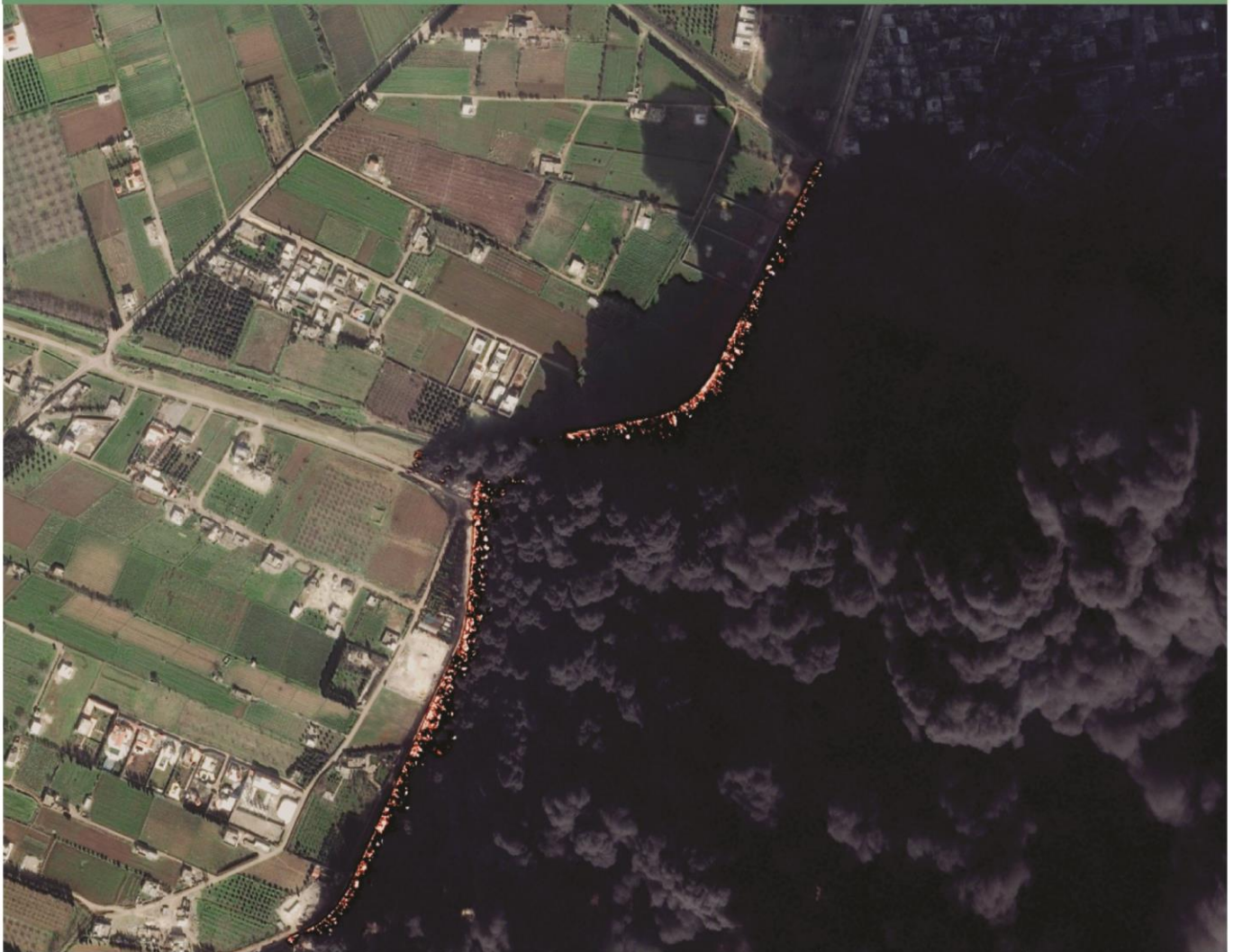


Baba Amr Neighbourhood Profile



BABA AMR

Neighbourhood Profile

Homs Governorate

City of Homs

Baba Amr Neighbourhood (بابا عمرو)

Sub-neighbourhoods (Haraat): The Old Town, Hakoura, Al Tawzee Al Ijbari, Al Jouri Mosque, Joret Al Arayes, Al Tahoon, Al Mjad'dara (see Figure 1)



Background:

Baba Amr is one of Homs's largest neighbourhoods in terms of area (280 ha) and population (55,000 inhabitants according to 2010 estimates). The neighbourhood grew from a small village west of the city overlooking the Orontes River and valley, and was later "absorbed" by city growth, and expanded to merge with the city western side. Population of the expanded village gradually abandoned their agricultural economy, and spurred the initiation of a new market at the heart of the upper-income western residential neighbourhoods. The market started a new supply route to the city, attaching it to the large agricultural plains that extends on Orontes River basin down to Qusair region, and later; the market expanded to include various industries and businesses, mixed with sprawls of medium density informal housing that also attracted a segment of Homs population seeking low-cost housing.

