

## STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN NORTHEAST SYRIA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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### How to cite this paper:

Salih Hussein, Benek Sedat and Nishan Moses (2025) Strategies for Climate Adaptation in Northeast Syria: A Systematic Review, Journal of Global Resources, Vol. 11 (01)

### DOI:

10.46587/JGR.2025.v11i01.003

Received: 21 Nov. 2024

Reviewed: 27 November 2024

Final Accepted: 11 Dec. 2024

  
Freely available Online  
[www.isdesr.org](http://www.isdesr.org)

**Abstract:** Northeast Syria is among the region's most vulnerable areas to climate change. This vulnerability arises not only from exposure to climate change and the intensification of extreme weather events but also from the way adaptation policies and projects have been designed using a top-down technocratic approach. As a result, much of the adaptation has led to negative consequences for certain groups that are often the most vulnerable; those who directly depend on nature for their livelihoods. This outcome, known as maladaptation, has been particularly evident. This paper conducts a systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature since 2014, the year maladaptation first gained significant attention in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report. The aim is to assess the current state of research related to climate change adaptation in Northeast Syria, particularly concerning the Euphrates River and the Khabur River, which are important components of the region's biodiversity. The review aims to identify research gaps and discuss key lessons learned. The keywords used in the review include maladaptation, barriers to adaptation, ecosystem-based adaptation, and gender, as these concepts are all somewhat interconnected. The review highlights significant research gaps across all topics, as well as a geographical imbalance in the distribution of studies within the region. Given the prevalence of maladaptation in Northeast Syria, it is crucial for further research to focus on this issue to gather insights and mitigate maladaptation in future climate change adaptation projects, as the region directly relies on natural resources.

**Key word:** Ecosystem, Strategies Adaptation, Based Adaptation, Barriers To Adaptation, Gender

## **Introduction**

Northeast Syria is one of the region's most vulnerable areas to climate change due to its geographic location. It faces significant challenges such as recurring droughts and decreasing water resources, which increase the overall fragility of the region. About 70% of land in Northeast Syria lies at an elevation of less than 500 meters above sea level, making it susceptible to severe climatic events (Mardini, 2016). Other factors contributing to this vulnerability include high population density and the ongoing conflict, which has negatively impacted natural resource management (Ahmed et al., 2019). A significant portion of the population in Northeast Syria depends on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and livestock, with agriculture being the primary source of livelihood (Al-Badawi, 2020). Studies have identified Northeast Syria as one of the region's most vulnerable areas to climate change (Akasha, 2021).

The ongoing armed conflict in Syria has worsened the environmental conditions in the region. The war has led to the destruction of critical infrastructure, negatively affecting the management of natural resources, particularly water, and increasing pressure on ecosystems due to the displacement of people to rural and agricultural areas (Ahmed et al., 2020). In addition, unsustainable agricultural practices have aggravated the climatic impacts in Northeast Syria, leading to the degradation of environmental resources and increasing the region's vulnerability to climate change (Mardini, 2016). This region requires urgent interventions in order to adapt to climate change, with careful attention to ensuring that poorly planned adaptation policies do not lead to maladaptation, which could exacerbate risks and vulnerabilities for the most affected groups, such as farming communities that depend on natural resources (Akasha, 2021).

Approximately 4 million people in Northeast Syria rely on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood (Al-Badawi, 2020). Therefore, the loss of ecosystem services due to climate change and human intervention could have severe consequences for vulnerable communities (Ahmed et al., 2019). Given the region's extreme exposure to climate change, there is a need for more climate adaptation initiatives. However, there is a risk that poorly planned projects could lead to maladaptation, worsening risks and vulnerabilities for other groups (Ghazi, 2021). Maladaptation occurs when adaptive measures harm the targeted group or other groups (Akasha et al., 2021). This is particularly the case when addressing complex issues such as climate change adaptation, which has multidimensional spatial and temporal characteristics. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has documented an increasing number of maladaptation cases since its fifth assessment report in 2014 (IPCC, 2014). Maladaptation intensifies poverty and inequality (Portner et al., 2022), making it essential to assess the impact of adaptation projects on vulnerable groups. Failing to consider potential negative impacts could worsen inequality, marginalize communities dependent on specific livelihoods, and increase their exposure to risks (Portner, 2022). One reason for maladaptation in Northeast Syria is that decisions related to climate change have largely been made by experts lacking effective connection with local communities, which possess valuable knowledge that could offer alternative adaptation strategies. This situation leads to weak interaction between government plans and local practices (Falzon, 2021; Naess, 2013). A lack of understanding of the root causes of vulnerability makes it likely that adaptation strategies will only address symptoms, rather than underlying issues, such as the ongoing conflict and the degradation of natural resources (Schipper, 2020; Shoup, 2020).

