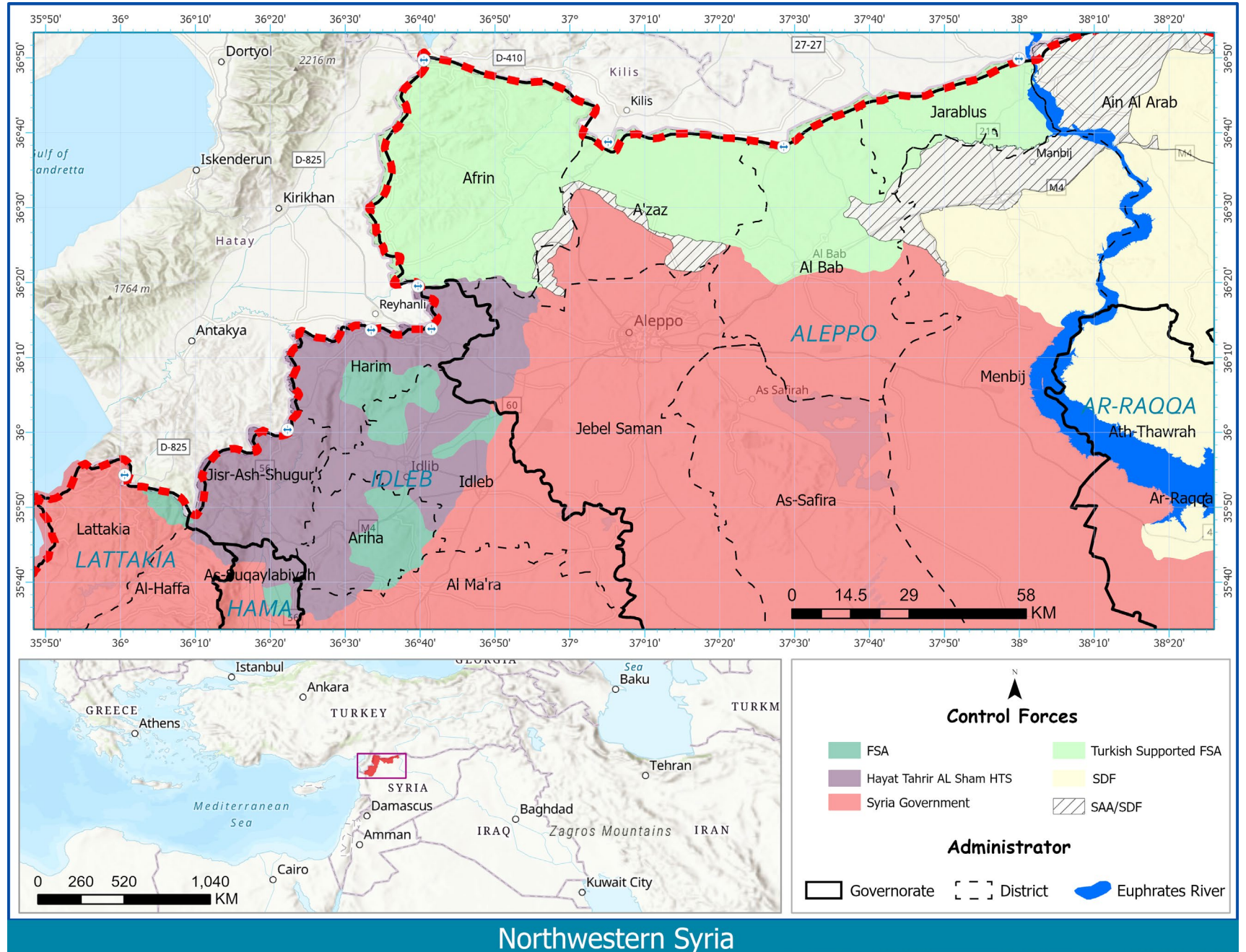
- EWARN was established in 2013
- The coverage area of the program is 5 Governorates (3 from NE and 2 from NW Syria)
- EWARN utilizes multiple surveillance approaches to implement its activities (Sentinel, syndromic, case-based, event-based, *community-based surveillance*)
- Weekly reports from more than 460 sentinel sites (240 from NWS)

EWARN Coverage Map - Dec 2020



The map and boundary of Northwest Syria

Northwest Syria



Northwestern Syria

Demography & administration

Estimated population:

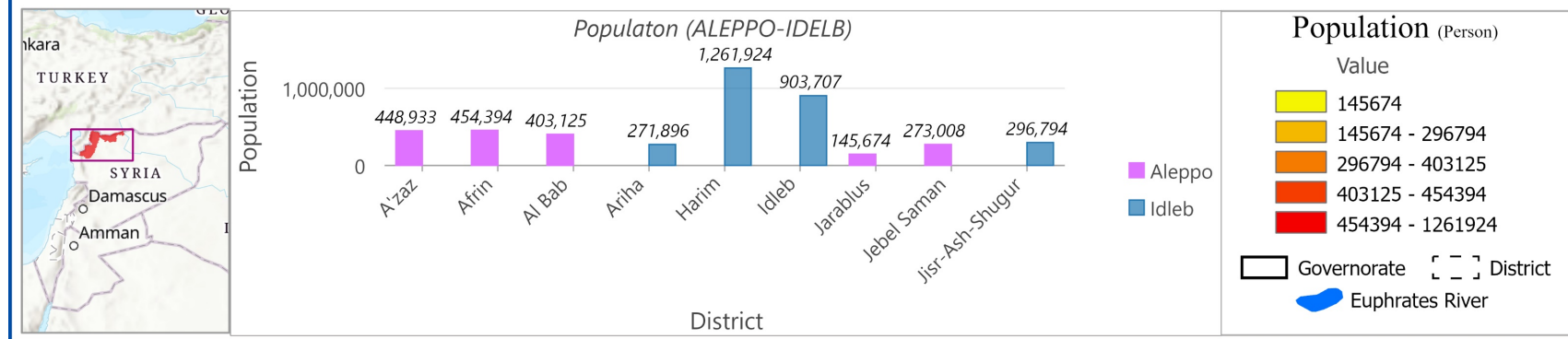
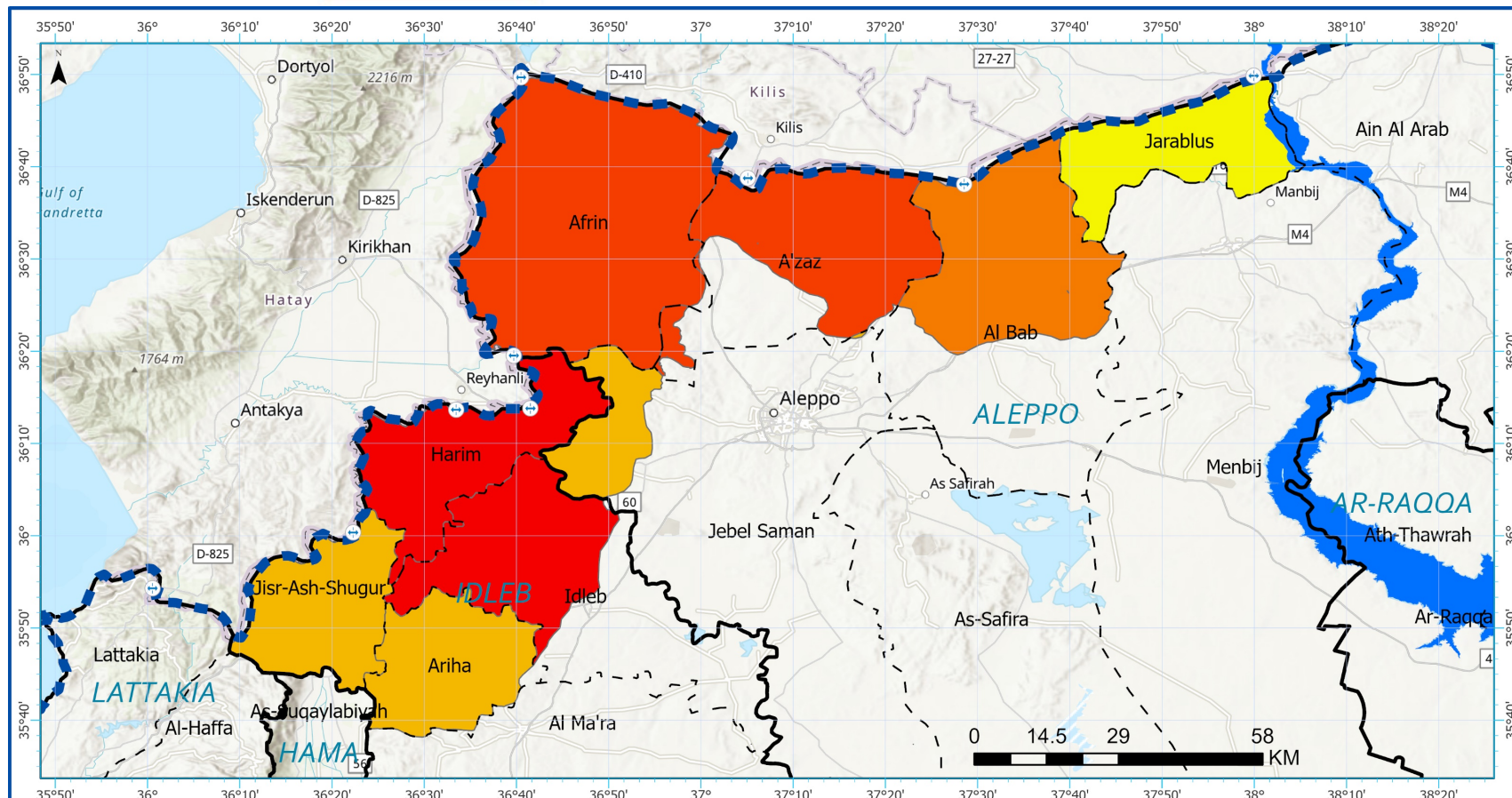
4.2 million