Although the neighbourhood mushroomed informally, it enjoyed acceptable degree of organized urban form. In 2005, the City Council adopted a resolution to formalize the neighbourhood, and later on in 2008, the city finally overcame all property and legal issues and declared all properties in the neighbourhood formal. In addition, the local authorities used all available unoccupied space to provide the neighbourhood with services and facilities, including schools, clinics, wholesale market (unfinished), and asphalt to all secondary road. The market that dominated the main street crosscutting the neighbourhood started to expand into the secondary streets, and the neighbourhood became a destination for trades and commerce that attracted western city consumers, who enjoyed the location of the market in between residential neighbourhoods and feasibly enabled them to avoid accessing the crowded City Centre. (Map 1)

Flash Timeline:

2011 Baba Amr was one of the first neighbourhoods in Syria to enter the conflict. Demonstrations and crackdown soon developed into armed clashes. The neighbourhood was also expanding informally on public lands. Population displacement peaked by the end of the year.

2012 The area was besieged, and population completely abandoned the neighbourhood. Army controlled the neighbourhood and The Old Town with the informal sprawls were razed. The Syrian President visited the neighbourhood and promised recovery and restitution of people. Population started to slightly increase, and were specifically incentivized to return by allowing them to add more floors to their buildings without much scrutiny on the impacts of such "vertical expansion" on the capacity of services and infrastructure. AOGs reclaimed the neighbourhood for a month then were pushed out to Al Waer and to the northern settlements. The latest incident collapsed all efforts to promote a population return, and the decision was taken to freeze the neighbourhood until a reconstruction project is in place despite the fact that the last combat operations did not specifically generate more damage.

2013 Stagnation, no return allowed to the larger proportion of the neighbourhood, and a Hara in the neighbourhood (Al Tawzee Al Ijbari) was surrounded by a wall, and became known as "the area between the two walls". This walled area became populated by 3,000 originals in addition to 7,000 IDPs. Schools previously occupied by collective shelters in Al Fardous neighbourhood were evacuated and IDPs were resettled inside the walled area, although with many access constraints which are still restricted to pedestrian access.

2014 No return allowed, except for few families who resettled inside one Hara/ sub- neighbourhood (500 persons in Al Jouri Mosque Hara). Nearly 4,000 persons were allowed to settle after evicting areas in Rural Aleppo (Nubbol and Al Zahra'a)¹, and are currently occupying sporadic private shelters. The reconstruction plan quickly evolved into a master plan the envisaged the complete demolition of the neighbourhood, and to alter its semi-urban fabric with a modern high-rise habitat. Governor of Homs publically announced through SANA that "the plan will guarantee equitable compensations to the neighbourhood community, but the regenerated area will be hosting a mixture of different cultures and origins, and will not be restricted to Baba Amr people".

Why Baba Amr?

Baba Amr has several characteristics that make it a strategic entry point for recovery and resilience:

1. **The city context:** Negotiations about Al Waer will reportedly unfold an agreement in the near future, which eventually means a reliable stability citywide. Security clearances for returns citywide are promised to be relieved once Al Waer agreement is in place, and Homs is expected to take a new trajectory of recovery in the next two to three years, annexing it to the social and economic system of the stable areas in Syria. Homs will gradually become a destination for returns, IDPs and investments, which are currently diverted into other stable areas such as the Christian Valley and the Coastal Region.
2. **New economic drivers:** the role of Baba Amr as an absorbent market for the products coming from the Orontes River valley is currently sundered as these huge agricultural areas (nearly 18,000 hectares) are deemed unsecure. Being sandwiched between Baba Amr and Al Waer will eventually mean an unleash of its agricultural potential once Al Waer agreement is in place. Baba Amr could be re-functionalized as a market platform for agricultural and

¹ The Dynamics through which these families secondarily occupy shelters in the neighbourhood are unclear. Some local informants claim that this was deliberately organized by security institutions, still its mostly believed that the soldiers who are originally from these two settlements (Nubbol and Al Zahara'a), and who happened to be serving in the city are calling in their families to settle in Homs, and specifically in Baba Amr where the neighbourhood has a lot of habitable shelters. However, these families must have acquired some sort of a clearance before accessing the checkpoints to the area, but on the other hand, original inhabitants are unable to acquire such clearances, and although there is no clear justification to the return ban, key informants believe that the reconstruction plan is the main reason, as the governorate may have hindered people's return, even if temporarily, in order to avoid the evacuation process needed to implement the expropriation and the reconstruction plan. This argument drops shadows at the claim of the governorate that the compensation amounts will be fare and are well received by the community.

