

Strengthening the Role of Syrian Civil Society in the context of Education and Livelihood Sectors

Workshop Report

Istanbul- 5-7th December 2015

By: The Humanitarian Forum



Introduction:

The Humanitarian Forum (THF) is a network of humanitarian and charitable organisations that include Muslim, western, multilateral and national NGOs. We improve the lives of those in need by developing relations between humanitarian actors. We do this by building trust and advocating for quality humanitarian action. Our organisation grew out of a belief that humanitarian work be carried out by a diverse set of humanitarian responders who commit to working together in common areas of co-operation. THF was founded on the shared principles that emerged after key debates held in 2005-2006 during workshops in 15 countries. Today, we continue to work internationally, bringing together humanitarian actors together as equals through training and dialogue.

The rising scale of conflict and natural disasters has made it imperative for more effective and efficient delivery of aid. Delays and duplication of efforts can cost lives. To combat this, our stakeholder meetings bring humanitarian organisations, governments, multi laterals, donor representatives and members of affected communities to a safe place where they can discuss how best to improve aid delivery in specific crisis situations. Through these meetings they can connect with peers, exchange information, collaborate with others, learn lessons from similar contexts and stimulate constructive dialogue for improving responses. Below is a list of some of the humanitarian conferences that we have organised:

- **Somalia:** THF held a coordination meeting in February 2012 in London, attended by 100 delegates from 78 international and multilateral humanitarian agencies as well as leading Somali NGOs. We convened regional meetings in Nairobi in 2011 attended by 70 representatives of NGOs and the Red Crescent movement.
- **Yemen:** The Humanitarian Forum held two conferences in Cairo in 2012 and another in London the following year which were attended by humanitarian organisations from Arab countries, the West and multilateral system, as well as Yemeni civil society organisations. They were invited to explore possibilities for addressing urgent humanitarian challenges facing the poorest country in the region.
- **Syria:** THF held two meetings in December 2011 and again in March 2012 in Cairo, attended by 110 participants from over 70 multilateral, international and regional NGOs and UN agencies.

Regional Connections MENA 2014: In 2014 we held two conferences in Amman, Jordan, to address humanitarian partnerships in the MENA region as a whole. The first conference looked specifically at how links between Eastern and Western humanitarians can be developed. The second discussed humanitarian action in the Arab Region. It was attended by representatives of 85 NGOs and multi-lateral organisation.

WHS consultations: Together with partners organisations in 35 countries we organized 39 consultations with nearly 2,000 participants representing national and local humanitarian

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organisations from Asia, MENA, Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The aim of these consultations was to gather data from frontline humanitarian NGOs and put forward their key recommendations for improving the international humanitarian system to the UN before the agenda for the summit in Istanbul in 2016 was finalised. Through these consultations we also aimed to support national NGOs to manage links with government and private sector actors to effectively deliver aid and better serve the community.

We champion accountability, transparency, efficiency and inclusivity in the humanitarian non-governmental sector and encourage the development of NGO networks at the community levels. With this in mind, we worked extensively in Egypt, Yemen, Indonesia and Sudan to support local organisations. We also trained humanitarian leaders for Syria, Indonesia, Libya and Yemen. We believe that Diaspora groups are fundamental to an optimised humanitarian system as they can act as a strong catalyst in the empowering of local communities. To this end, we have spent time over the last 5 years supporting emerging Somali, Yemeni and Syrian Diaspora NGOs based in the UK.

Background:

The Syrian humanitarian crisis is one of the worst crises the world has seen since World War II. It is also among the most complex with a large number of parties involved in the escalation of the situation, especially with the absence of a political solution in the near future. Since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria, approximately 9.3 million people are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million displaced people inside Syria and over 4 million refugees abroad. Humanitarian relief agencies have responded with programmes to provide cash assistance to the most vulnerable families in order to help them survive, but as their numbers increase, so does the need, while the possibility for the crisis to be resolved and for these people to return home is looking less and less likely.

As time goes on, aid is diminishing. Competition for jobs and natural resources, such as land, water, infrastructure, housing and energy in the vulnerable host communities is high. These communities are put under yet more pressure to integrate refugees and maintain their support and hospitality toward them. The situation faced by Syrian refugees requires long-term solutions.

All the reasons mentioned above increase the moral, ethical and institutional responsibility to pause, think, and review before we can effectively strengthen communication and coordination to bring humanitarian work to a new horizon. There is a deep seated need to stimulate a social movement and activate the competencies of the people of Syria.