IDPs in the camps:

1.5 million

Administrative units:

- 2 Governorates (Aleppo & Idlib)
- 9 Districts
- 29 Sub-districts



Northwestern Syria (Population)

EWARN's role in the COVID-19 PRP (COVID-19 Task Force)

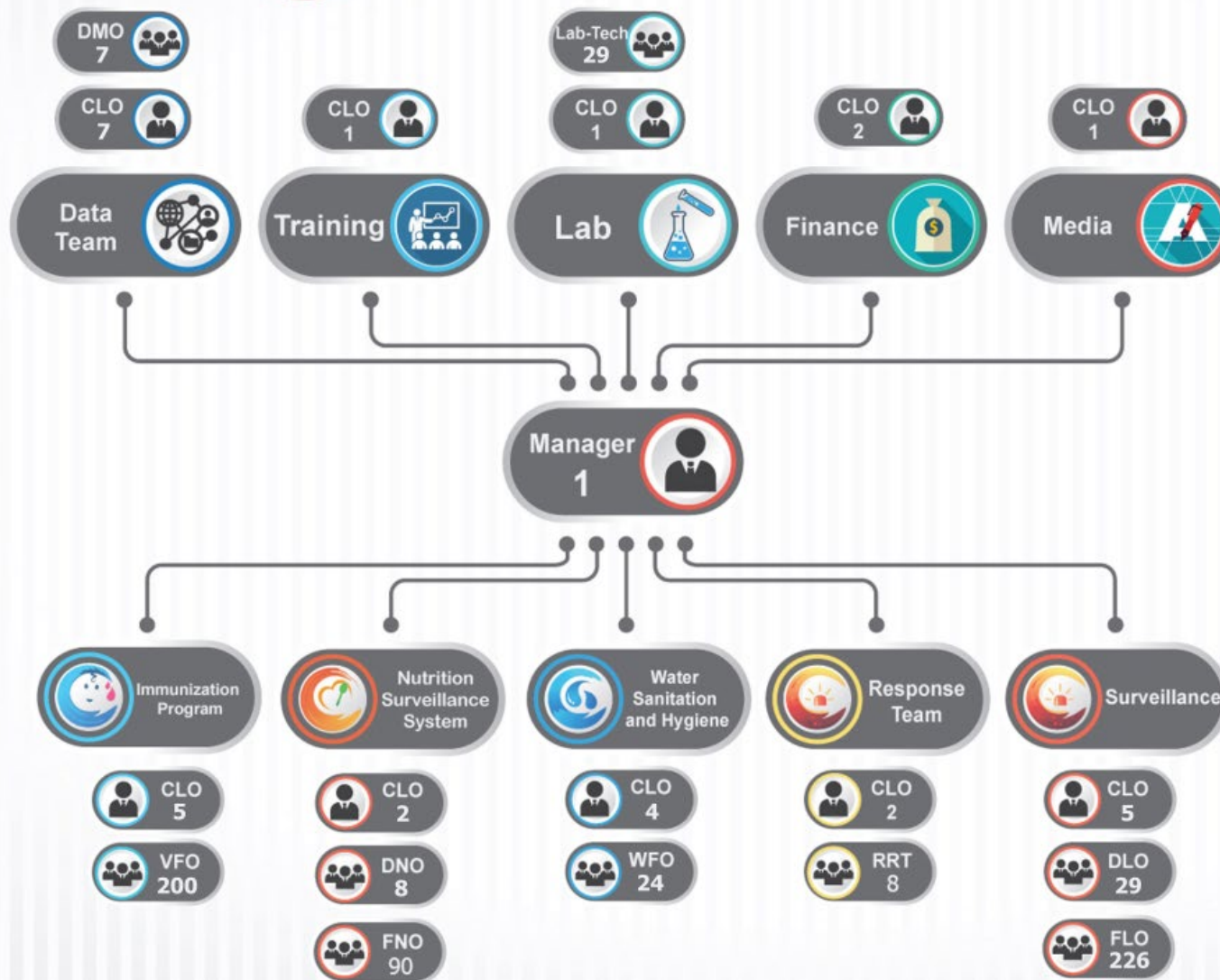


COVID-19 surveillance team in NWS

- 2 Central Level Officers
- 1 Data Management Officer
- 13 District Level Officers
- 156 Field Level Officers (responsible for contact tracing and daily follow-up)