Perceptions of climate change and adaptation strategies in Northeast Syria are influenced by cultural values and community practices. The diverse needs of communities, including agricultural and pastoral communities, must be taken into account when developing adaptation strategies. Non-inclusive adaptation efforts can worsen maladaptation and increase the vulnerability of communities (Antwi- et al., 2018; Al-Abdullah, 2021). In this context, adaptive initiatives must be inclusive and based on local and indigenous knowledge. The Northeast Syria region requires urgent interventions for climate change adaptation; however, barriers to these interventions vary. Factors such as weak infrastructure, lack of financial resources, and insufficient training and education hinder communities' ability to adapt (Barnett et al., 2015; Al-Abdullah, 2021). These barriers have often been studied in advanced contexts, but little research has addressed how these barriers affect communities in developing countries, such as Syria (Biesbrock et al., 2013).

### **The Study Area**

Northeast Syria, which includes Al-Hasakah Governorate and parts of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, is considered one of the strategically important regions of the country. Geographically, it borders Turkey to the north and Iraq to the east, with parts of Raqqa to the west and Deir ez-Zor to the south. Geographically, it is located between latitudes 35° and 37° north and longitudes 40° and 43° east. The area is estimated to cover about 50,000 square kilometers, representing approximately 27% of Syria's total area of 185,180 square kilometers. The population of Northeast Syria is around 4 million people, accounting for approximately 18% of Syria's total population, which is estimated at around 22 million people. In the context of Northeastern Syria, communities face significant environmental and social challenges resulting from ongoing conflict and natural disasters. The region has experienced substantial loss of agricultural land due to continuous fighting, leading to decreased agricultural production and increased poverty among farmers (FAO, 2020). Communities suffer from severe shortages of clean water, with an estimated 30% of households lacking access to safe drinking water (UNICEF, 2021), which leads to the spread of diseases and increased health risks.

Furthermore, lack of water and changes in climate have resulted in increased soil salinity in some areas, negatively impacting agriculture and reducing productivity (World Bank, 2018). It is noteworthy that there is a difference in the level of damage and drought among three geographical areas in Northeastern Syria. While the Euphrates River provides fresh water sources in the Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates, Al-Hasakah governorate suffers from water cuts from the Khabur River and other sources due to Turkish government policies, making it the most affected by environmental and climatic destruction. The region also suffers from a severe lack of healthcare, with reports indicating that 70% of health facilities are not fully operational due to the conflict (WHO, 2021), affecting the population's ability to access necessary medical treatment and care. As agricultural production declines, many residents find themselves compelled to seek alternative livelihoods, exacerbating their economic hardships (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2022). These factors reflect the difficult situation faced by communities in Northeastern Syria and highlight the urgent need to develop strategies to enhance resilience and promote sustainability in the region.