With this in mind, The Humanitarian Forum organised a consultative meeting in Istanbul on 16th August 2015 with 22 Syrian NGOs. The participants recommended furthering the discussions at a larger consultation with specific focus on education, livelihood and coordination as these three elements, they felt, are currently the most important sectors for with the most potential to create long-term improvement in the lives of Syrian refugees.

The Humanitarian Forum facilitated this larger meeting in Istanbul over three days in early December 2015 with a series of workshops under title 'Strengthening the social movement and activating the self-competencies of the Syrian people in Syria and in the Diaspora'.

Over 70 humanitarian organisations working inside Syria or in neighbouring countries, came together to discuss two key themes:

- The achievements of institutions and organisations during the past five years, paying attention in particular to the successful ways these organisations work.
- The challenges and failures of institutions working in Syria and/or with the diaspora and how to mitigate the impact of these challenges and failures.

We were able to provide a forum for the attendees to have frank, transparent dialogue and allow the exchange of experiences and coordination of future programs.

In this report, the Humanitarian Forum presents the main findings and recommendations proposed by the workshop participants.

Livelihood

The Context:

In Syria more than half of the Syrian people are suffering from extreme poverty and are unable to obtain basic necessities. Millions of people are unemployed, having lost their jobs at the beginning of the crisis. 90% of the people in Syria are expected to be living under the poverty line by the end of 2015, with more than 60% unable to obtain food supplies.¹

Lebanon has taken the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world. In addition to the Syrian refugees, there are high numbers of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees.² The cost of living in Lebanon is extremely high and this is particularly difficult for the Syrians who are used to much lower prices in Syria.³

The suffering of Syrian families in Lebanon and the lack of livelihood opportunities coupled with insufficient revenues and high expenses, means that the families are forced to live in socially unacceptable conditions and that they are struggling to adapt. Many Syrian families are heavily in debt and living in poor conditions with few job opportunities, high levels of frustration and a lack of hope for a better future.

In addition, there is a gap between income and expenses in different regions. To cover this, people are forced to rely on personal savings or borrowing from friends and family. Many Syrian refugees are looking for business opportunities, but without success, as the Lebanese market and economy are weak and unable to accommodate the high numbers of refugees. Many Syrians are highly skilled and suffering because they cannot put their skills to use.⁴

In Jordan, it is indicated that 84% of refugee families are living outside the camps.⁵ UNHCR faces great difficulties in providing basic elements to refugees including shelter, food and health care. Many Syrian refugee families depend entirely on the support they receive from

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Syria four years on: No end in sight Mapping the situation for internally displaced Syrians and refugees after four years of civil war http://acaps.org/img/documents/s-acaps-report-syria-4-years-on_13_march_2015.pdf accessed at 09/10/2015

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Under Pressure an overview of the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on host communities in Lebanon World Vision UK briefing for Members of Parliament http://9bb63f6dda0f744fa444-9471a7fca5768cc513a2e3c4a260910b.r43.cf3.rackcdn.com/files/9914/1141/8705/Under_Pressure_an_overview_of_the_impact_of_the_Syrian_refugee_crisis_on_host_communities_in_Lebanon.pdf accessed at 09/10/2015

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DRC experiences of cash assistance to non-camp refugees in Lebanon and Turkey <http://www.enonline.net/fex/48/drcexperiences> accessed on 09/10/2015

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In Addition To Aid, Syrian Refugees Need Livelihoods www.interaction.org/newsroom/blog/addition-aid-syrian-refugees-need-livelihoods accessed at 09/10/2015

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<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

the Jordanian, Arab and international humanitarian agencies while others are forced to work without permits, as only 10% have been able to obtain the legal permits required. Syrians are competing for jobs with Jordanians who have high levels of training and experience. Studies indicate that Syrian refugees have been forced to resort to doing menial jobs such as buying and selling food and other essential goods, or to borrowing.⁶

In Iraq, more than two hundred thousand Syrians have taken refuge in the country's Kurdistan region and this represents 97% of the total Syrian refugees in Iraq. More than 90% of them are Syrian Kurds.⁷ The government of the province has allowed Syrian refugees to work in Iraqi Kurdistan but there is a noticeable increase day by day in the tension between host communities and refugees whose presence places pressure on the available services.