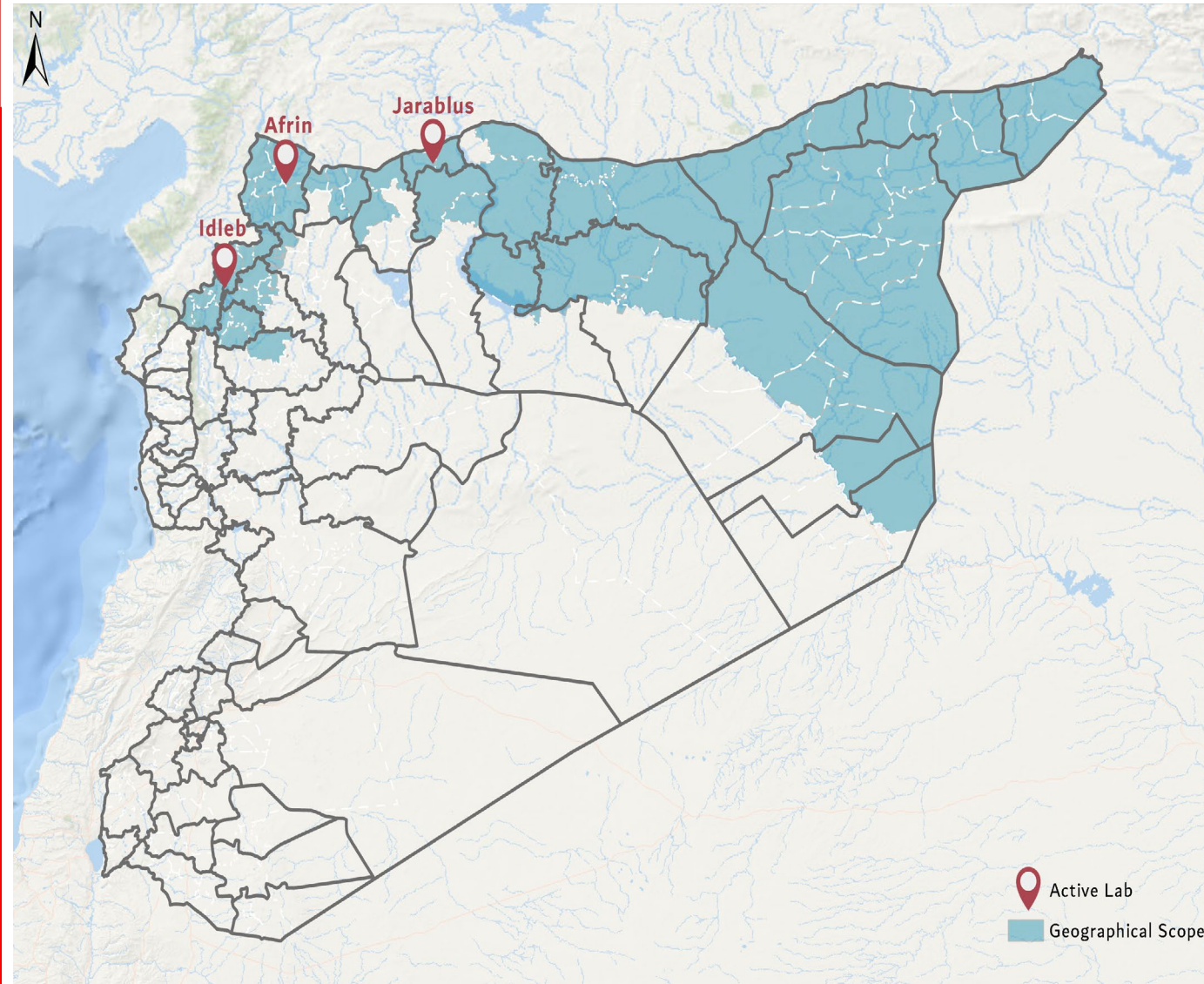


EWARN Organogram (December - 2020)



Laboratories

- **Testing strategy:**
 - Test all cases that meet the case definition of suspected cases for COVID-19
 - Collect nasopharyngeal swabs from individuals and test by the RT-PCR
- **First PCR lab: Idleb** (January 2020)
- **Start date of lab testing for COVID-19 using RT-PCR: 26 March 2020**
- **Establishment of 2 new PCR labs: Jarablus and Afrin** (Sep 2020)
- **Current testing capacity: ~1500 PCR tests per day**
- **2 more new labs in pipeline**