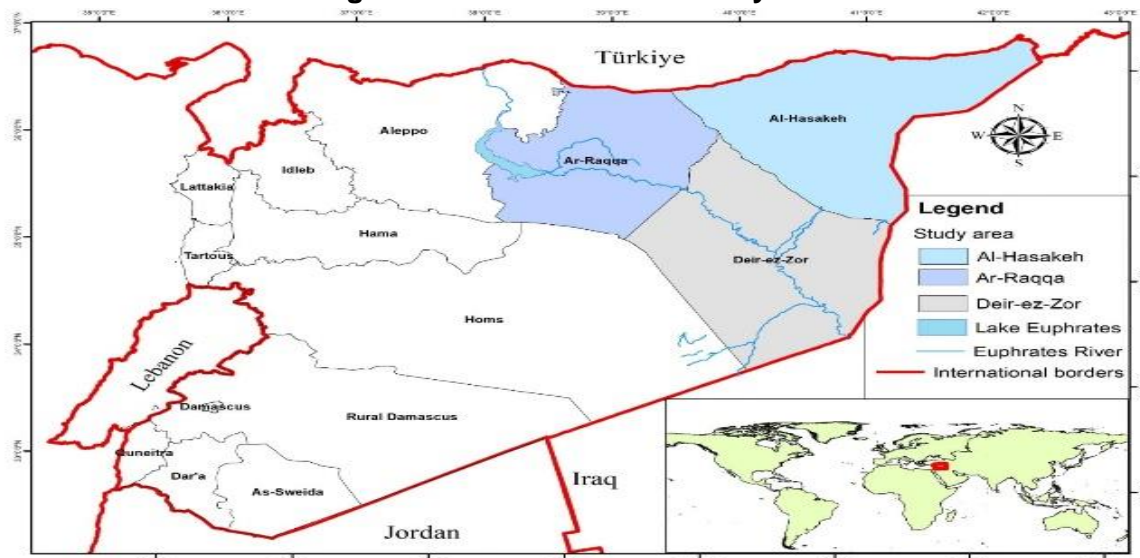
### **Materials and Methodology**

To improve the quality of systematic review reporting in healthcare and other fields, Higgins et al. (2021) provided a revised set of guidelines for enhancing meta-analyses and systematic reviews. Higgins et al. (2021) define a systematic review as a review of a well-defined question using systematic and explicit methods to critically identify, select, evaluate, and collect data from relevant research. The process follows a flowchart consisting of four stages:

Identification, Screen in, Eligibility, Inclusion Criteria. By using a robust and reproducible approach, the likelihood of biases that may affect iterative reviews can be minimized (Raad & Burke, 2018). The structured methodology of systematic reviews is applicable to both natural and social sciences and has increasingly been used to map and summarize existing knowledge (Ford & Pearce, 2010) and identify research gaps (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). While most systematic reviews have been conducted in healthcare fields, their use has expanded to other disciplines, including the study of climate change adaptation (Berrang-Ford et al., 2011; Antwi-Agyei et al., 2018; Shepard et al., 2011; Gleick, 2014; Kelley et al., 2015). Highlighted studies on the impacts of climate change in Syria include : (Gleick, P. H. (2014), Kelley, C. P., et al. (2015), Selby, J., et al. (2017), and De Châtel, F. (2014)) Given the significant impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, it is crucial to explore not only the environmental aspects but also the economic and social dimensions of adaptation strategies. Incorporating these aspects can enhance our understanding of the overall impacts and the effectiveness of these strategies (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). This systematic review aims to address the following key research questions:

1. How prevalent is maladaptation in climate change adaptation projects in Northeast Syria?
2. What barriers to adaptation have been identified in the region?
3. To what extent is the ecosystem-based approach (EBA), which incorporates local communities and their knowledge, being adopted in Syria?
4. Are there gender differences regarding the impacts of climate change and adaptive capacities, and how are these differences being addressed in climate change adaptation projects in Syria?

**Figure 01: Location of the Study Area**



## Document Selection

Definition Phase: The research was conducted from August 15 to October 10, 2024, using the Scopus and Web of Science databases. Google Scholar was not used due to concerns about citation accuracy (Falagas et al., 2008). The study focused exclusively on peer-reviewed articles to ensure that the selected papers met the research criteria. The search targeted publications from January 2, 2014, to October 5, 2024. The year 2014 was chosen as a starting point due to the release of the fifth assessment report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which extensively addressed the importance of maladaptation in the environment. Keywords such as "adaptation," "climate change," "Syria," and "Northeast Syria" were used in titles, keywords, and abstracts. Additionally, the terms "maladaptation" and Syria were included. Although there is an inevitable element of bias in literature reviews, this bias

can be significantly reduced by using systematic methods with clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (Smith et al., 2020). In this study, the following criteria were adopted for including studies:

1. Peer Review: The study must have undergone review by other researchers in the field.
2. Language: Only studies published in English and Arabic were included.
3. Date: The targeted studies were published between January 2, 2014, and October 5, 2024.
4. Content: The study should address issues of climate change adaptation or maladaptation in the context of Syria or Northeast Syria.