Income-generating activities currently available to the families of Syrian refugees living in camps in Iraq is not enough to cover their basic needs. A large proportion of refugees have limited or no opportunities to earn money. Those who do not work full time are unable to meet the needs of their families.⁸ The province represents an excellent opportunity for income-generating programmes and the creation of jobs for refugees, especially because there is cooperation from the government in light of the economic potential and the need for employment in the labour market.⁹

In Turkey the vast majority of Syrian refugees live in urban areas on the Syrian-Turkish border. Despite the facilities granted to the refugees in Turkey, work opportunities and services to improve employment are limited.¹⁰ Refugees outside the camps face many challenges, including language barriers, unemployment and lack of social integration, which has led to tensions with local communities.

Some Syrian refugees have been able to find unofficial work but earn less than their Turkish peers, with no access to the legal rights of regular workers. Those who were able to get jobs

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Food Security Situation and Livelihood Intervention Opportunities For Syrians Refugees And Host Communities in North Jordan, <http://www.acted.org/en/food-security-situation-and-livelihood-intervention-opportunities-syrians-refugees-and-host-communit> accessed at 09/10/2015, Survey on the livelihoods of Syrian refugees in Lebanon www.ciaonet.org/catalog/29774 accessed 09/10/2015

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<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

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Syrians contributing to Kurdish economic growth www.fmreview.org/syria/sood-seferis accessed on 09/10/2015

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Syrians contributing to Kurdish economic growth www.fmreview.org/syria/sood-seferis accessed on 09/10/2015

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Needs analysis on Syrian refugees in turkey A Study of Out-of-Camp Refugees in Hatay www.researchgate.net/publication/258167746_NEEDS_ANALYSIS_ON_SYRIAN_REFUGEES_IN_TURKEY_A_Study_of_Out-of-Camp_Refugees_in_Hatay accessed at 09/10/2015

(daily, weekly, or sometimes monthly) often found that they were not paid at the end of the job and are unable to pursue any legal recourse because they do not have the right to work legally in Turkey.

The cost of living in the border provinces has increased. The rental costs and commodity prices have also risen (in some cases by more than 50%). These economic difficulties, along with other social issues undermine social cohesion between refugees and local communities and has naturally led to the prevalence of child labour, begging and other social symptoms of instability.

SWOT Analysis of NGOs Working in Livelihood Sector

At The Humanitarian Forum's conference on 'Strengthening the social movement and activate the self-competencies of the Syrian people in Syria and in the Diaspora', the audience was divided into discussion groups to explore the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to analyse the humanitarian sector's response to this crisis. After lengthy discussions, the groups agreed on a set of recommendations for the livelihood sector. Below are some of the main points:

Strengths

- The ability to influence donor policies to guide further support to the livelihood sector.
- The building of and investing in positive relationships with various stakeholders to further support the sector.
- The ability to gain knowledge of the needs of the market and the ability to translate that into economic feasibility studies.
- The human resources capacity and efficient project management.
- Practices and experiences in the field of livelihood and development that can be developed and built upon to create more effective and efficient models.
- The ability to create livelihood programs that suit the reality of refugees and internally displaced Syrians.
- The ability to mobilize the population's capacity to further support livelihood projects.
- The potential to invest in partnerships and cooperative relations with stable institutions in neighbouring countries.

Weaknesses

- The lack of financial resources available to the sector.
- The limited expertise available.

- Weaknesses on the part of Syrian non-governmental organisations in several factors, mainly:
 - Limited administrative structures.
 - The lack of legal structures.
 - The absence of vision and strategies.
 - Mechanisms are weak in accountability and transparency.

Opportunities:

- The productive capacity of the Syrian society.
- The existence of best practices across the world in the livelihoods sector can emulate them and benefit them.
- The growing interest of donors to support livelihood projects.
- The absence of bureaucratic red tape to create a business.
- An availability of internal and external markets.
- There are opportunities to provide integrated support and integrated projects (i.e. financial support, technical support, marketing etc.)

Threats:

- NGOs which already have limited capacity, are working in a legal vacuum.
- Donors are no longer giving confidently to those affected by the Syrian crisis.
- The impact of anti-terrorism laws.
- Close links between politics and humanitarian aid.
- Donors are usually directed towards relief work and development is neglected.
- There is notable brain drain of skilled labour from regions that need it.
- There is an absence of safe, effective banking systems.
- The infrastructure within Syria is worn out.

Stakeholders Analysis:

The working groups at the conference discussed the roles played by relevant stakeholders and suggested how to activate these roles for greater impact.