ترصد مرض كوفيد 19 شمال غرب سوريا
COVID-19 SURVEILLANCE NORTHERN WEST SYRIA

Date 2021.02.15 التاريخ

إجمالي الحالات Total Cases: **21,078**

حالات جديدة مثبتة New Confirmed Cases: **6**

الوفيات الجديدة New Deaths: **0** / Total | إجمالي: **407**

عدد التحاليل الجديدة New Tests: **521** / Total | إجمالي: **89,779**

حالات الشفاء الجديدة New Recoveries: **82** / Total | إجمالي: **17,331**

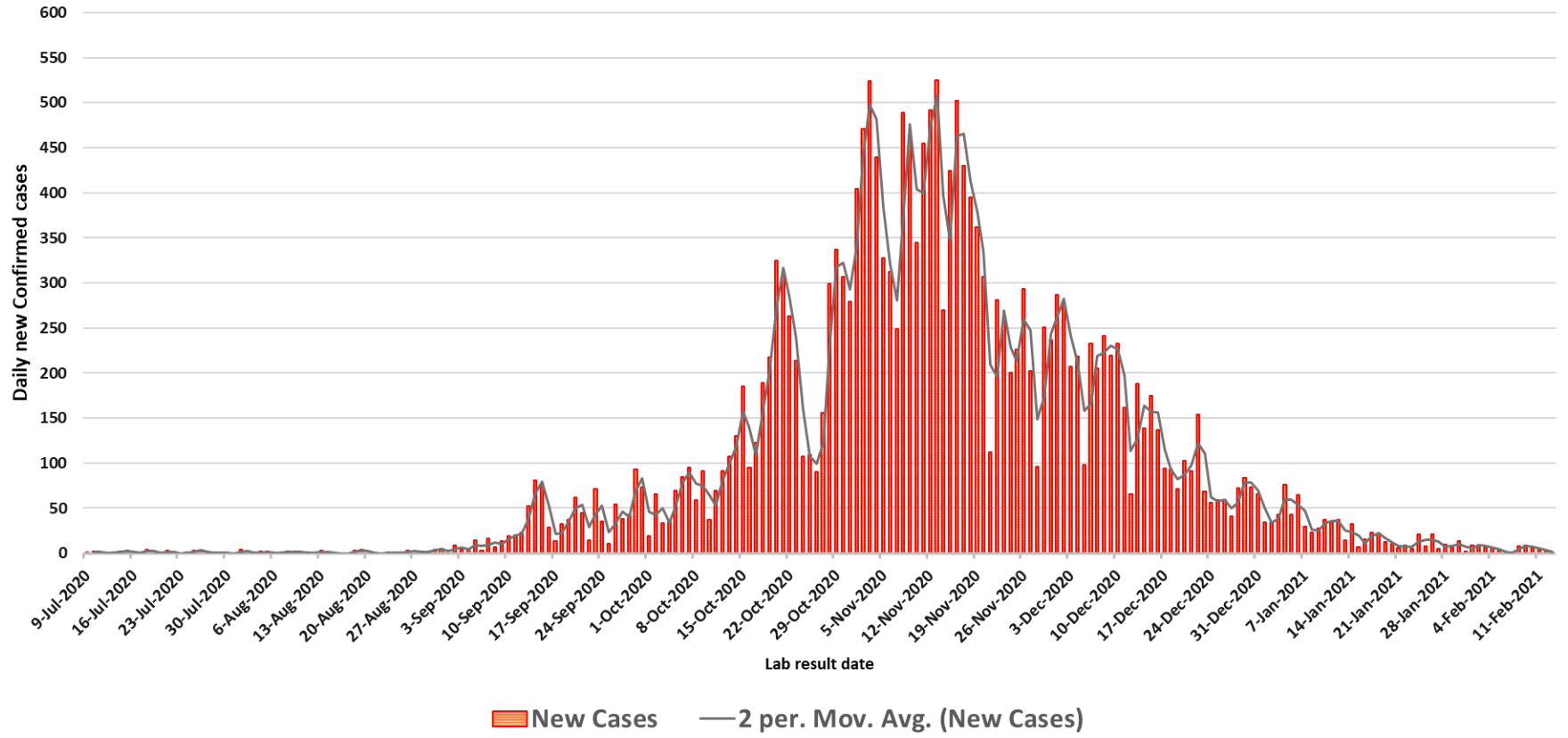
Recoveries الشفاء COVID Cases الإصابات

A zaaz | Afrin | Al Bab | Jarablus | Jebel Saman | Arha | Harim | Idlib | Jor-Ash-Shugur
 أعزاز | عفرين | الباب | درابلس | جبل سمعان | أريحا | حارم | إدلب | جسور الشفور

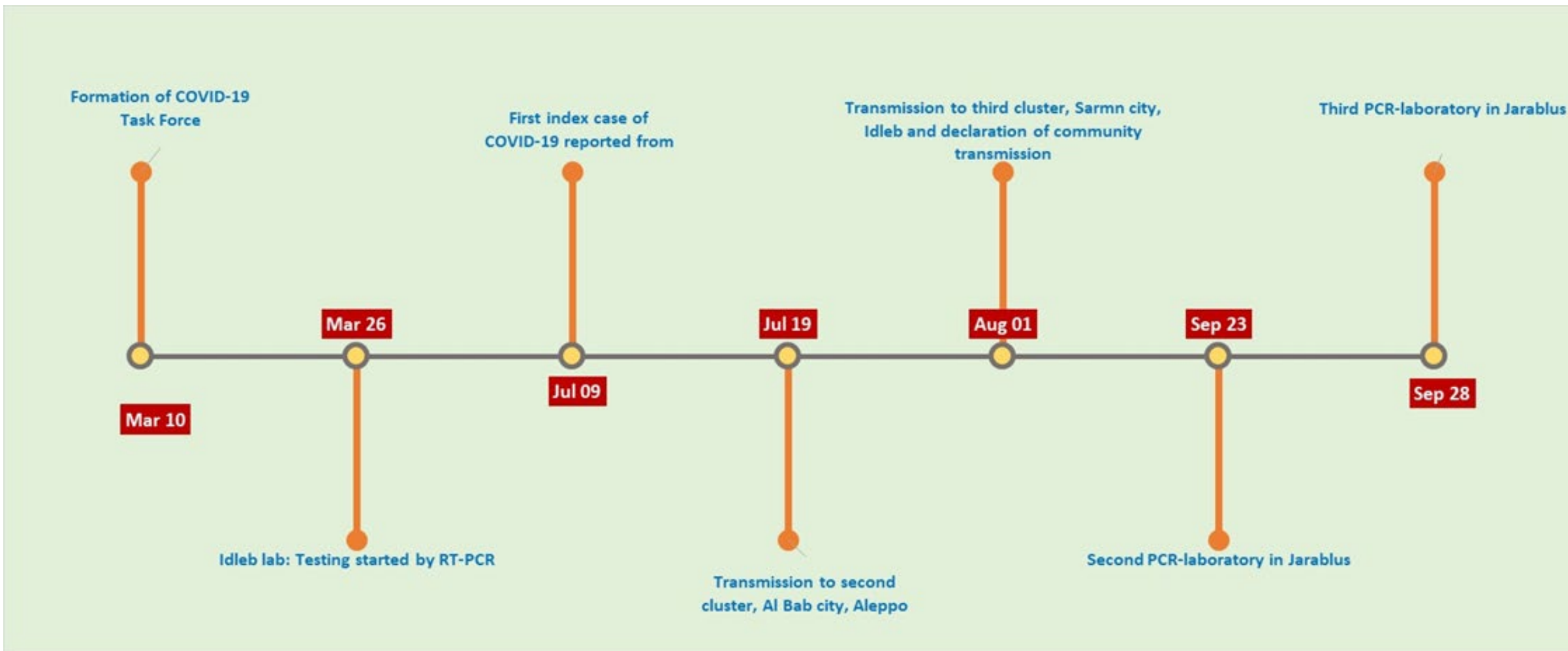
حلب | Aleppo | إدلب | Idlib

وحدة تنسيق الدعم EWARN
 شبكة الإنذار المبكر والاستجابة للأوبئة
 EARLY WARNING ALERT AND RESPONSE NETWORK

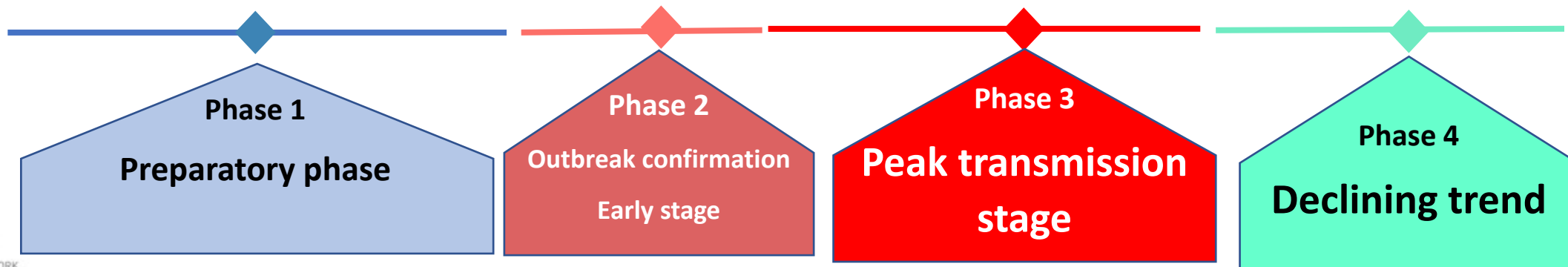
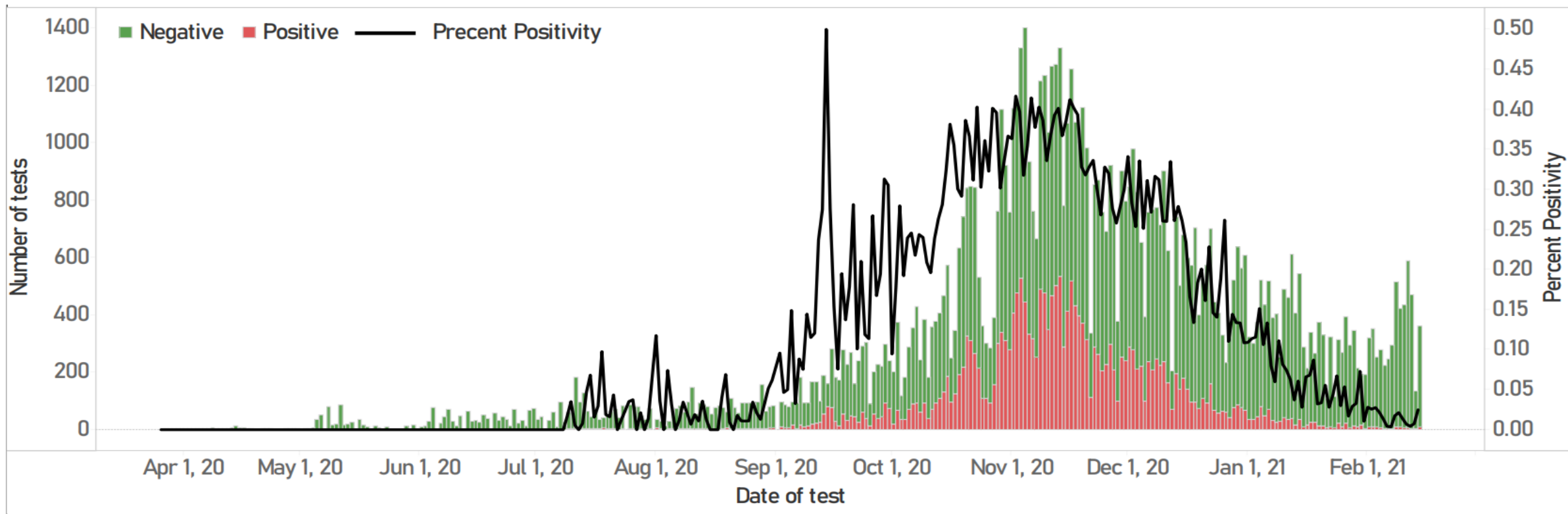
DAILY NEW CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES BY LAB RESULT DATE NWS - UP TO 15 FEB 2021