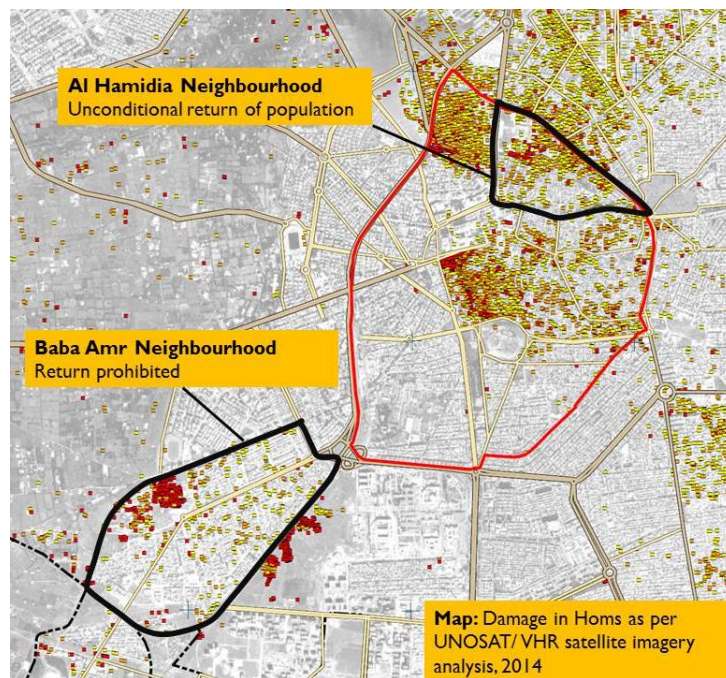
livestock productivity restoration, which in turn calls for support to the farmlands themselves, given the size of impacts and deterioration of their assets and infrastructure.

3. **Countering unrealistic planning:** Providing equitable and realistic plans for areas such as Baba Amr will inspire decision-making processes country wide. The decision to demolish the remaining 10,000 housing units (that could be simply rehabilitated) using an amendment to Law 66 was taken at a time when Baba Amr was unique in its state of damage, but currently, and given the size of damage observable elsewhere, even in the same city will not justify any reconstructionist agenda. The urban planning paradigm which is not based on physical and social justifications could easily be interpreted as retaliatory, whereas locally driven recovery in Baba Amr could bring about stability and confidence to the city and the Central Region as well. (Figure 2, Photo)



Photo: Rendering of the new master plan of Baba Amr

Figure 2 : Satellite imagery analysis of Damage to buildings in Homs City (UNOSAT, 2014).