Stakeholders	Relationship	Potential ways to activate their roles
Donors (Institutions)	Funding/Partnerships	Adopt policies that support transparency Raise awareness of the issues of concern to the partners Syrian civil society organisations.
Donors (individuals)	Funding	Educate individuals on the sustainability of venture related issues
The Government in Syria	Co-ordination	Keep communication lines open. Raise awareness of the importance of the work of civil society organisations in building Syria.
Beneficiaries	To receive funds that they can use in short-term and long-term, meaningful ways	Involve civil society in all stages of programs from the beginning of needs analysis to the evaluation of the program after its end. Raise community awareness of the important role of civil society and engage in community work.
Banks	Partner	Activating the currency exchange companies as an alternative to the banking sector. Work with civil society organisations and the private sector to find alternatives to the formal banking system.
Private Sector	Partner	Work on developing relationships and gaining the support of the national private sector.
Country experts	Partners / Advisers	Work with experts on research when possible and share results. Create a database of and maintain relationships with experts inside and outside of Syria and divide them according to specialities in areas such as agricultural development and economic empowerment.
The host community	Partners/Beneficiaries	Involve them in programs that target and affect Syrian refugees.

		Ensure that programs targeting Syrian refugees are sensitive to their host communities and acknowledge the difficulties that host communities are also enduring.
The host governments (authorities)	Co-ordination	Use appropriate tools when communicating with host governments such as initiatives launched by international organisations.

Models of Practice

Participants in the sessions reviewed some successful examples of programs carried out by their organisations in previous years and discussed how to apply the experience in other places. The following are some of the successful examples discussed:

Agricultural land reclamation and rehabilitation of residential areas

Using local expertise inside Syria, one of the organisations who participated in the meeting was able to work with displaced people coming from villages and helped them to plant crops that are suitable for storing, such as beans, in their host's gardens. 1000 displaced families benefited from this low cost, sustainable program which can be applied in different places in Syria. The program was able to provide food even during the times of siege.

Installation of artificial limbs for those affected by war and/or in previous employment within their professions

The project targeted 500 of the victims of the war between 16 and 65 years who were given rehabilitation after the installation of artificial limbs. At a cost of about ¼ million dollars, the program was carried out over 5 years. Job opportunities were found for most of the victims.

A national program to support micro-enterprises

One participant talked about a program to support the implementation of micro-projects at a cost of between \$800 to \$1,000 per project. Up to five organisations or partners would share the loan to achieve the greatest benefit to the community. 25 people were trained for two months in loan administration for micro-projects and 7 people were hired to work in project management. The project was successful and 460 beneficiaries who took the loan and were able to repay it at an impressive rate. All loans were settled by the end of the first year. An important lesson learned from this is that we should train staff in recruitment in every aspect of a project.

Teacher Training

Another participant mentioned a project that managed to train 350 (male and female) secondary school certificate holders to teach for a period of 3 months. Those teachers were later distributed to different schools in different areas within Syria. The cost of the program was very low and can be applied in other parts of Syria. It can be developed to cover a wider range of school subjects.

Distribution of sheep to families in the western countryside

One participant's organisation distributed 500 sheep to 100 families. Families selected were chosen from those who included a widow or a disabled person. The families were provided with sheep feed for a continuous period of six months and a veterinary team followed up the project to check the health of the sheep. The project now now to provide a car to collect milk from the beneficiary families and start simple food industries serving the domestic market to provide milk products at a low price.

Education

The context

The provision of education for Syrian pupils is a huge challenge as the crisis enters its fifth year. Before the crisis, school enrolment rates in Syrian primary schools were 100% for male children and 98% for females. At secondary school level, the enrolment rate was at least 67% for both male and female students.¹¹

After the crisis, the percentage dropped to dangerous levels for several reasons, including direct exposure of schools to violence prompting parents not to send their children to school, fearing for their safety. Hundreds of thousands of families have fled to neighbouring countries with their children and many of them have now been out of school for long periods due to a variety of difficulties accessing schools in the camps and host communities.

The education crisis in Syria and the countries hosting refugees:

Syria has the lowest school enrolment rates in the world with half of the displaced children receiving no education at all. Enrolment in elementary education has fallen from almost 100% to an average of 50%. In areas such as Aleppo, which has seen military operations for an extended period, the rate drops to 6%.¹² At least a quarter of Syrian schools have been vandalized or destroyed. There are about three million Syrian children who do not go to school. In 2014, half of the children of displaced persons did not receive any education at all. There is a lack of required educational programmes due to the absence of adequate funding and an inability to compensate for the schools and educational equipment that has been destroyed. The training of new teachers alone could cost more than three billion US dollars.