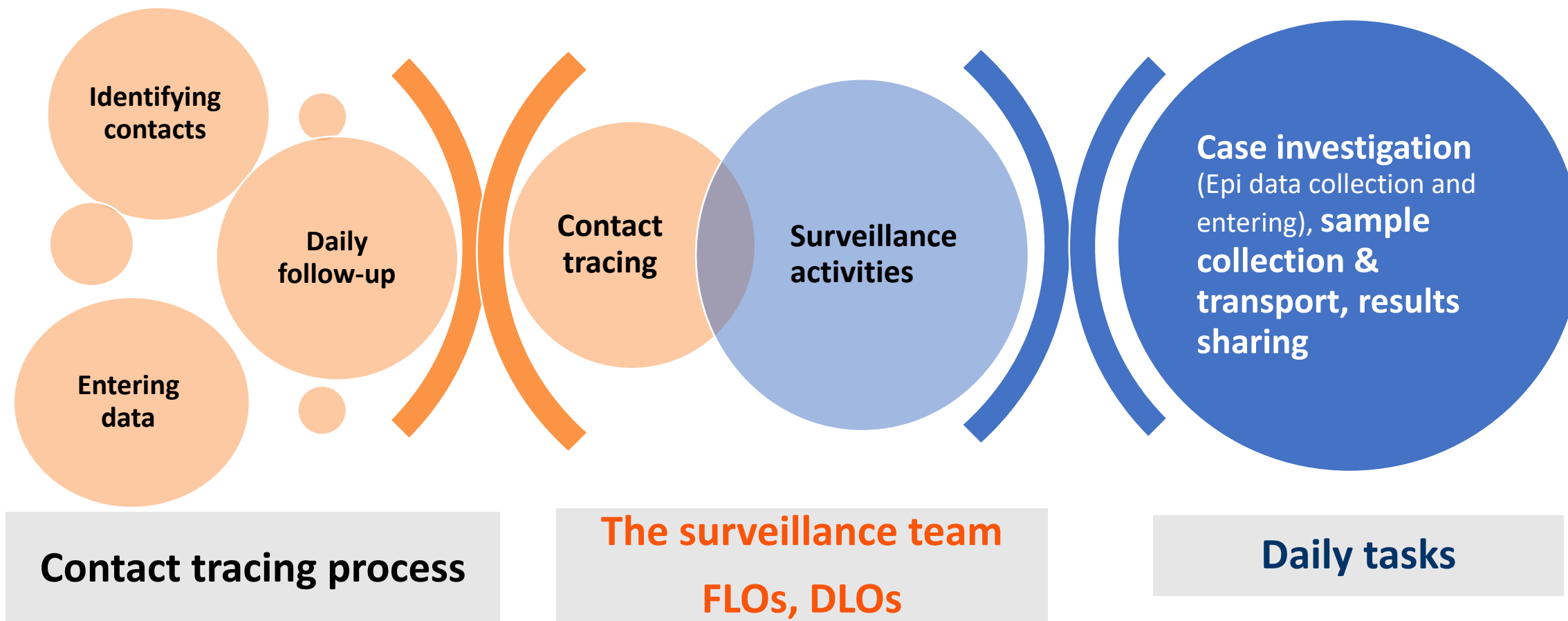
COVID-19 outbreak in NWS: timeline for key events



Evolution of COVID-19 outbreak in NWS



Contact tracing



Contact tracing process



Confirmed COVID-19 case

1



Identifying the contacts

WHO definition of 'Contacts' followed

Responsible staff:
Field Level Officers (FLOs)

2



Explanation of protocol to contacts

Quarantine period

Symptoms that may appear

3



Daily follow-up

Data collection tool:



