



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Report on the National Accounts
Compilation Mission (September 2–4, 2025)

OCTOBER 2025

PREPARED BY

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Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Abbreviations and Acronyms	5
Executive Summary	6
Recommendations	7
I. Overview of Technical Assistance Needs	8
II. Methodological Review.....	9
III. Work Plan to Improve 2022–24 Annual GDP Estimates	13
Tables	
Table 1. Detailed Recommendations	7
Table 2. Methodological Review	9
Annex	
1. Officials met During the Mission.....	14

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
METAC	Middle East Regional Technical Assistance Center
SUTs	Supply and Use Tables
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Executive Summary

At the request of the Syrian authorities, a mission was conducted in Beirut, Lebanon, from September 2 to 4, 2025, by Gregory Legoff, Real Sector Statistics Advisor at the IMF Middle East Regional Technical Assistance Center (METAC). The mission reviewed the work plan to improve annual GDP estimates for 2022–24 and made recommendations to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

The initial phase of the project requires a comprehensive review of data sources and methods used for the compilation of recent annual GDP estimates by December 2025. Immediate efforts will improve GDP estimates for 2022–24. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) has developed a workplan to enhance national accounts, coordinating with METAC on methodological improvements. To ensure data consistency, fill gaps, and reduce future revisions, compiling simple supply and use tables (SUTs) before finalizing new estimates is recommended. Postponing the compilation of SUTs after the compilation and release of GDP estimates may require later revisions that would impact users and the CBS credibility. A feasibility study will assess whether basic SUTs can be compiled by December 2025 or if a commodity flow analysis should focus only on key GDP components. Compiling simple SUTs would be preferable.

The second phase of the project after December 2025 will focus on medium-term improvements and capacity development, building on the foundation established in the initial stage. This will involve targeted training for CBS staff on advanced national accounts methodologies, enhancing data integration from various administrative sources, and developing robust processes for ongoing quality assurance. Additionally, the feasibility of a comprehensive rebase of the national accounts will be carefully assessed, considering the outcomes and lessons learned from the first phase of the project. The list of officials met during the mission is shown in the Annex 1.

Priority recommendations

Target Date	Priority Recommendation	Responsible Institution
October 2025	Assess the feasibility of compiling SUTs.	METAC - CBS
November 2025	Review revised GDP estimates for 2022-24 and prepare the dissemination of data and metadata.	METAC - CBS
December 2025	Disseminate annual GDP estimates for 2022-24.	CBS

Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to assist in reviewing annual national accounts estimates. Additional technical assistance will be provided for the successful implementation of this work plan.

Table 1. Detailed Recommendations

Priority	Action/Milestone	Target Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Implementation Status
M	Review estimates for agriculture and mining.	October 2025		Ongoing
H	Assess the feasibility of compiling simple SUTs.	October 2025		Ongoing
M	Compile SUTs for 2023 or alternatively develop commodity flow approaches for key components of GDP.	October 2025		Not started
H	Review annual GDP estimates for 2022-24.	November 2025		Ongoing
H	Prepare the dissemination of data and metadata.	November 2025		Not started
H	Disseminate annual GDP estimates for 2022-24.	December 2025		Not started

H: High, M: Medium, L: Low

I. Overview of Technical Assistance Needs

1. **Data quality and timeliness are impacted by the lack of key underlying source data.** There is a need for methodological enhancements, capacity building in national accounts statistics compilation methods, and improved utilization of administrative data sources. It is recommended that revised statistical data be published in the coming months to reflect these advancements.
2. **A brief review was conducted during the June 2025 mission, which included the participation from the IMF headquarters.** This assessment identified budgetary constraints related to source data and skill gaps resulting from staff turnover as well as institutional changes that could affect the CBS. Technical assistance on national accounts statistics will be provided exclusively by UNESCWA and the IMF. The CBS currently employs nine data compilers, who are responsible for collecting, processing, and validating the national accounts statistics. Financial and security constraints limit the ability to conduct large-scale or frequent surveys. Improvements scheduled for the coming months will use current source data to enhance methodology, geographic and activity coverage, and data consistency checks.
3. **The first phase of the project is the revision of national accounts, being carried out in collaboration with UNESCWA and the IMF-METAC until December 2025.** This project encompasses the assessment of GDP estimates from 2022 to 2024 in current prices, followed by a second phase beginning in 2026, during which GDP estimates for 2010 to 2024 will be reviewed, potentially involving a rebase of the national accounts. The decision to rebase national accounts will be made after the review of GDP estimates to be conducted by December 2025. Concurrently, there is an emphasis on developing institutional capacities.
4. **The second phase, after December 2025, will also include an evaluation of the alignment of GDP estimates with the *System of National Accounts 2008* and the assessment of regional GDP estimates.** Preparations are also being made for the transition to the *System of National Accounts 2025* framework. The Head of National Accounts at the CBS attended a workshop in Abu Dhabi from September 9–11, 2025, organized by UNESCWA and the Arab Monetary Fund with METAC's support which focused on the *System of National Accounts 2025*.
5. **It is recommended to focus on annual estimates at this stage and explore indicators to track quarterly activity if necessary.** The review of annual GDP estimates for 2022–24 is ongoing. The calculation of quarterly GDP estimates has been deemed too challenging within the given timeframe. Should there be a need for quarterly data, the CBS may explore the provision of economic activity indicators as an interim measure, recognizing that the development of comprehensive quarterly GDP estimates would necessitate further time and resources.