A full education for Syrian refugee children is an essential form of welfare, yet nearly half of the refugees are not enrolled in school. The number of children registered in formal education does not exceed 340,000. This figure is significantly reduced in some areas where it is believed that 750,000 children of school age cannot afford to continue their education.¹³ The education services which are available are sporadic and inadequate. An unfamiliar curriculum, language barriers and racism against Syrian children are all obstacles to their accessing a proper education. Most of the children of refugees living outside the official camps in host communities are receiving only an informal education.

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The Impact of War, Calculating the impact of the collapse of Syria's education system on Syria's future http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/The_Cost_of_War.pdf accessed at 9th October 2015

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The Impact of War, Calculating the impact of the collapse of Syria's education system on Syria's future http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/The_Cost_of_War.pdf accessed at 9th October 2015

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REGIONAL MONTHLY UPDATE: 3RP ACHIEVEMENTS - MAY 2015 <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/3RP-Regional-Dashboards-May-2015.pdf> accessed 9th October 2015

Access to education is linked to the limited capacity of government education systems in the host countries and the enormous financial pressures that parents suffer. For refugee families who have lost everything and are struggling to survive, it is difficult for them to prioritise the education of their children. The following is a brief overview of the availability of education in the countries hosting refugees.¹⁴

Jordan: Of 350,000 Syrians officially registered, 215,000 are children of school age, and only 129,000 of them are currently in formal education.¹⁵ This has added to the pressure on teachers and the school infrastructure. The challenge facing the Jordanian government is the need to build prefabricated classrooms and train more teachers and workers in the field of mental health.

In addition to dealing with overcrowded schools, many Syrian students have found it difficult to adapt to the new curriculum and overall system which lacks adequate support for refugees. As well as formal education for Syrian refugees, non-governmental organisations provide intensive programmes to help students to catch up and to re-integrate them into the formal education system. Many non-governmental organisations offer professional and life-skills training programmes for refugees inside and outside the camps.

Iraq: The number of registered refugees in Iraq, according to UNHCR statistics, is around 247,352, and 14% of them are of school age.¹⁶ Schools in northern Iraqi Kurdistan, which hosts most of the Syrian refugees in Iraq are suffering most due to the lack of facilities available in schools. There is a considerable need to build new schools to accommodate the growing numbers and the existing tents used for educational purposes need renewing.

In northern Iraq / the Kurdistan region of Iraq the language of instruction in most public schools in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah is Kurdish and in Dohuk the teaching language is Kurmanji Kurdish. Although the Kurdish refugee families from Syria speak Kurdish Kurmanji, Kurdish refugees nevertheless face difficulty in studying in the Kurmanji language. Arabic schools currently account for only 1% of the schools in northern Iraq.

There are indications that young refugees lack motivation to get involved in education and training because of the language barrier and diminished prospects for higher education or employment. Since August 2014 this problem has been gradually worsening as many of the schools in northern Iraq have been used as temporary shelters for internally displaced people

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The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/unhcr-campaigns/childrensreport/Future-of-Syria-UNHCR-v13.pdf> accessed 9th October 2015

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Scaling Up to Reach One Million Refugee Children: Accelerating Progress on Education for Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon http://www.aworldatschool.org/page/-/uploads/Reports/Theirworld%20-%20Reaching%201%20million%20refugee%20children%20in%20Jordan%20Turkey%20%26%20Lebanon%20-%20Executive%20Summary%202015_09_10%20Release.pdf?nocdn=1 accessed 9th October 2015

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UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response Information Sharing Portal: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> accessed 9th October 2015

fleeing violence and persecution in the northern regions of Iraq.

Lebanon: During the last four years, Lebanon has witnessed a large influx of Syrian refugees with United Nations records showing that more than 1,078,338 Syrian refugees are currently registered in Lebanon. Reports regarding the conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon indicate that they suffer significantly because of the lack of capacity in public schools, transportation costs, and language of education, tuition fees, intimidation, child labour and safety concerns.¹⁷

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has made huge efforts to integrate the Syrian children and facilitate enrolment. Morning classes have been expanded in order to include a large number of children displaced from Syria and a second period in the afternoon was created to accommodate the growing numbers. Children who have missed school for at least a year now have the opportunity to resume their education through enrolment in an accelerated education program that will allow them to catch up with the Lebanese curriculum in subjects such as Arabic, French or English, mathematics and science, to enable them to join public schools next year.