Contact via WhatsApp



4



Completion of follow-up

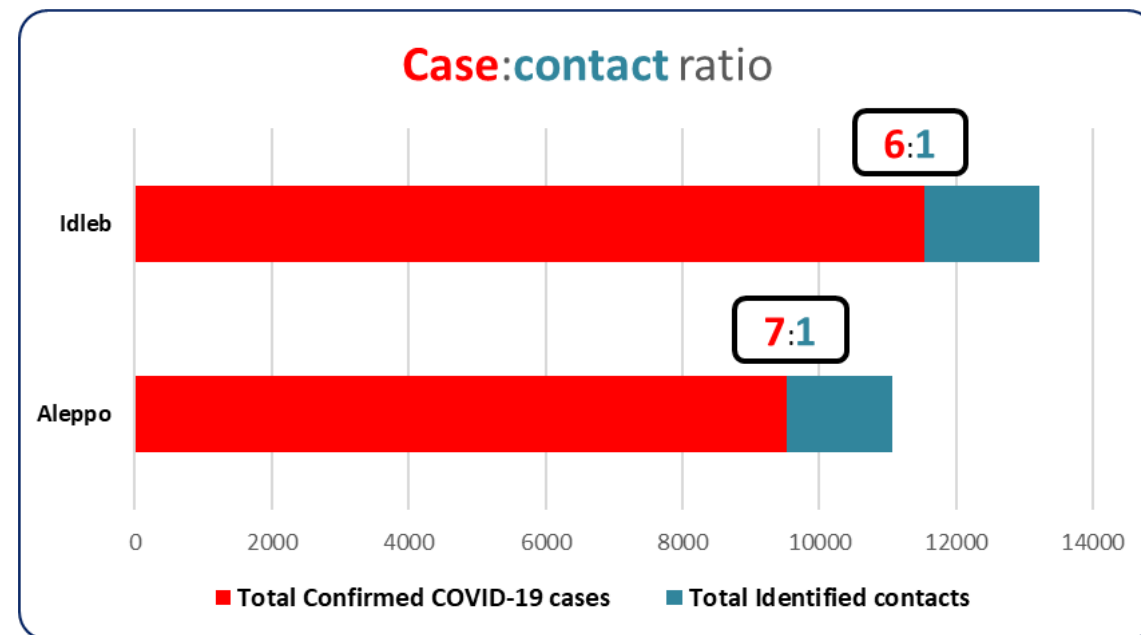
14 days after last contact

Convert the contact to case once develops symptoms

The contacts tracing performance

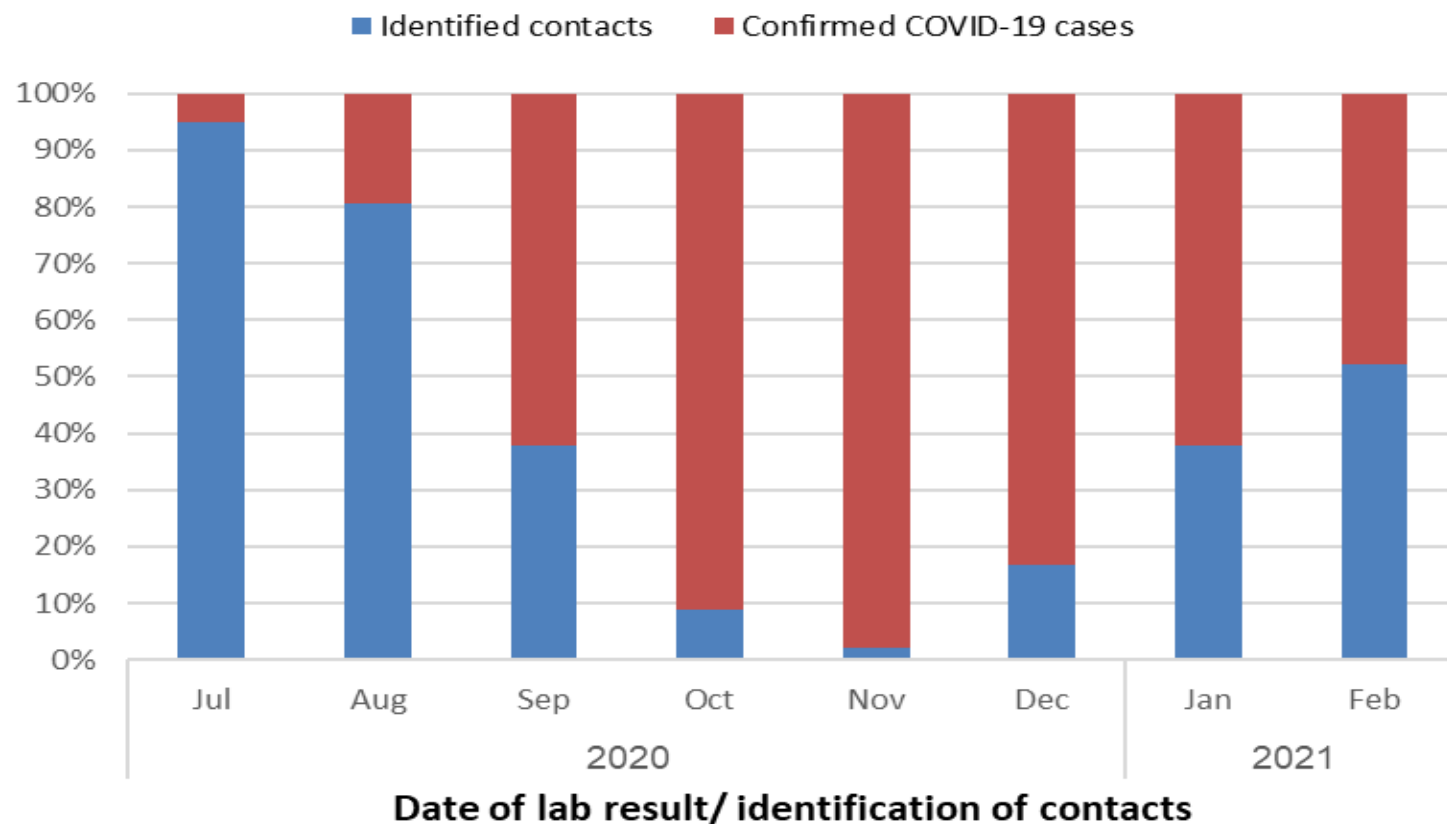
- The data is for **7 months** period (from date of confirmation of **first case of** the outbreak **on** 9 Jul 2020 to 9 Feb 2021)
- **Overall Inverted Case:contact ratio**

Confirmed COVID-19 cases		Identified contacts	
Aleppo	Idleb	Aleppo	Idleb
9518	11532	1543	1682