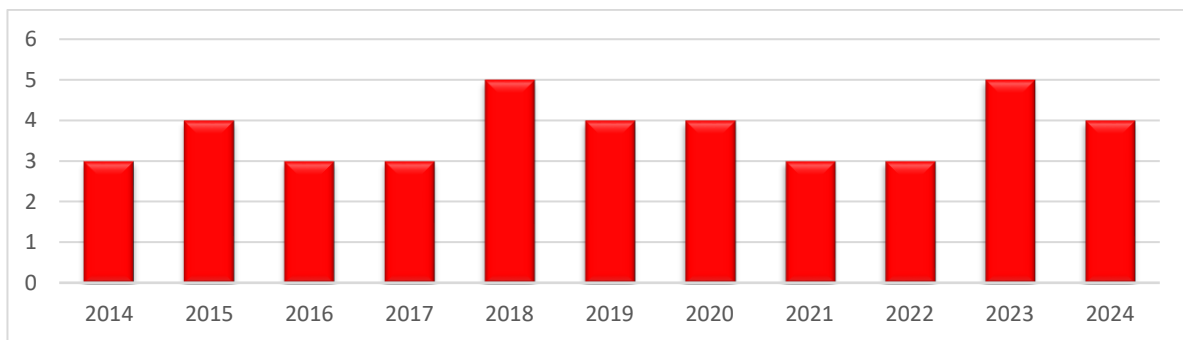
Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded, as well as gray literature, which may have led to the omission of other studies that could have provided greater depth to the analysis. Google Scholar was also excluded because it may contain unreliable or inaccurate references, which could affect the quality of the extracted data.

## Results

### Summary of the Selected Articles

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of publication years for studies in the systematic review from 2014 to 2024. This figure shows a lack of a clear upward trend in the number of studies published during this period. Despite the fact that the issue of maladaptation to climate change has begun to receive increasing attention in recent years, as noted by Porter et al. (2022), this awareness has not been rendered into a significant increase in research directed toward the Northeastern context, particularly within the Syrian framework. The analysis reveals a noticeable deficiency in studies addressing maladaptation in Northeastern Syria, with this topic covered in very few research articles. This indicates a weak understanding of the various dimensions of the environmental challenges associated with climate change in this sensitive region (Hassan & Zadan, 2022).

**Figure 02: Publication by year**



Research findings regarding Northeastern Syria indicate a significant gap in studies focusing on the impacts of climate change, particularly in areas such as Qamishli and Raqqa. This research gap hinders our comprehensive understanding of the environmental challenges faced by these regions, which include negative impacts on water resources, agriculture, and population displacement. Figure 02. Qamishli and Raqqa interact with diverse ecosystems, including desert and aquatic environments, making them more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. For instance, Raqqa heavily relies on irrigation for its agriculture; however, ongoing conflict and its repercussions have aggravated drought issues, significantly affecting agricultural production and food security. In Qamishli, the persistent conflict increases pressures on water and environmental resources, complicating adaptation efforts and limiting the community's ability to cope with climatic changes. Therefore, these dynamics highlight the urgent need for further research to understand the impacts of climate change in these areas

and to develop effective strategies for adaptation and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

**Figure 03: Number of Studies by Districts**

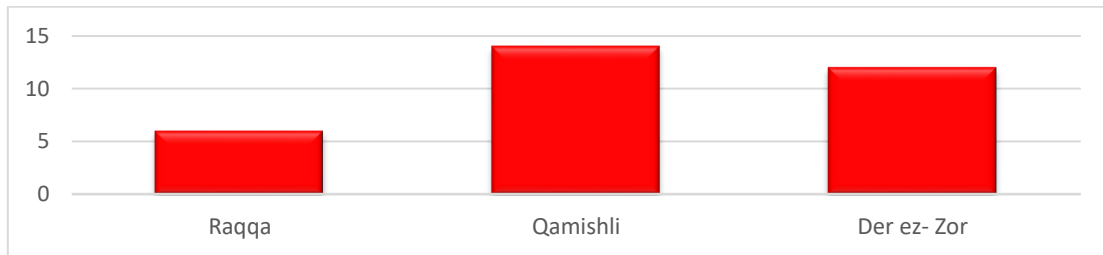
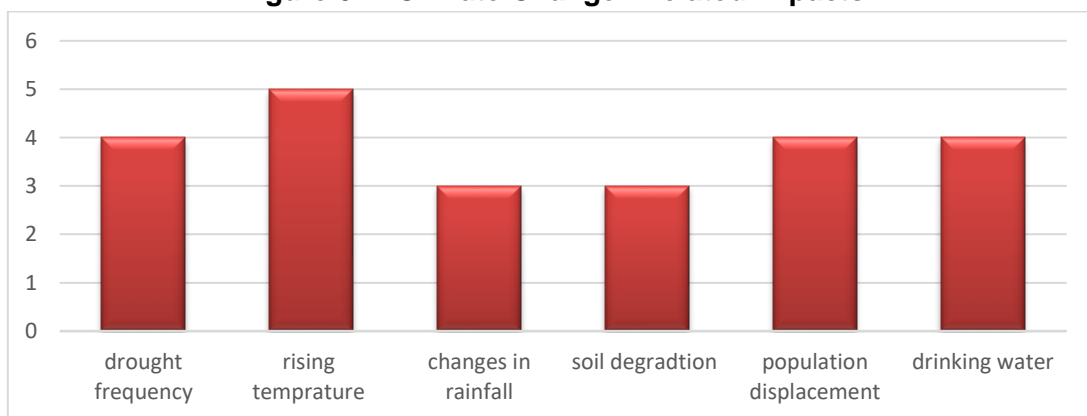