Thousands of children have benefited from recreational activities such as sports, games and arts. A number of non-governmental organisations in Lebanon have provided the Syrians with vocational training including courses in auto mechanics, computer training, hairdressing, English language and electronics. This training gives them the skills to enable them to join the labour market.

Turkey has the largest number of refugees with 1,938,999 registered Syrian refugees, around 621,000 are children and only 227,000 of them are able to continue their education. Those living outside the refugee camps do not have the same opportunity to receive regular education services as those in the camps. Currently, around 80% of the refugees of school-age (6-17) living in camps attend school while only 27% of those outside the camps attend.

Although Turkey has tried to accommodate most of the children of school age, there are many obstacles facing Syrian refugees. These include the lack of adequate school facilities, economic weakness in the face of increasing financial needs, distance from schools, the limited capacity of teachers and the lack of funding for the salaries of teachers. Turkish and international organisations and non-governmental organisations also believe that the lack of residence permits, which are required to register at Turkish government schools, and limited ability in the Turkish language also form serious challenges to school attendance for refugees.

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SWOT Analysis of NGOs working in the Education Sector

As with the livelihood SWOT analysis, participants notes the points of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that apply to the education programmes implemented by the charities working in and around Syria:

Strengths

- Ability to operate in Syria and abroad with creativity and flexibility to address very complex problems. Through their platforms educational institutions can transfer external expertise to the local institutions thus providing services to refugees or displaced people who may be in areas posing risk to international organisations.
- Educational institutions are able to understand the context and accurately identify the needs of refugees which enables them to provide leading humanitarian action programs.
- Most of those working in Syrian humanitarian organisations are concerned with maintaining the professionalism of the Syrian educational institutions. This encourages people to prioritise education and achieve success with the support of volunteerism.
- The performance of many Syrian charities which are not politically oriented has improved, as has their understanding of humanitarian work. Some of these charities gained the trust of international donors and started to interact with international and UN partners.

Weaknesses

- The war in Syria forced the majority of qualified cadres in various fields to migrate further inside Syria or to neighboring countries. The cadres include teachers and managers. The unrest created doubts over the authenticity of certificates held by the refugees and displaced persons which were issued from institutions existing in Syria before the crisis. Many lost their educational certificates, passports or proof of their identity. Given the scarcity of financial resources of the charities, the wages of teachers were low compared to the high costs of living and prices of goods. The opportunities for teachers and administrative personnel development were few. This led to the deterioration of the quality of education which is provided for the Syrians.
- The unclear political situation, the lack of security and stability and the state of the ongoing displacement of Syrian families has forced educational institutions to plan only for the short-term. Most believe in the inevitable return to their original areas which should be expected at any moment. This mindset encourages a lack of strategy.

- The lack of financing of local community schools limits their ability to expand to new areas. It is also difficult to provide a quality curriculum that meets the needs of people in such uniquely difficult circumstances.
- Many schools lack adequate and stimulating classrooms in which to teach students comfortably. Nor do they have the follow-up components of an educational process which would allow them to review and improve the quality of schooling.
- The lack of precise information on the laws governing the host country, or statistics on the Syrian population's education at home or in neighbouring countries limits an organisations' ability to plan, review and further develop the educational process or draw lessons learned from the experiences. Participants from Turkey expressed their concern that official bodies do not recognize the certificates issued by the community and local schools. Students prefer to work and search for a living in view of the difficult financial circumstances which their families are experiencing. It is evident that the politicization of the curriculum and the lack of agreement between the various parties on the content threatens the social fabric.
- Traditional governance methods: Many of the schools' initiatives supported by charities at home or neighboring countries, lack experienced staff and volunteers in relief and civil work. The initiatives are also affected by the individual leadership and the poor practice of associative action in taking decisions based on institutional research and scrutiny. On the level of the teachers cadres, most teachers are volunteers with limited wages.
- Financing: This is considered a thorny issue within the Syrian relief work given that finance has diverse sources, size and flow. Recently, there is insufficient funding to meet the needs of education because the donor resources have been exhausted to meet other humanitarian needs. In many cases, the funds are transferred to more pressing humanitarian crises in West Africa or South Sudan. The participants highlighted the difficulty of transferring funds to banks and charities to support humanitarian action in Syria to avoid charges of financing terrorism. The participants stressed the need to urge donors to donate to programs that are moving beyond delivering solely humanitarian responses and more towards the recovery phase.
- Insufficient funding allocated for the educational programs affects the quality and sustainability of work. Most attendees confirmed the lack of funds at their charities to cover costs for more than a year for each school. In many cases, charities cannot pay the monthly salaries of their employees. Charities may also be obliged to accept funding from donors who associate funding with political or ideological agendas in order to continue their services. In addition, some have highlighted the imbalance of power and inequality between the charities on the one side and the donors on the other, giving the donors the opportunity to influence the decisions of charities.
- The gap created by the lack of one central body for state institutions in Syria has led to a disunited effort, poor co-ordination and the lack of a collective vision. With this