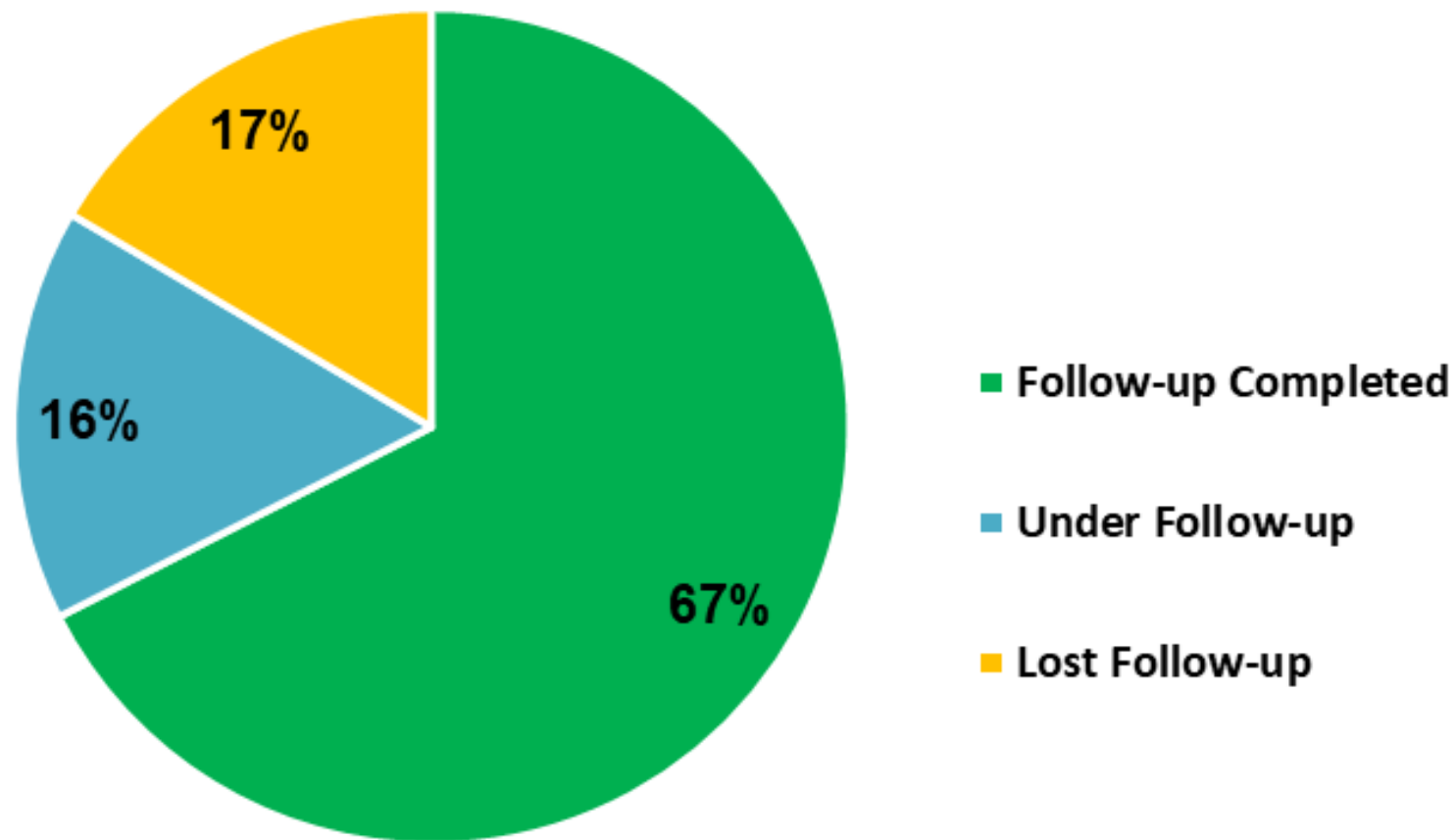


- In early stage of the outbreak (Jul-Aug 2020), the staff were able to identify contacts for almost all the confirmed cases
- During peak transmission period (Inverted case:contact ratio), the staff were overwhelmed, and the priority of contact tracing was given to the areas that reported less # of confirmed cases
- After the decline in # of cases, the staff resumed the full contact tracing

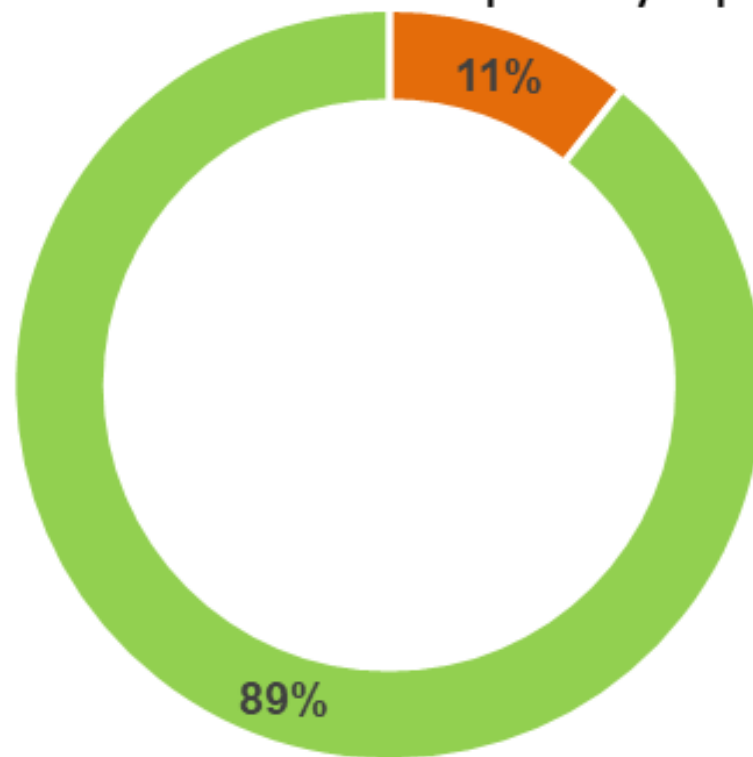
Confirmed COVID-19 cases / Identified contacts



Follow-up status



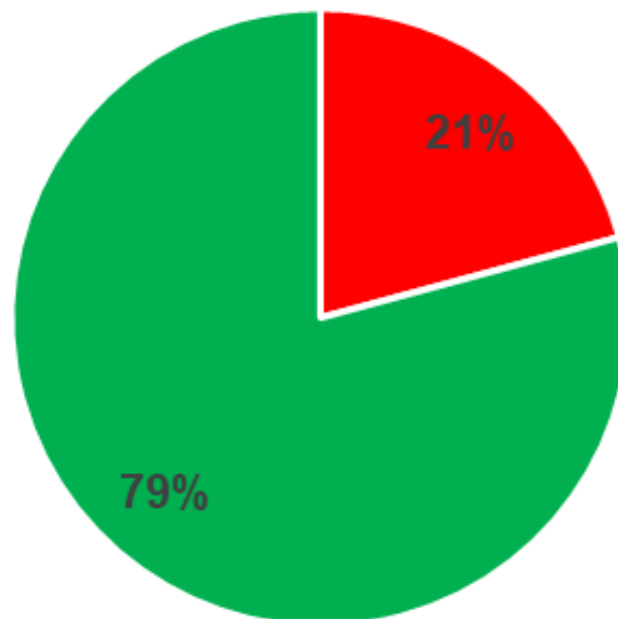
Contacts who developed symptoms



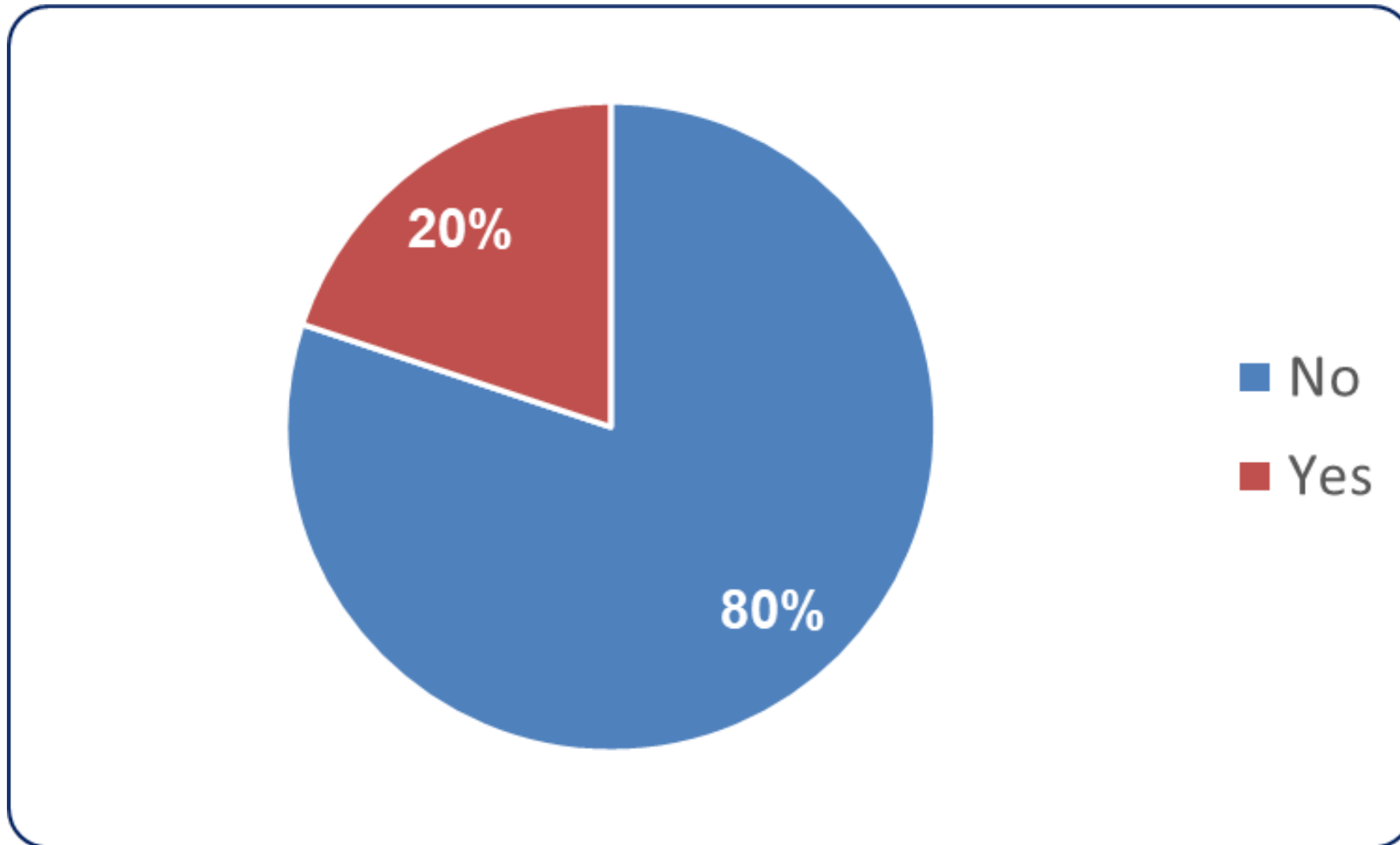
- Contacts developed symptoms
- Contacts who completed the follow-up without developing symptoms