Figure 4 illustrates the diverse climatic impacts revealed by the systematic review. As shown, the main drivers of climate stress in Northeast Syria are the increasing frequency of drought (Al-Hassan et al., 2019) and rising temperatures. The impact of drought not only leads to crop loss and decreased agricultural production but also results in population displacement and loss of income (Darwish, 2020). This displacement can worsen social and economic issues in the region, as displaced individuals face challenges in accessing essential services and resources. The problem of water scarcity is significantly heightened due to climate changes, with groundwater levels expected to decline markedly during the dry season (Saleh, 2021). As agricultural fields turn into barren land, livelihoods are at greater risk (Al-Hassan, 2018). Here, it becomes essential for local policies to adopt effective adaptation measures, including improved water resource management and the development of sustainable farming techniques.

The impacts of other climate change factors, such as changes in rainfall patterns and rising temperatures, require an immediate response in the Jazira region. This response should focus on enhancing local capacities for adaptation through investment in water infrastructure and raising awareness about drought-resistant farming methods. Achieving this necessitates cooperation between local governments, communities, and international actors, thereby enhancing the ability to confront climate challenges and achieve food security.

**Figure 04 : Climate Change – related Impacts**

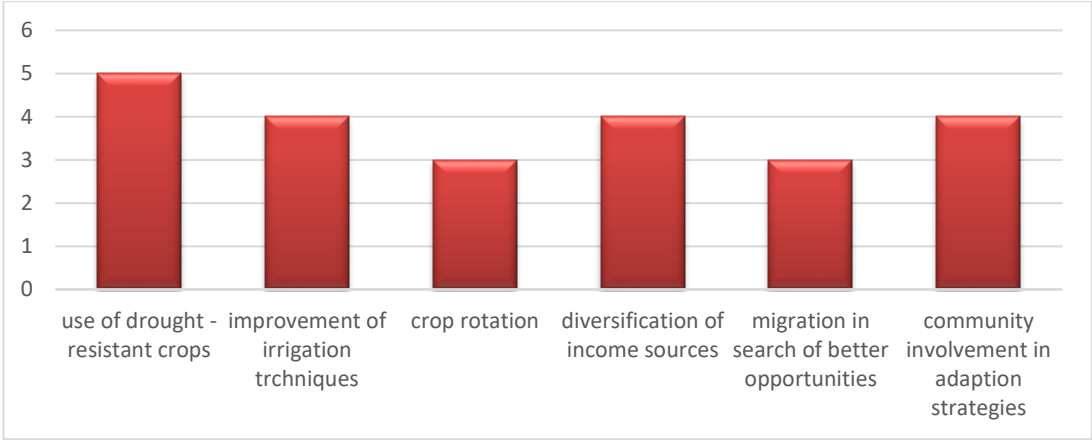


The various forms analyzed reveal the different adaptation measures adopted by the population in Northeastern Syria to address environmental challenges. Among the most prominent of these measures are modifications to agricultural practices, such as the use of pesticides and fertilizers, as well as crop intensification and crop rotation (Al-Ali & Al-Jubouri, 2021). Migration to urban areas in search of job opportunities is also a common strategy in rural areas, especially in light of the scarcity of local livelihoods. This dynamic particularly affects gender equality, as there is a notable trend of male migration (Al-Qadir, 2019). In

Northeastern Syria, research indicates that farmers have begun adopting new adaptation measures, such as improving irrigation techniques and using drought-resistant crops, but these efforts remain limited due to complex economic and political conditions (Khamis, 2021). Despite the limited references to community-based adaptation measures in Northeastern Syria, the cases observed focus on ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA). These strategies encourage local communities to actively participate in developing adaptation plans that address their unique needs (Bader & al-Ikhsas, 2020).

The analysis reveals significant research gaps regarding how climate change adaptation measures impact the residents of Northeastern Syria. It also highlights the importance of examining the barriers to adaptation, the necessity of integrating gender considerations, and the need for a comprehensive approach that responds to local community needs (World Bank, 2020; FAO, 2022).

