



# The Reality of NGOs in Northern Syria

## From the local community's perspective

### Key Messages:

#### 1. The assessment of the role of NGOs and the relationship between them and other actors.

- NGOs are not playing their intended role in northwestern Syria because of the conditions of instability imposed by the war, the change of the controlling parties, and the absence of basic services, which made those organizations play the role of local service institutions.
- Most NGOs work in more than one sector instead of focusing on one sector, leading to a lack of achieving the required efficiency and effectiveness in performing their role.
- NGOs succeeded in managing the earthquake disaster - based on the capabilities available- despite the absence or weak coordination among them.
- Organizations prioritize less important sectors, such as protection, over more critical sectors, such as education.

#### 2. Assessment of the relation and accountability mechanisms

- The relationship between NGOs and society as a whole is somewhat shaky due to a defect in the mechanisms and methods of accountability and response by NGOs.
- Despite accountability and complaints mechanisms for NGOs, they are ineffective, as they are not followed up and are not responded to periodically and effectively.
- The community members (stakeholders) lack awareness related to the complaints mechanisms and do not know what are their rights and duties in the context of what they are entitled to complain and be held accountable for.
- There is no government accountability and no accountability from the community at the level of the full project but only at the level of activity or to achieve individual gains from this complaint.

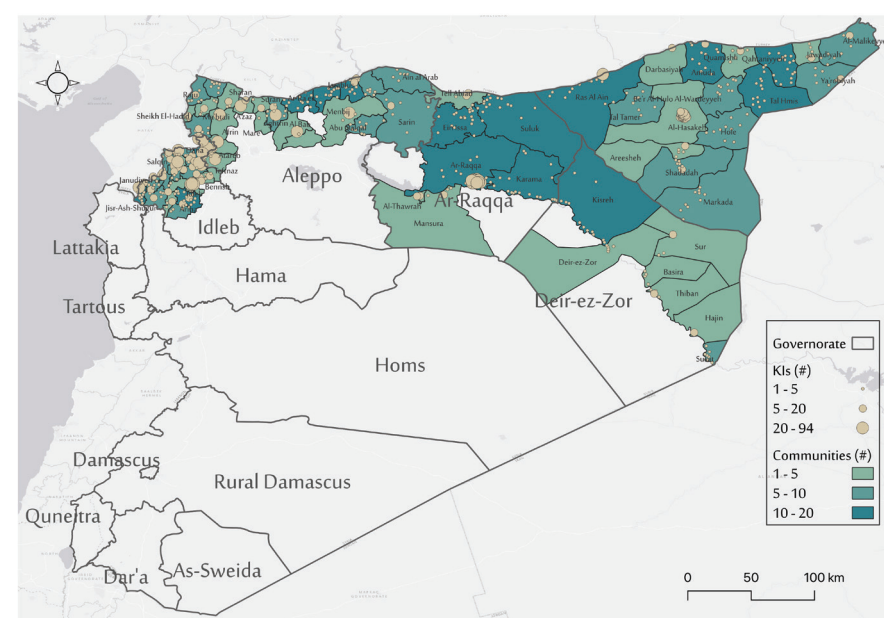
#### 3. Recommendations to improve the current reality

- Moving from random work to specialization improves NGOs' performance. Specialization allows them to provide services more effectively and accurately identify needs, which contributes to improving their impact on local communities.
- There is a need for external oversight of projects and programs implemented by NGOs.
- NGOs need to improve accountability and transparency mechanisms to take the form of a legal system that is clear to the community members and binding on all. On the other hand, a culture of social accountability should be promoted in society and among its members.
- There is a need to establish a platform to assess the real needs in the community with the participation of all parties and thus issuing a unified assessment to achieve success in the work.
- One of the most important steps to be taken is to increase coordination between NGOs to achieve effectiveness and work.

### Methodology:

The IMU relied on conducting a survey through a perception survey with a sample of the population in the targeted areas. The respondents were selected from key informants for field researchers in the IMU, in addition to workers in active NGOs in the targeted area of the study. The total number of questionnaires was 2,025, of which 38% were by women. The data for the survey was collected between 07-12 June 2023. The ACU also conducted four FGDs between 11-14 July 2023 with a sample population to obtain qualitative information on the subject of the study. The central team in the IMU analyzed the quantitative data from the questionnaire and cross-checked it with qualitative data from the FGDs to draft this report.