II. Methodological Review

6. It is recommended to produce estimates for provinces outside government control, as well as to improve the coverage of the non-observed economy. The government-controlled region remains the most significant economically but broadening the coverage to encompass all regions of Syria is important. The UNESCWA is currently investigating the possible use of satellite imagery for data collection. However, the application of these images to national accounts compilation is a longer-term endeavor and will not be immediately available in 2025. Notable shifts in the economic landscape are anticipated for 2025, whereas changes for the years 2022–24 are expected to be more moderate. The informal sector is projected to expand in the context of ongoing economic challenges.

7. Survey samples remain small, though some surveys receive financial support from international organizations. The primary survey focus is on population. In 2026, the United Nations Development Programme may fund an economic survey, and a household income and expenditure survey. The previous household income and expenditure survey dates to 2009. Additionally, a labor force statistics questionnaire is planned. The current statistical base year is 2000. While the CBS Facebook page is currently not updated, data compiled up to 2023 should be published in the coming months.

8. Government finance statistics involve both general government and local administration budgets. The Ministry of Finance supplies data for the general government, while municipalities and governorates provide their own revenue figures. Wages and salaries are used to estimate value added in national accounts. Independent budgets exist for local authority, but additional funds come from the central government. The data compilation is complicated by around 1,000 municipalities. Although a single budget initiative is planned, it has not yet begun. Discussions continue about defining the government sector, with the goal of unifying the Syrian government administration. The Ministry of Finance intends to adopt the *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014* in the future, but its implementation is currently pending.

Table 2. Methodological Review

GDP component	Source data	Comment	Expected changes
Agriculture	The Ministry of Agriculture publishes a bulletin detailing quantities and prices. While fisheries and forestry estimates are included, they constitute a minor portion of overall agricultural activity. There are challenges associated with accurately estimating intermediate consumption. Private enterprises account for approximately 95 percent of production; however,	The Ministry of Agriculture's statistics do not account for subsistence farming. A commodity flow approach should be used.	Better coverage of activities, including for the non-observed activities.

GDP component	Source data	Comment	Expected changes
	government-operated farms also exist.		
Mining	The Ministry of Oil and Mining previously oversaw this activity. Currently, three ministries have been consolidated into a single Ministry of Energy. Comprehensive data is available, and the supervisory authority maintains access to these records.	Crude oil is refined and exported.	
Manufacturing	Market producers are surveyed annually, with samples ranging from 6,000 to 15,000 units and including small entities. The survey spans most of the activities, potentially capturing 65% of production across four governorates. State-owned companies may account for 50% of total output.	Check with the tax office or chamber of commerce to confirm large units estimates. Drug production, which was sanctioned five years ago, is now prohibited.	Changes are expected due to additional source data but only 70 percent of activities might be covered.
Electricity	There are both private and public electricity producers. One producer is responsible for distributing electricity. Electricity is also exported. Data regarding private producers who sell at higher prices is unavailable.	Estimates could be made based on use.	Electricity produced by small generators should be estimated based on assumptions, average rates, and the number of hours used.
Water supply	Estimates are based on data from governorates. Both public and private companies supply water.		
Transport services	The Ministry of Transport database includes informal land transport		Assumptions may be applied to improve the activity coverage.