**Figure 05: The Most Common Measures**



An ecosystem-based adaptation approach enhances community engagement rather than imposing top-down measures on affected parties. Therefore, it is essential for research and policies to focus on developing strategies that encourage local community capacity to adapt to climate changes, in line with their specific social and economic contexts. Figure No 6.

**Discussion**

**Maladaptation:**

According to Joule et al. (2016), maladaptation is defined as the result of a deliberate adaptation policy or measure that leads to negative outcomes for the targeted actors or other actors. Maladaptation can lead to three different outcomes: 1) rebound vulnerability, where adaptation measures increase the vulnerability of one party by increasing exposure or sensitivity, or by reducing adaptive capacity; 2) transformed vulnerability, where vulnerability shifts to external parties; and 3) erosion of sustainable development, leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions and leaving negative impacts on environmental conditions and/or social and economic values.

In the context of Syria, Fawzi (2019) notes that climate change significantly affects agricultural production, increasing the challenges faced by farmers. Moreover, Maqbesi and Elzait (2020) discuss the impact of climate change on water resources in the region, which complicates water management under increasingly unstable conditions. Sovakol and Lenier (2015) identified four different types of maladaptation outcomes. The annex: refers to the process of transferring assets or responsibilities from public entities to private entities, which may involve the appropriation of public administration functions or privatization. Exclusion: is

understood as preventing or hindering stakeholders from participating in decision-making and influencing the political agenda. The third type of maladaptation outcome is encroachment, where adaptation measures aimed at enhancing human resilience negatively impact natural areas, species, and ecosystems. Finally, entrenchment, which leads to increased social and economic inequality by diminishing the power of already marginalized groups, such as women and minorities, for instance, through the destruction of livelihoods or the entrenchment of wealth. Northeast Syria is facing the consequences of maladaptation due to climate change and environmental challenges. These consequences encompass several key areas, as outlined below:

1. **Impact on Food Security:** Deteriorating environmental conditions, including water scarcity and climate change, have significantly reduced agricultural production. For example, the region has recorded a decline in wheat and barley production, making it increasingly difficult to secure food needs for households (Economic and Social Research Center for the Middle East, 2022). This has led to an increased reliance on humanitarian aid, threatening sustainable food security in the region (FAO, 2021).
2. **Migration and Displacement:** Deteriorating living conditions due to climate change have forced many residents to migrate to other areas in search of better opportunities. This displacement has significantly affected the demographic composition, increasing pressures on resources in host areas (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Studies indicate that displacement may lead to increased competition for essential services such as education and healthcare, worsening social tensions (World Bank, 2020).
3. **Public Health:** Maladaptation to environmental conditions can lead to disease outbreaks. For example, flooding resulting from heavy rains may contribute to the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera (World Health Organization, 2022). This situation places additional pressure on the local health system, which is already suffering from challenges arising from ongoing conflict and lack of resources.
4. **Social Conflicts:** The decline of natural resources, such as water and agricultural land, may heighten conflicts among local communities. For instance, conflicts have arisen due to competition over limited water resources, illustrating how maladaptation can lead to insecurity and instability (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021). Research shows that conflicts over natural resources aggravate humanitarian conditions in the region.
5. **Infrastructure Degradation:** The region is suffering from the destruction of infrastructure due to harsh climatic conditions. Climate change has impacted roads and transportation, making it increasingly difficult to access markets and essential services (World Bank, 2021). This degradation contributes to exacerbating economic and social challenges and affects local communities' ability to adapt to changing conditions.

In Northeast Syria, Khan (2020) addresses how climate changes affect agricultural practices, leading to increased reliance on unsustainable farming methods. Furthermore, Said and Talab (2022) enumerate the impact of climate change on water scarcity in the region, as climate pressures intensify challenges related to water security. These maladaptation outcomes stem specifically from three broad factors: infrastructure, institutional, and behavioral (Schipper 2020). The risks threatening other points manifest in institutional maladaptation in how economic agents interact with one another. For instance, it has been found that farmers with climate insurance worry less about drought-resistant crops and agricultural techniques, as insurance makes them less aware of a state of ethical weakness. Behavioral maladaptation



occurs when people make decisions to adapt to the climate. In the context of a labor shortage for harvesting, maladaptation outcomes in Syria can be classified into two types: maladaptation resulting from government actions (infrastructure and institutional) in response to specific climate pressures (such as drought and floods) and maladaptation arising from actions taken by livelihoods directly affected by climate change. For example, government policies related to water distribution may worsen water scarcity issues, increasing the vulnerability of local communities and restricting their ability to adapt to climate changes. In this context, negative transformations in livelihoods in Syria can be considered a direct result of climate change, as research highlights the increase in social and economic tensions arising from the consequences of climate change, such as displacement and rising poverty (Krause 2017).