### Coverage

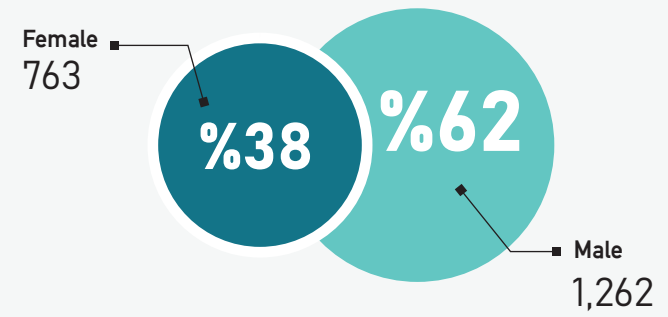


### Context and Rationale:

The year 2011 marked the beginning of the conflict in Syria, and its circle rapidly expanded to include the northern regions of the country. As a result of the ongoing fighting and heavy shelling, basic infrastructure and facilities have been damaged, and human suffering has accumulated. International and local humanitarian NGOs started to intervene to address the needs of conflict-affected civilians. These NGOs provided emergency relief assistance such as shelter, food, water and health care to displaced and affected people. The NGOs have become key actors in communities, playing roles away from providing urgent humanitarian assistance and basic needs. This study attempts to shed light on the relationships and roles played by NGOs operating in northern Syria from the point of view of the local population, as well as what is expected of these NGOs and recommendations to improve their performance and effectiveness in communities.

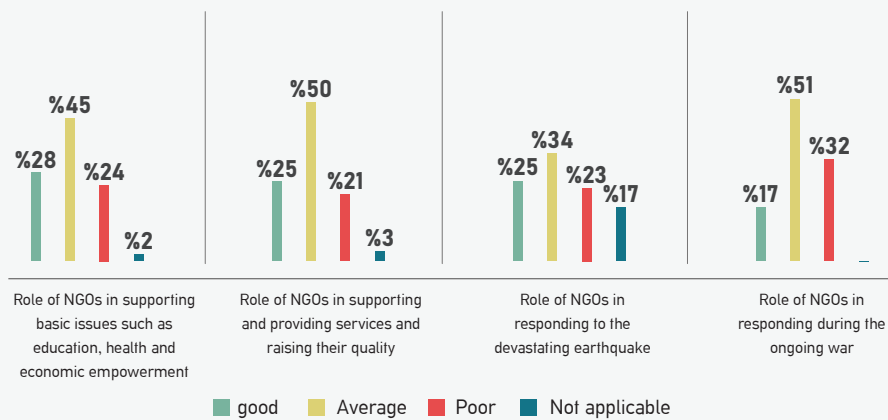
## The Study Sample

The IMU conducted a survey with a sample of respondents in the targeted areas, but the sample does not necessarily represent all community segments in the targeted areas. It is also not possible to generalize the results of the study to the entire population in those areas.