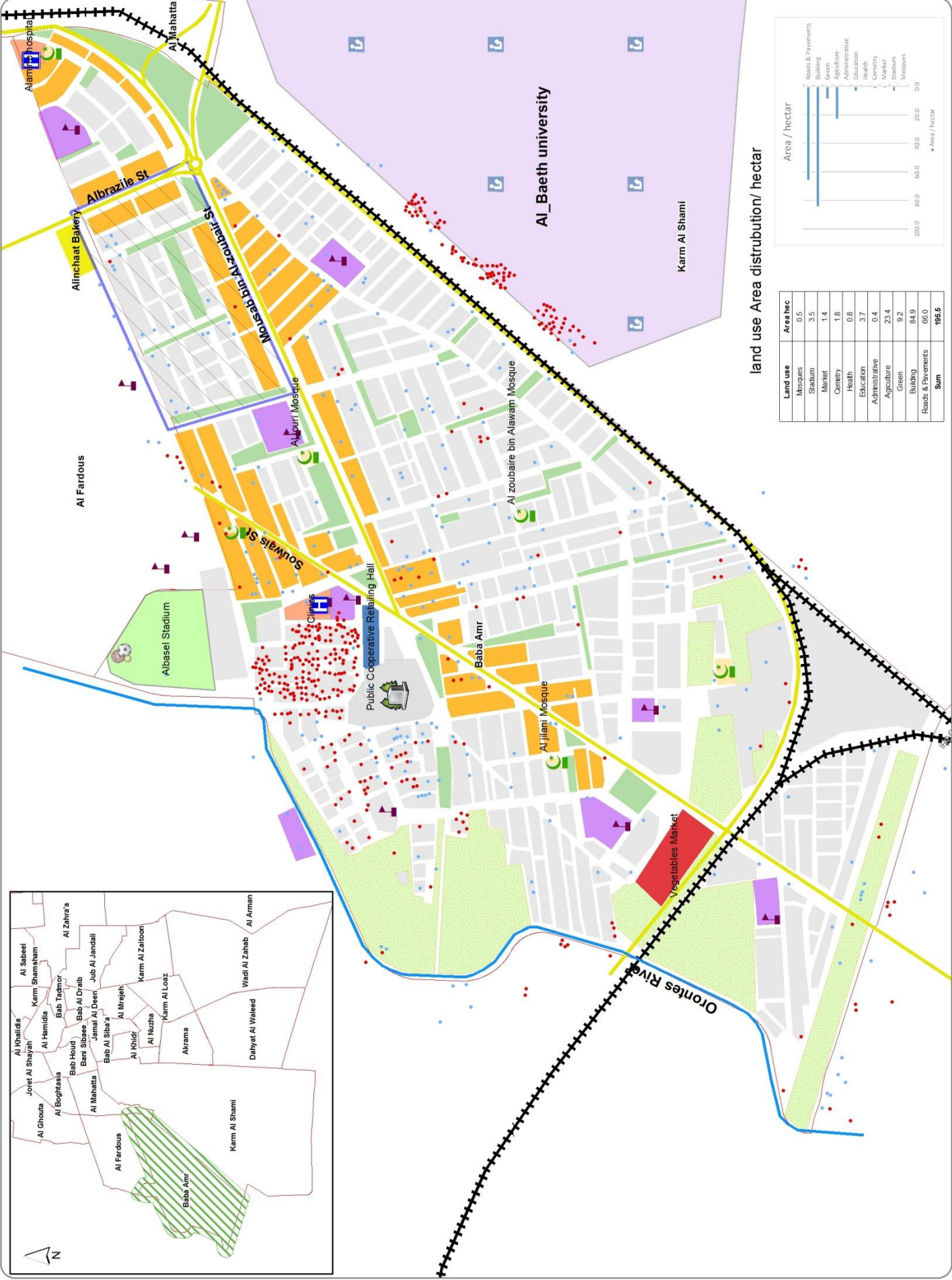
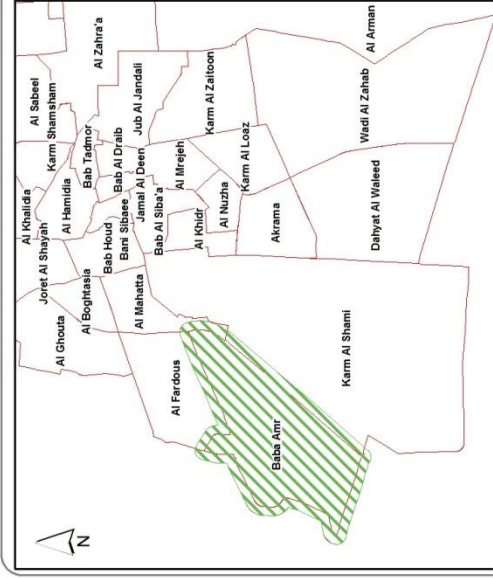
4. **The shelter stock:** Baba Amr which used to have nearly 14,000 shelter units reveals an opportunity for a major shelter stock restoration that would contribute to bridging the shelter-gap locally and nationally. The fact that nearly 10,000 units could be feasibly rehabilitated should definitely be examined, and with the humanitarian Shelter Sector contribution, thousands of shelters could be sustainably recovered, specifically since that 31% of Baba Amr labour was occupied in the building and construction sector (CBS, 2010), making them the largest productive labour group in the neighbourhood, and providing a unique potential for involving them in a participatory recovery process.

- 5. High return potential:** A quick distribution of Baba Amr IDPs over displacement destinations refers that a considerable majority (nearly 50%) of the IDPs are still living inside Homs (i.e. displaced within the city). In fact, out of the 25,000 IDPs from Baba Amr currently living in Homs, 10,000 are distributed between two adjacent neighbourhoods to Baba Amr (Karm Al Shami and Al Fadrous). UN-Habitat recently led a community consultation with the IDPs from Baba Amr living in these two areas, and the feedback received about the readiness to return was obviously prevalent. On the other hand, nearly 15,000 IDPs (originally from Baba Amr) are besieged in Al Waer, creating one of the largest communities there. In case the prospected agreement in Al Waer came to being, and with the relief of entry ban paused on Baba Amr, one could witness a return momentum, which deserves the attention of the international humanitarian community, not only through drawing support to the infrastructure rehabilitation, but also through the facilitation of the return process in a negotiable context.
- 6. Potential to work on phases:** in fact, the neighbourhood recovery could be planned to incubate diverse approaches and timelines. *Map 4* represents the results of key informants consultations that were initiated by UN-Habitat in June 2015, which resulted in a generic phasing of interventions in 5 working areas. The development framework for these areas could be summarized in the following: (see *Map 2*)