### **Barriers to Adaptation**

Distinguishing between Adaptation Limits and Barriers, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has defined adaptation limits as: “conditions or factors that make adaptation ineffective as a response to climate change and are largely insurmountable” (Adger et al. 2007). Limits are generally viewed as environmental and physical, or economic and technological, but Adger et al. (2000) also pointed out that societal limits to adaptation exist in the form of values, ethics, risk, knowledge, and culture. Limits are absolute because they represent a threshold beyond which current ecosystems, species, and land use cannot continue (Moser 2010). On the other hand, adaptation barriers refer to obstacles that can be overcome through changes in institutions; resources, land use, and so on (Moser & Ekstrom 2010). What might appear to be limits, especially social limits, are often barriers that can be overcome with political will and the necessary resources (Adger et al. 2009). Therefore, questioning whether an obstacle is a barrier and whether it can be overcome is often crucial for advancing the adaptation process (Moser & Ekstrom 2010).

In its latest assessment report, the IPCC identified seven different types of barriers to adaptation: governance (adverse political structure), social (risk aversion and cultural values), institutional (lack of coordination and prioritization processes), behavioral (psychological distress from attachment to place), financial (limited resources for adaptation), structural (increased exposure due to inadequate infrastructure), and technical (lack of access to adaptation technologies) (Poriner et al. 2022).

### **Governance and Institutional Barriers**

In Northeast Syria, the region suffers from weak institutional infrastructure and a lack of coordination in natural resource management, especially in light of continuing conflicts. The 2020 report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlights that ongoing struggles hamper the ability to implement climate adaptation plans, and unstable land control affects the effectiveness of environmental governance. Governance and institutional barriers have been mentioned in several studies that addressed the impact of conflicts on climate adaptation.

### **Social Barriers**

Many studies on Syria indicate that social and cultural values may form a barrier to adaptation. In Northeast Syria, rural communities are relatively conservative, making it difficult to integrate women and youth into adaptation initiatives. A study by Saleh, R. (2021) examined the influence of struggles on social structures in rural areas of Syria and discussed the social obstacles faced by local populations in adapting to climate change.

### **Natural Barriers to Adaptation**

In Northeast Syria, natural barriers also play a significant role in limiting the region's ability to adjust to climate change. The region is prone to natural phenomena such as droughts,

desertification, and soil erosion, which have been intensified by rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall. These natural barriers compound the effects of human-induced challenges, making adaptation efforts more difficult.

For instance, a study by Al-Hassan (2018) noted that prolonged drought periods in Northeast Syria have led to significant reductions in water availability for both agricultural and domestic use. This has intensified the degradation of arable land, contributing to desertification and the decline of agricultural productivity. The loss of fertile soil and water resources creates a natural obstacle to applying effective climate adaptation strategies. Moreover, natural disasters such as floods and sandstorms, which have become more frequent due to climate change, create additional risks for local communities. These events not only damage infrastructure but also obstruct the long-term sustainability of adaptation efforts, as resources are frequently diverted towards disaster recovery rather than proactive adaptation planning.

### **Financial Barriers**

Reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2019 indicate that widespread poverty in Northeast Syria reduces the capacity of populations to adapt to climate changes. Limited financial resources make it difficult for local communities to implement effective adaptation strategies, and long-term wars have further deteriorated the local economy.

### **Structural Barriers**

In rural areas of Northeast Syria, structural problems include poor water resource management and a reduction in arable land due to increasing desertification and drought. A study by Al-Ahmad, K. (2020) on degraded lands in Northeast Syria found that the loss of arable land due to drought and desertification reinforces structural barriers.

### **Technical Barriers**

Reports indicate that farmers in Northeast Syria face a lack of technical knowledge to cope with climate changes, including limited access to modern irrigation techniques or drought-resistant crop varieties. A report by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) discussed the technical barriers faced by farmers in Northeast Syria.

These natural barriers, combined with the governance, social, financial, structural, and technical challenges, make the adaptation process in Northeast Syria highly complex, requiring a multilayered approach to overcome both human and environmental obstacles.