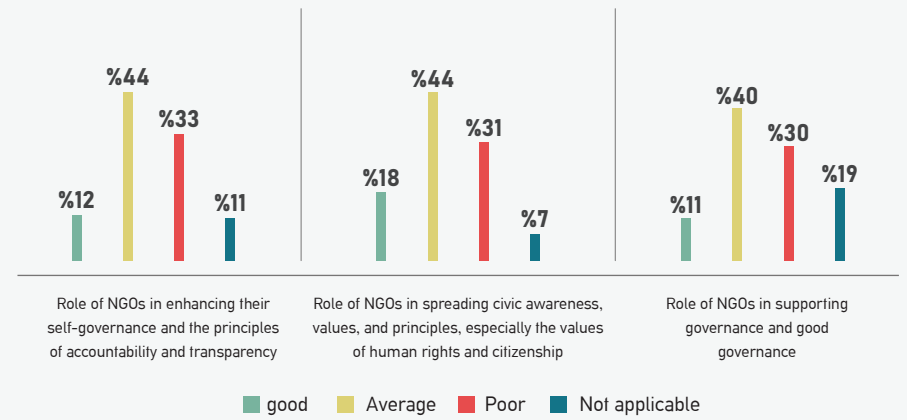


## Findings

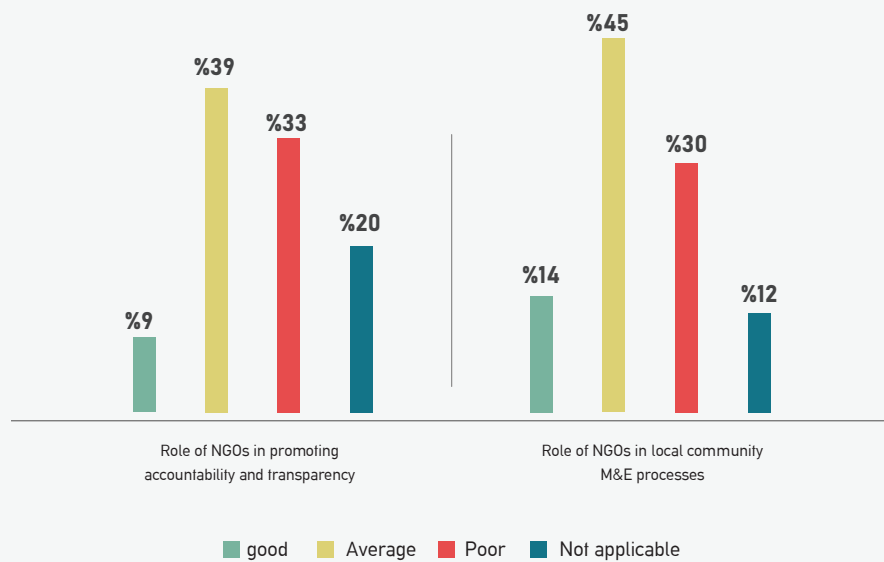
### Response of NGOs



### NGOs and governance



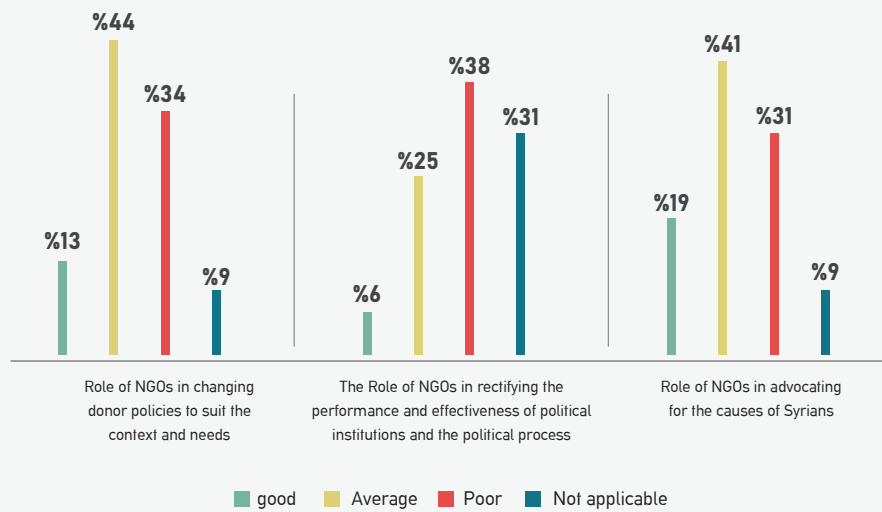
### NGOs and transparency



### NGOs and countering militarization and extremism

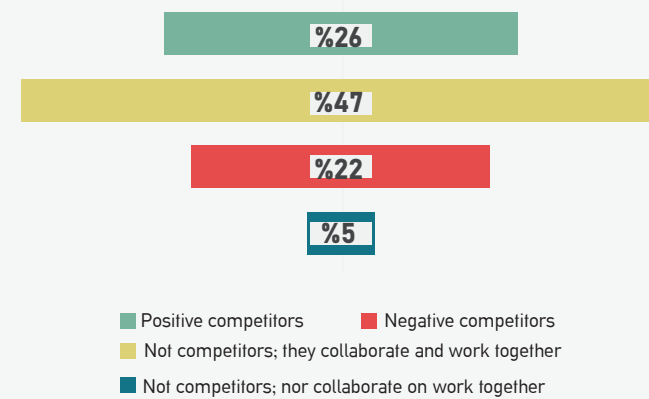


### NGOs and advocacy



### Coordination and competitiveness between NGOs and political and governmental bodies

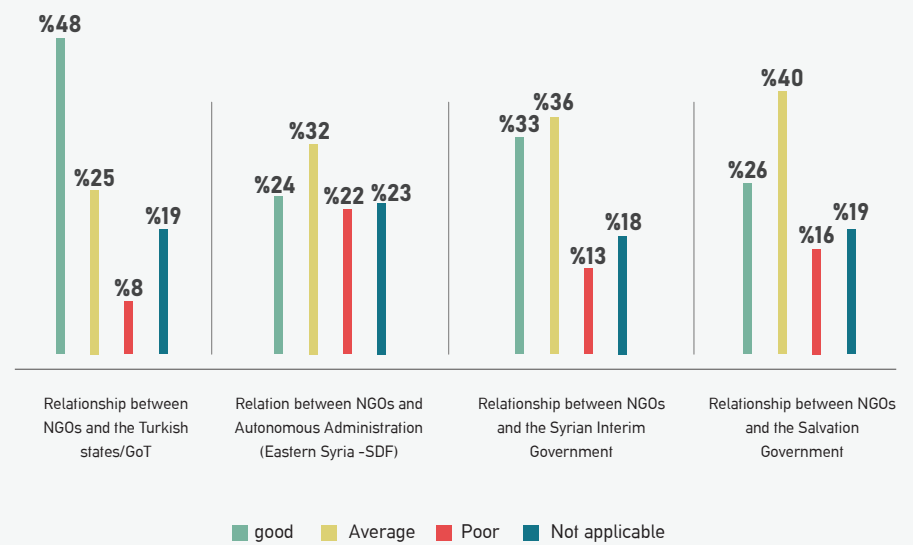
#### NGOs' competition for governance structures



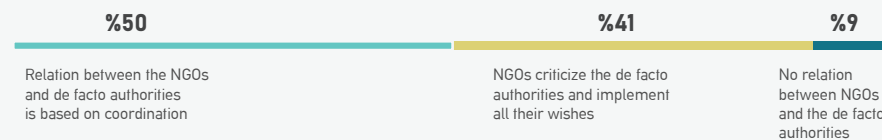
### Effective participation of NGOs in political action



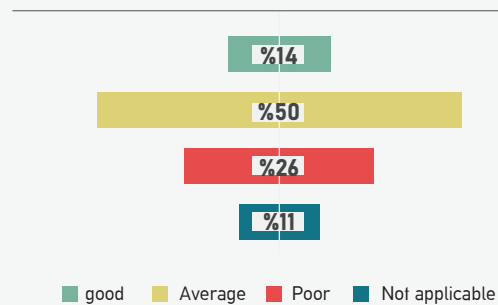
