The conflict in Syria has led to economic devastation, an alarming prevalence of injuries and disabilities, and poor psycho-social well-being for the majority of the Syrian population.

Households in Syria generally need all family members to generate income, but suffer from the fact that persons with disabilities, women and young people are precluded from developing the necessary skills and mindset to be able to effectively participate in the workforce.

Urgent Concerns

- **2.5 million people** are at risk of food insecurity and a further 6.5 million are already food insecure; **4 out of 5 people live in poverty**, and **8.7 million people** are in need of Early Recovery & Livelihoods support in 2019.

- The conflict has decimated the Syrian economy and destroyed economic systems and networks amongst communities: cumulative losses in Syria’s gross domestic product (GDP) from 2011 to end-2016 equal around four times the Syrian GDP in 2010, estimated at $226 billion. This has a graver and longer-term predicted impact than even the physical destruction;

- **6.1 million people** in Syria are neither in employment nor any kind of education or training, and the unemployment rate is 78% amongst young people. This has severe consequences for human capital, a mere 51% of the pre-crisis workforce is now available, and will lead to a shortage of critical skills well into the future;

- Humanitarian organisations working in the field report that lack of skills and work experience and access to affordable loans are two of the main barriers to employment, both when it comes to community members’ ability to gain access to employment and among small business owners who want to expand their businesses;

- **A shortage of electricity**, the high price of fuel, and prohibitively high costs of transportation and limited connectedness across internal and external markets further diminish economic production and exchange;

- Between December 2018 and February 2019 Syria saw on average **165 explosive incidents per day**, and **10.2 million people are at risk** of exposure to explosive hazards, with 1 in 4 communities reporting some form of contamination, this especially makes agricultural economic activity extremely dangerous.

- Close to **6 million people**, which is approximately one third of the population, are internally displaced and more economically vulnerable due to loss of social and economic networks. The devastating economic impact of the crisis on Syrian households and communities may lead to increased community tensions unless both IDPs and host communities are equally supported for livelihood interventions.

Livelihoods programming promotes dignity and independence for households by enabling them to become self-reliant again, instead of having to rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.

Livelihoods programming can also have a wider impact on reviving communities and markets by restoring key economic infrastructure such as marketplaces, improving the supply and reducing prices of essential items, increasing purchasing power within communities, and, thereby, reviving stagnant economic flows within local markets.

Further, supporting livelihoods is a critical element of enhancing social cohesion within communities, as conflict dynamics are often linked with reducing standards of living and competition over scarce meaningful economic opportunities.

Livelihoods programs remain underfunded in the Syrian response. Therefore, HI calls for an urgent review of funding for livelihoods activities in Syria.

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4. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
An inclusive humanitarian response is a core component of principled and effective humanitarian action: inclusion of persons with disabilities is a cross-cutting concern that lies at the heart of a non-discriminatory and principled emergency response. It is rooted in the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality and the human rights principles of equity and non-discrimination.

An inclusive humanitarian response recognises that for every group that is marginalised or vulnerable, there are strategies to address their particular needs, so as to overcome particular barriers in their access to services;

All people affected by a crisis have the right to equal and dignified access to humanitarian assistance based on their needs and without discrimination. They have the right to also be involved in an equitable manner in decisions that concern them.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities must be strengthened in the Syrian humanitarian response, in terms of both protection and assistance.

### The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) on 23–24 May 2016 in Istanbul the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action provides a policy framework on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. It has been seen as major steps forward by the humanitarian community, and has been endorsed by a large variety of stakeholders, including States, UN agencies, NGOs, and organisations representative of persons with disabilities (DPOs).

Visit the website [http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org](http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org) to consult the text of the Charter and the full list of endorsers.

### Urgent Disability-related Concerns

- Estimates are that 3 million people inside Syria are living with a permanent disability, moreover thousands of conflict-related trauma cases per month are leading to new permanent disabilities;9

- Persons with disabilities are marginalised and disproportionately affected during disaster and conflict situations. They face attitudinal as well as physical barriers from accessing skills training and employment. Moreover, there are virtually no after-care services available for people that have undergone treatment for an injury and since, for example, access to prosthetics and orthotics equipment is extremely limited, people living with injuries and disabilities often have to depend on their families for all of their basic needs;

- Households with a family member that has an injury or disability have fewer family members that can work for an income and higher health-related costs. This significantly increases their risk of poverty. A survey conducted in Syria in 2017 by a consortium of humanitarian agencies showed that:
  - 50% of households with a disabled family member suffered from poor food consumption, compared to 34% for households without persons with a disability;
  - households with one or more members with a disability had, on average, nearly $200 more debt than other households;
  - households with one or more members with a disability were more likely to engage in negative coping strategies, such as parents eating less so children can eat more, and selling food to buy medicine or other essential items;

- Humanitarian organisations working in the field report that economic opportunities and psycho-social well-being are inter-dependent, as people consulted linked a lack of livelihoods opportunities with increased psychological stress and adoption of negative psycho-social coping strategies;10

- Whilst the conflict has led to a marked increase in the number of female-headed households and persons with disabilities, 50% of enterprises consulted by humanitarian organisations working in the field felt that job opportunities should go mainly to able-bodied men because of high unemployment rates.