### **Ecosystem-Based Adaptation**

As previously mentioned, one reason for poor adaptation in Northeast Syria is that projects or policies are often applied without effective engagement of local communities and without considering the local geographic and environmental context, which may increase risks (Hassan et al. 2022). In contrast, integrating biodiversity into environmental adaptation plans shows greater resilience and cost-effectiveness. Ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) in Northeast Syria is a flexible approach that helps lessen the impacts of climate change and protect traditional livelihoods in rural and agricultural communities. This approach is defined as the use of natural resources to maintain the resilience of local ecosystems in adapting to climate change (Al-Shammari et al. 2023).

The sustainable use of ecosystem services and biodiversity in the region underscores the importance of environmental management in enhancing adaptive capacity (Youssef et al. 2021). One of the main advantages of this approach is its ability to preserve local agricultural production by enhancing land management and wetland areas, and it also contributes to reducing reliance on costly infrastructure techniques (Al-Saleh et al. 2022). Environmental administration in Northeast Syria requires the engagement of local stakeholders to ensure a

better understanding of livelihood challenges and vulnerabilities in a changing climate (Jumaa et al. 2022). Available adaptation methods in the region include planting drought-resistant crops, such as barley and wheat, which enhances food security, and utilizing sustainable irrigation systems, like drip irrigation, to improve water use efficiency. Additionally, reforestation of degraded areas is crucial for enhancing resilience to climate changes. Traditional water resource management plays an important role by maintaining techniques such as small dams and ancient wells. Restoring wetlands is essential for preserving biodiversity and improving water quality, while sustainable urban planning contributes to creating green spaces and reducing flood impacts. Finally, training and community awareness are integral parts of adaptation efforts, as educational programs for farmers on how to cope with environmental challenges are provided, and infrastructure is improved to enhance its ability to withstand climate changes (Youssef et al. 2021). Despite these strategies, significant challenges for adaptation remain in Northeast Syria, including lack of funding and technical support, as well as political instability. Additionally, government policies and the lack of comprehensive planning for environmental adaptation hinder communities' ability to effectively implement adaptation strategies. (Al-Saleh et al. 2022).

## Conclusions

The systematic review indicates that **Northeastern Syria faces significant challenges due to ongoing droughts** affecting water and agriculture resources. This drought places additional pressure on the region's inhabitants who rely on farming to secure their basic needs. Studies have shown that reduced rainfall and rising temperatures lead to deteriorating crop yields, increasing food insecurity and threatening livelihoods. Additionally, **women in Northeastern Syria face unique challenges related to climate change**. As drought intensifies and resources diminish, women bear the greatest burden in securing food and water for their families, increasing their workload. Furthermore, the unending conflict deprive women of a proper access to education and the resources necessary for empowerment, intensifying gender inequality and making their participation in adaptation efforts more difficult. Moreover, **the conditions resulting from conflict complicate efforts to adapt to climate change** in Northeastern Syria. Residents suffer from the consequences of dislocation and loss of infrastructure, making it difficult for them to access the necessary means for adaptation. Due to the conflict, tensions surrounding natural resources escalate, further worsening environmental and economic problems. The results also indicate a significant risk of **maladaptation in Northeastern Syria** due to a lack of attention from policymakers to local communities and their traditional knowledge. These barriers hinder the implementation of effective measures, as local needs are overlooked. Additionally, the population's reliance on ecosystem services for their livelihoods makes them more vulnerable to climate change risks. The review emphasizes that **the ongoing conflict has led to evident environmental degradation**, obstructing access to natural resources. Pressures on ecosystems are increasing due to unsustainable resource use, emphasizing the need for effective adaptation strategies. Finally, the findings underscore the importance of **enhancing active participation from local communities in climate change adaptation efforts**. Projects must be grounded in an understanding of local particularities and address the crises stemming from conflict. An ecosystem-based approach can contribute to greater sustainability and decrease the dangers of maladaptation, thereby improving the economic and social situation of the residents in Northeastern Syria.

The study's findings provide a comprehensive view of how local and international policies interact with climate change challenges, highlighting the importance of adapting these policies to the unique climate challenges of each region. The research shows that strengthening cooperation between government sectors, civil society, and international organizations is

essential to achieving effective climate adaptation strategies. One prominent political implication is that implementing comprehensive adaptation policies can enhance community stability and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change, such as environmental migration and economic effects. The study also emphasizes the role of governments in allocating necessary resources to strengthen local capacities, particularly in communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.

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