Area per phase	Current population	Potential return volume	Intervention framework
Area 1: The inhabited area between the walls	10,000	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently hosting 7,000 IDPs • Area for improvement of services and job-creation • Improvements are conditioned by an ease in the access
Area 2: Al Jouri Mosque	500	1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light damage • Area for immediate/ short-term population return • Rehabilitation of services and shelters
Area 3: The southern and eastern sub-neighbourhoods	4,000	12,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium damage • Area for medium-term population return • Participatory rehabilitation of shelters and services • Substantial infrastructure investments will be required
Area 4: The market corridor and the agricultural plain	0	3,500 (farmers of the Orontes Valley area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium damage • Rehabilitation of the market and the workshops, in addition to restoring agricultural productivity • Support the conjunctive role of the market between fresh food suppliers and the main consuming areas • Impact of land contamination resulting in from an oil pipeline explosion incident needs to be tackled
Area 5: The Old Town	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe damage • Area for long-term reconstruction • Preservation of surviving heritage remains that represents the Old Town's memory

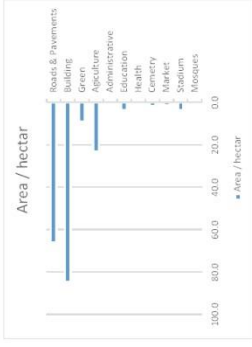
The Base map for Baba Amr Neighbourhood

This map illustrates the base map for Baba Amr neighbourhood in HOMS city. The damage assessments points was received from UNOSAT, date of 20 february 2014. Wide analysis show a total of 335 building as blocks (3000 of them are from the original habitants and 7000 are IDPs). (53 block of them are very highly damaged and 76 block are moderately damaged)



Land use	Area hec
Mosques	0.5
Stadium	3.5
Market	1.4
Cemetery	1.8
Health	0.8
Education	3.7
Administrative	0.4
Agriculture	23.4
Green	9.2
Building	84.9
Roads & pavements	66.0
Sum	195.6

land use Area distribution/ hectar



Coordinating system: WGS84 / UTM zone 37N
To be print in Scale 1:7,500 for A3

200,000 100,000 0 200,000 Meters

Map 2: Key Projects And Initiatives As Identified Through Community Consultations

Shelter rehabilitation

- Rehabilitate approximately 5,000 affected shelter units (number of units distributed on the maps by sub-neighbourhood)
- Support families willing to return to lightly affected shelter units with relevant kits
- Support a comprehensive training and local labour force participation programme
- Support the temporary use of a large public hall as a hub for building materials, shelter rehabilitation workshops and training

Livelihoods restoration

- Rehabilitation of the wholesale fruit and vegetable market
 - Coordinate with local agriculture and livestock producers, facilitate transportation and access
 - Provide support programmes to local producers, provide productive assets
 - Disinfect and sterilize the agricultural areas contaminated with fossil fuel
 - Provide the market with equipment (entry control, storehouses, weigh bridge, ... etc.)
 - Provide services (water and sanitation, telephone connections, electricity)
 - Coordinate the process with the traders currently occupying emerging markets in neighbouring areas
- Rehabilitate the main market corridors (starting with Mousab Bin Al-Zoubair st.)

Rehabilitation of the networks

- Rehabilitate affected tower tanks (2 tanks) and the emergency water wells
- Rehabilitate the primary and secondary public water grids
- Rehabilitate the main streets affected with impact craters
- Rehabilitate the minor effects on the sewerage system
- Restore the electricity network that has been totally damaged and looted

Restoration of the educational process

- Relocate the occupants (IDPs) of two school in the neighbourhood (recently displaced from Palmyra and Idleb, approximately 15 families)
- Rehabilitate affected schools or schools occupied by non-educational function (5 schools)
- Promote education, incentivize re-enrollment

Restoration of health care service

- Rehabilitate the public clinic, provide equipment (generator, medical equipment, ambulance)
- Capacity building for the medical staff to be recruited at the public clinic
- Provide support to private medical care clinics

Waste collection

- Provide 30 workers for street sweeping and daily garbage collection
- Provide equipment (tools, barrows, bins, in addition to one compactor)
- Organize the waste collection and disposal operation with the relevant department, coordinate with the landfill
- Remove the debris from the totally damaged locations