comes a lack of trust and too few clear strategic goals. This results in poor integration of those goals and generally restricts the efforts of NGOs.

- There are few adequate transparency and professional accountability systems to monitor and evaluate the humanitarian results professionally. This includes auditing of financial procedures. In addition, there is no accurate data being collected.
- Priorities in light of the difficult economic situation: some institutions have focused on remaining a source of livelihood and job safety for their workers. Such institutions may not adequately address the needs of the affected.

Opportunities to improve work in the education sector:

- The possibility to build varied coordinating entities supporting integration among themselves through joint work strategies either at the Syrian level or at the level that includes the Syrian, Arab, regional and international institutions.
- The environment in Turkey is encouraging and supportive, compared to other neighboring countries, especially concerning the legal framework, aiding provision of job opportunities for Syrian refugees, facilitating access to educational services, and cooperating with various parties in the Syrian government.
- International public sympathy has turned toward the plight of Syrian refugees. This helps build alliances with those working in the field in order to highlight the needs of the people affected by the crisis. This can then be presented to decision-makers in regional and international forums, through advocacy and lobbying campaigns.
- Entering into partnerships with charities with similar experiences in education programs in conflict areas, to benefit from their experiences in the field of alternative education during crisis, utilising information and communication technology to reach students, or use of radio in education and e-libraries to support the Syrian curriculum.
- Charities should seek to employ people with scientific and intellectual expertise gained during the past five years to support an educational environment suitable for the specific needs of Syrian students, especially those at the secondary and university stages.
- Promoting communication between students, schools and families and integrating new areas, such as psychological support to students and their families, or using arts education (theater, music, drawing, etc.) to help parents and their children deal with the results of violence. New quality and creativity programs have been introduced to link the educational sector with the relief and development sector, supporting health programs (hygiene, vaccination, etc.), with great success.
- There are increasing opportunities to use educational structures to further the integration of refugees into their host communities. This may take the form of strengthening student bodies, as well as holding regular meetings between students'

families and schools.

- There is considerable interest among the Syrians in the importance and priority of education for their children. Even during difficult circumstances, people continued to educate their children in their homes, places of worship or through the internet. The charities continued to design and operate so as not to lose opportunities for student enrolment, either by running regular schools, or vocational rehabilitation courses or the training of cadres to work in jobs required in the labour market.
- There are opportunities to emphasise the role of the international and UN institutions to assume their responsibilities to provide human services, as well as informing funders about the importance of the continued support of education programs to avoid losing a generation to extremism and fanaticism.

Threats hindering the delivery of education services:

- Workers at charities, school headmasters and teachers may be exposed to harassment by people in power to influence management, distribute aid or employ workers. This may reinforce negative perceptions which leads to acceptance of a reality which cannot be changed on the collective level.
- Legal issues: lack of referential authority to attest certificates, or hold public examinations in the northern part of Syria or Turkey to determine the level of students. This limits the chances of the Syrian students to enroll in higher education institutes and universities which increases the school dropout rate, especially at the secondary level. Some participants highlighted the difficulty students face when attempting to participate in the educational process because of the difficulty of renewing their residence permits officially.
- Insufficient attention is paid to other aspects of education provided to different age groups, such as vocational training to engage them in the local labor market, nursery schools, literacy programs, or non-formal education and the percentage of school dropout rates.
- There is little awareness of the importance of the role the civil society can play in rebuilding a war-torn country.

Stakeholder Analysis:

The working groups were asked to consider the different spheres of influence occupied by various stakeholders. This exercise served to identify the opportunities for positive change and identify areas of potential damage.