### The relations between NGOs and de facto authorities



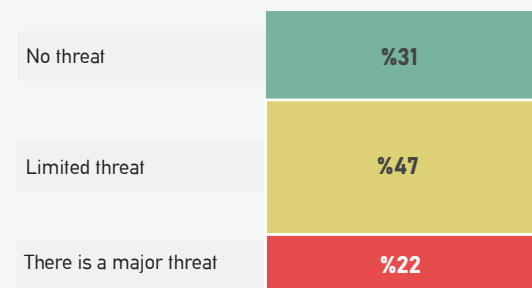
### Coordination of decision-making between NGOs and de facto authorities



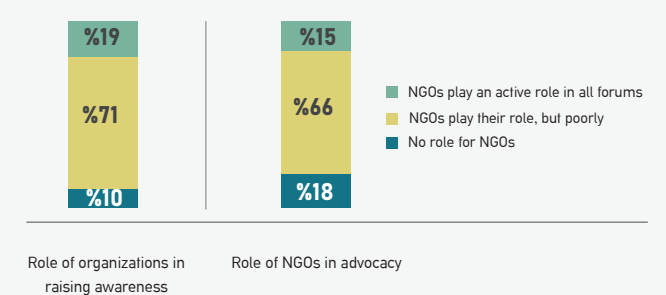
### Assessing the performance, effectiveness, impact, coordination, information sharing, and response improvement of NGOs



### The threat to the civic space in the area (the margin of freedoms - the formation of civil bodies and networks - the exercise of rights, etc.)



### Assessment of the role of NGOs in awareness-raising and advocacy



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