GDP component	Source data	Comment	Expected changes
	but lacks data between governorates. Air transport is included, though one company does not report.		
Communication and IT	Large corporations are involved in this activity.	Business accounts should be used. Possible data gap on software developers.	Possible revisions depending on the availability of better source data.
Trade	There are a lot of informal activities. Some margin ratios are applied to supply to derive trade margins. Prices surveys were conducted on an annual basis back to 2022. Prices are regulated by the government for some commodities.		Retail trade estimates are based on indicators rather than observations from data collection programs. Large changes are expected.
Accommodation and food services.	The Ministry of Tourism previously conducted surveys focused on large hotels and restaurants. Due to the decline in tourism, these establishments have received only a limited number of local consumers in recent periods. However, tourism is now resuming. An annual survey continues for major hotels, collecting data on customer numbers and duration of stays. Estimates may be available for restaurants.	Investigate the possible use of labor force statistics as a source of data.	
Construction	Data is sourced from planning administration and annual private sector surveys based on permits. Capital expenditure is tracked,		Possible revisions depending due to methodological improvements.

GDP component	Source data	Comment	Expected changes
	execution stages are monitored, and field prices are collected. Non-licensed construction is estimated using ratios, while other methods use building material input data.		
Real estate	Data are limited. The method currently used applies 10 percent to private building values to estimate rent, including imputed rentals.		Results from the 2024 rental survey may be used.
Finance and insurance	The central bank provides the financial data, and the insurance details are gathered from the supervisory authority. The dataset includes just one insurance company.	Methodologies should be reviewed.	No major change expected.
Central bank			The sum of costs should be used to measure output.
Professional and scientific services	Based on ratios from other activities.	Could explore data availability from government finance statistics.	Possible revisions depending on the availability of better source data.
The consumer price index is unavailable from January to June 2025, with price collection resuming after June. The household survey dates back to 2009.	Partial amendments were made to the consumption basket in 2010.	UNESCWA considered updating the reference year and developed harmonized residential property and machinery price indexes for the region.	

III. Work Plan to Improve 2022–24 Annual GDP Estimates

9. **To strengthen data consistency, address information gaps, and minimize the likelihood of significant future revisions, it is recommended to compile comprehensive SUTs for establishing new national accounts benchmarks.** This approach enables a systematic reconciliation of economic data, aligning production, expenditure, and income statistics for greater accuracy. Delaying this process until after the release of the 2022–24 GDP estimates may result in substantial revisions, potentially affecting stakeholders and impacting the credibility of the CBS.

10. **Therefore, as part of the improvement work plan, a feasibility study will be initiated in the coming weeks.** This assessment will determine whether simple SUTs can be constructed using available data sources or if a more targeted and limited commodity flow analysis should be employed for selected key components of GDP, such as agriculture and mining. Compiling simple SUTs would be preferable but this may not be possible due to resource constraints. The study will consider factors like data availability, staff resources, technical expertise, and the timeline for implementation.

11. **In addition, statistical capacities will be developed for CBS staff, ensuring that they have the necessary skills to maintain and update the SUTs as new data and methodologies become available.** These efforts are expected to improve the credibility and transparency of national accounts, ultimately supporting better-informed economic policy decisions and fostering greater trust among data users.

Annex 1. Officials Met During the Mission

Name	Role	Institution
Shamil Rateb Badran	Planning and Statistics Authority, Assistant Head of Authority, Director of National Accounts	CBS
Mohammad Kader Akeel	Planning and Statistics Authority, Directorate of National Accounts, Head of the Division of Income and Production	CBS
Hames Alwadi Jaber Mohamad	Planning and Statistics Authority, Directorate of National Accounts, Head of the Financial Statistics Division	CBS
Rasha Ali Moalla	Planning and Statistics Authority, Directorate of National Accounts, Division of Income and Production	CBS
Mhd Belal Abdullah Aboarshid	Planning and Statistics Authority, Directorate of National Accounts, Financial Statistics Division	CBS
Tarik H. Alami	Director, Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division (ECRI)	UNESCWA
Wafa Aboul Hosn	Chief of Economic Statistics Statistics, Information Society and Technology Cluster	UNESCWA
Majed Skaini	Regional Program Manager, Statistician Economic Statistics, Statistics Division	UNESCWA
Amir Hadziomeragic	Government Finance Statistics and Public Sector Debt Statistics Advisor	METAC
Christel Hanna	Economist	METAC