Stakeholder	Influence %	Positive influence	Negative influence
Family	80%	Stability	Psychological factor

Student	20%	Continuity of education	Psychological factor and behaviour
School/management	70%	Specialization	Lack of specialization, partisan, trade and profit
Teacher	90%	Experience	Psychological situation and lack of specialization
Local governmental departments (inside areas controlled the by Syrian regime or outside the same)	50%	Experience	Lack of support
Donor, individual or institution (Syrian, Arab, Islamic, or from Syrians in the diaspora or international donors)	90%	Support	Lack of understanding of the development nature of the sector.
The association working in the educational field	80%	Experience Support	Lack of resources. Immigration of qualified cadre.
Military factions	85%	Protection in time of military operation	Mixing the humanitarian with the political. Lack of understanding of the nature of the work
Training institutions	10%	Available experience	
Professional groupings and unions	10%	Experience	
Community leaders	7%	Support	

Models of practice

- Improve skills of volunteer teachers and school administrators so that in providing education to communities affected by violence they can focus on: education

technology, psycho-social support to students and their families and maintaining a safe learning environment.

- Include psycho-social support in curricula.
- Implement programs that focus on rehabilitation of damaged school buildings in safe zones and making them available for education provision.
- Establish a school that focuses on sponsoring children in women-led households. The school provides a monthly living stipend to family, educates the children in school and provides opportunities for the matriarch to work or improve her skill to earn a living.
- The establishment of a training programme for medical staff and paramedics who have not migrated from Syria

Recommendations

The recommendations proposed by participants reflect an intention to encourage Syrian NGOs to collectively define their complementary roles in order to:

- Improve skills of NGOS staff and volunteers engaged in provision of education and livelihood programming.
- Explore strategic approaches and synergy between education and livelihood sectors.
- Support NGOs to provide quality service that preserves the fabric, cultural and heritage identity of Syrian society in the middle of this humanitarian crisis. This will lead to
 - Increased trust in Syrian NGOs.
 - Enhanced funding opportunities.
 - Increased outreach to communities in need.
 - Improved effectiveness within the most disadvantaged communities.
 - Support of new community leaders

Coordination

It is expected that with the absence of central government and the fragmentation of social service provision, that coordination between stakeholders will be minimal. The attendees recommended technical support to aid the coming together of civil society coordinating entities, umbrella groups and professional syndicates through a neutral and safe process that demonstrates tangible results no matter how modest.

This would need to focus on commitment towards establishing standards of quality monitoring operations. Similar support needs to be given to NGOs who are working on coordinating between civil society organisations with Arab, Muslim and international donors to identify priorities and build momentum towards fulfilling them. The following activities are proposed:

- Support of existing NGO networks and encouragement of collaborative programmes
- Development of an open Web based system that documents NGO achievements and progress.
- Organisation of networking events and opportunities for developing joint projects.

Livelihood

Syrian communities have demonstrated exceptional levels of resilience and collective solidarity during difficult times due to their aptitude for entrepreneurship. NGOs working in livelihood programming still need to develop their capacity to better utilize these opportunities and deliver to scale on livelihood programming that is relevant to the context of Syrians in their country or in neighbouring countries.

Equally, Syrian NGOs should share their good practices, expertise and solidify partnerships in livelihood programming. Since the focus of majority of donors is on humanitarian intervention and saving lives (whether in Syria or elsewhere in the world), Syrian civil society organisations should advocate within the donor community at the regional and international levels to leverage their allocation to financial support for livelihood programmes that minimizes dependency on handout aid.

Participants also recommended that all stakeholders utilise the multilateral pledging conference for Syria, planned to take place in London in February 2016 and influence the size of resource allocation to livelihood programmes.

Education

Participants recommended a focus on maintaining a safe, compassionate, non-politicised space to foster dialogue, trust and relationship building on matters that Syrian have consensus on such as provision of quality education to all Syrian students whether citizens, internally displaced or refugees.

Participants spoke about improving coordination between frontline community based organisations and umbrella coordination groups who focus on provision of education services. This should mainly focus on standardising quality and developing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of education provision to Syrians.

Participants also recommended organising an international conference to identify innovative approaches to scale up provision of education that integrates psycho-social programmes and career planning to Syrian students in their communities. Some organisations highlighted the innovative approach of using web-based distance learning and the need to accredit it from an internationally recognize governmental body. Attendees also highlighted the significance of paying attention to specific vulnerable groups who are missing out on education such as people with special needs and secondary, tertiary and vocational education students.

With limited access to resources and broken infrastructure the participants called for NGOs to better utilise the human and physical resources available to provide Syrians with quality education at home and in host communities. This includes improving pay to teachers, mobilising volunteers, improve facilities for learning spaces, encouraging twinning arrangements, and sharing experiences with NGOs from other conflict settings.