### An inclusive response

- An inclusive humanitarian response is a core component of principled and effective humanitarian action: inclusion of persons with disabilities is a cross-cutting concern that lies at the heart of a non-discriminatory and principled emergency response. It is rooted in the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality and the human rights principles of equity and non-discrimination;

- An inclusive humanitarian response recognises that for every group that is marginalised or vulnerable, there are strategies to address their particular needs, so as to overcome particular barriers in their access to services;

- All people affected by a crisis have the right to equal and dignified access to humanitarian assistance based on their needs and without discrimination. They have the right to also be involved in an equitable manner in decisions that concern them.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities must be strengthened in the Syrian humanitarian response, in terms of both protection and assistance.

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Recommendations

**Donor should:**

- Make available **recovery-focused, longer-term funding** in order to enable livelihoods actors to implement more sustainable solutions to poverty alleviation and economic growth for Syria;
- Prioritise funding for programs that focus on **restoring economic and social networks**, therewith increasing incentives to engage in productive economic activity with the potential to re-establish critical economic systems;
- Prioritise funding for programs that strengthen the **nexus approach** in Syria by: identifying and supporting opportunities for introducing development principles into livelihoods programming; **advocating people-centered action**; and **promoting local capacity** development and ownership while respecting humanitarian principles;
- Be more **adaptive** in the way they manage grants, taking into account the still **dynamic and evolving context** in Syria, and giving humanitarian actors **sufficient scope to adapt** locations, types of livelihoods activities implemented and partners supported;
- Encourage all actors to use the **UN approved Washington Group questions** when collecting data on persons with disabilities, to facilitate inclusive action toward identified persons with specific difficulties in functioning;
- Ensure considerations related to disability are taken into account in project review and prioritization and prioritise funding for **inclusive humanitarian programs** by: **reserving a set percentage** of livelihoods funding for inclusive livelihoods activities; making **explicit long-term commitments**; supporting the formation of alliances with specialised actors in programs; including indicators to measure the inclusiveness of programs they fund.

**Humanitarian actors should:**

- Adopt participatory, integrated approaches across different sectors of intervention such as health, livelihoods and civil society strengthening to **improve socio-economic impacts on households and communities**;
- Assess contextual risks regarding potential land contamination by explosive remnants of war, and make mine risk education an integral part of livelihoods programming in areas of possible contamination;
- Address both supply and demand dynamics within labour markets, balancing an expansion of employment opportunities and household purchasing power with approaches scaling up skills strengthening and business creation;
- **Increase the application of the graduation model**, i.e. strengthening capacities of vulnerable households to progress from dependence on humanitarian assistance towards developing skills and assets, which eventually enable them to become self-reliant in meeting their basic needs;
- Generate and **share greater evidence and learning** on approaches such as market-based interventions that have the potential to amplify socio-economic impact for households and communities, specifically within the complex and protracted Syrian crisis context;
- **Improve coordination** with other specialised actors within target areas to increase the scale and impact of programming for beneficiary households. For instance, seek specialist support to improve the **integration of persons with disabilities** into existing livelihoods programmes, increase referrals across sectors to address specific needs such as prosthetics and orthotics, physical rehabilitation and protection;
- **Identify persons with disabilities in the communities** in which they work in order to include them in activities, and ensure activities are accessible for all persons with disabilities which includes physical access and diverse communication methods as well as integrated case management of the most vulnerable persons;
- **Include persons with disabilities** in every stage of the project cycle by ensuring that they are identified and consulted with throughout the Humanitarian Planning Cycle (HPC) in each sector response plan;
- **Adapt project design to make livelihoods services more inclusive**: this can be done by decentralising service sites, doing home-based beneficiary registration, providing individualised support to enhance participation and engagement through case management, and giving flexible options for participation in various activities;
- **Disaggregate data** by sex, age and disability;
- **Work towards the full implementation of human rights frameworks** and reaffirm the implementation of the **commitments of the Charter** on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action by mainstreaming **disability inclusion** through all processes and policies.