Proportion of contacts who became cases (the tested contacts)

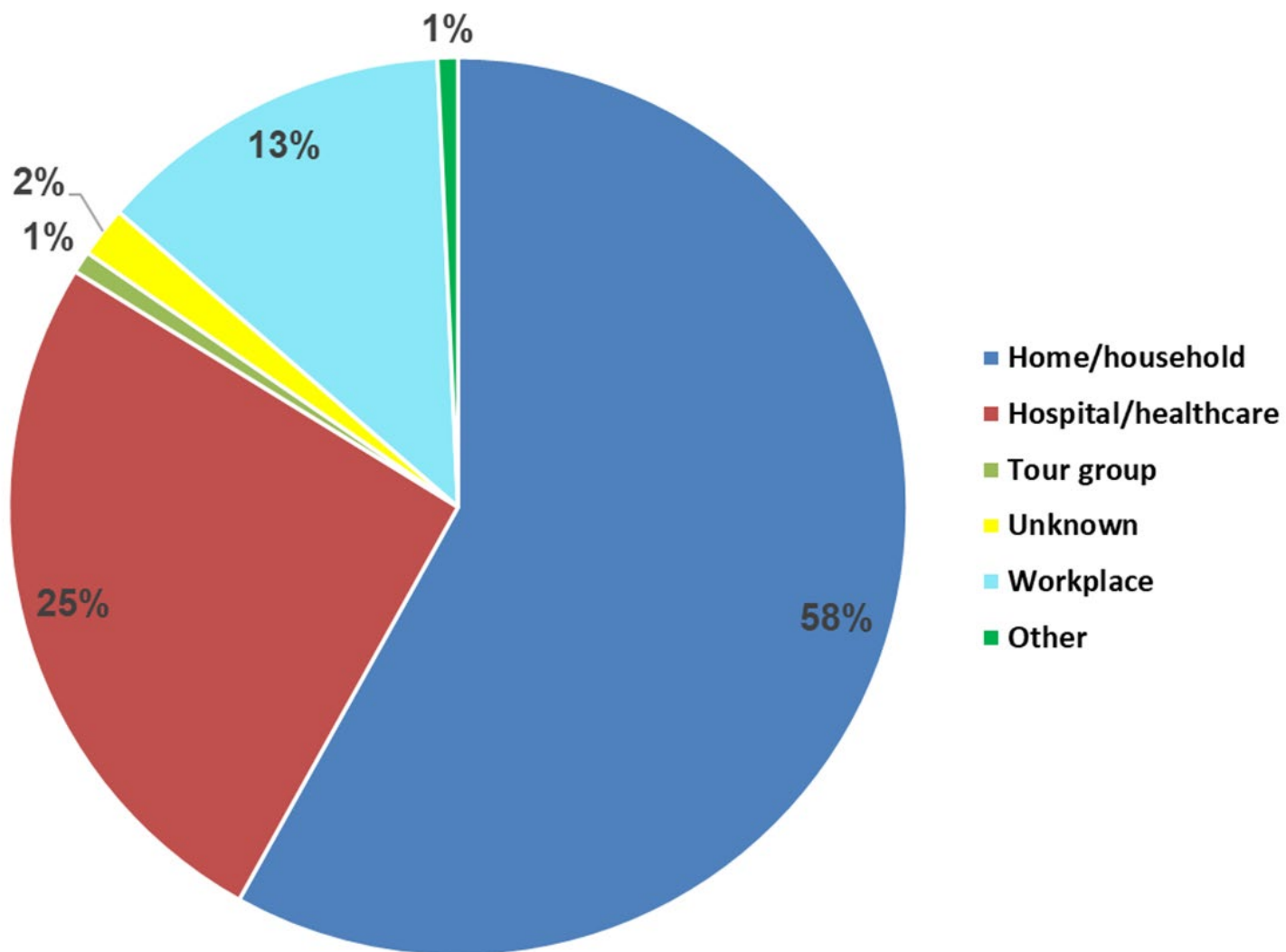
■ Positive for SARS-COV-2 ■ Negative for SARS-COV-2



Contacts who became cases with a prior history of contact with a confirmed case in last 14 days



Type of Contacts



The mitigation measures in the context of NWS-1

- **Collaboration with the CHW network:**

- Coordination through supported NGOs and COVID-19 Task Force
- Surveillance teams share the names of the identified contacts
- CHWs conduct daily follow-up

- **Coordination with the Turkish Health Directorates**

- Support contact tracing teams in Aleppo and Idleb (using same above methods)

The mitigations measures in the context of NWS-2

- **Quarantine centers:**

- 2 centers were established to help the contacts that cannot complete the home-quarantine (mainly contacts inside the camps)
- EWARN shares the names of the identified contacts with the referral system to transfer them to the quarantine centers

- **Using the easy electronic applications to conduct interview:**

- WhatsApp is the most common and easiest platform for contacting the people in NWS
- The contact tracing using the above platform (e.g. sharing lab results, identifying contacts, daily follow-up etc)

Challenges 1 of 2

- **Staff shortage:**

- Shortage of surveillance staff in general and contact tracers in particular.
- Surveillance staff are overwhelmed
- No dedicated contact tracers in current budget

- **Inadequate adherence to isolation and quarantine measures**

- Economic reasons
- Crowded living settings (esp. IDP camps)
- Unpaid vacations (esp. health staff)
- Stigma

- **Challenges related to follow-ups:**

- Many contacts were lost to follow up mainly as a result of continued population movement
- Lack of fixed addresses or contact details

Challenges 2 of 2

- Refusal to share contact names
- Many people have lost their ID, and some gave false information.
- Challenges in using electronic application for contact tracing:
 - Issues faced by the field teams while using Go.Data for data collection
 - Delay in data submission and data sharing
- Sub-optimal communications among partners, community, health staff.
- Lack of governmental oversight body and domination of many operating partners with variable work objectives

Way forward

- **Recruit additional staff as contact tracers and enhancing capacity of existing surveillance staff**
- **Strengthen coordination with partners**
- **Include data from other sources (e.g. NGOs)**

Thank You