

Inclusive Livelihoods Programs for Early Recovery

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. The current economic crisis has been described as the worst in living memory and millions of people are struggling to cope.⁽¹⁾

Households in Syria generally need **all family members to work**, but suffer from the fact that **persons with disabilities, women and young people** are precluded from developing the necessary skills and required support to be able to effectively participate in the workforce. Moreover, **movement restrictions** related to the **COVID-19** pandemic further restrict people's access to livelihood opportunities.

Urgent Concerns

According to the January 2022 UN figures:

- **12.4 million people in Syria (57% of the total population) are food insecure** - the highest number ever recorded, and an **increase of 4.5 million** since last year⁽²⁾ - and a further 1.8 million are at risk of food insecurity.⁽³⁾
- **300,000 jobs were lost since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic** and the **unemployment rate stands at approximately 50%**.⁽⁴⁾
- A **shortage of electricity, the high price of fuel, prohibitively high costs of transportation, the continuing devaluation of the Syrian pound, the regional drought** and limited connectedness across internal and external markets further diminish economic production and exchange.

Moreover:

- Some economic activity, like **agricultural work**, is impeded by **contamination with explosive ordnance**: farming and herding pose the highest risk for explosive ordnance accidents.⁽⁵⁾ Overall, **half the population is at risk of explosive ordnance**.⁽⁶⁾
- **Approximately 6.7 million people** - a third of the population - **is internally displaced**⁽⁷⁾ and much more economically vulnerable due to loss of social and economic networks. The worsening economic situation on Syrian households and communities could 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 again become self-reliant, instead of having to rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.

Livelihoods programming can also have a wider impact on **revitalising 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.

Urgent Disability-related Concerns

- A recent UN study found that **nearly a third (30%) of Syrians aged 12 and up have disabilities** - double the global average of 15%. Further over **a third (37%) of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) aged 12 and up** and **40% of heads of households**, have disabilities.⁽⁸⁾
- Persons with disabilities are marginalised and **disproportionately affected during disaster and conflict situations**. They are also at increased risk in the **COVID-19** pandemic due to: the need for close contact with personal assistants/care givers; increased risk of infection and complications due to underlying health conditions; and socio-economic inequalities, including poor access to health care.
- Persons with disabilities 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, persons 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

1. COAR, 'The Syrian Economy at War Labor Pains Amid the Blurring of the Public and Private Sectors', 19 November 2020, <https://coar-global.org/2020/11/20/the-syrian-economy-at-war-labor-pains-amid-the-blurring-of-the-public-and-private-sectors/>.

2. WFP, 'Syrian Arab Republic', <https://www.wfp.org/countries/syrian-arab-republic>.

3. WFP, 'Emergency Dashboard December 2021' <https://www.wfp.org/publications/syria-2>, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/3597b35d83cb40c3942d817d882b3c9c/download/?_ga=2.114230660.202617555.1612792541-1548312139.1612436202.

4. UN OCHA, '2021 Needs and Response Summary', <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2021-needs-and-response-summary-february-2021>.

5. UNMAS, December 2021.

6. UN OCHA, '2021 Needs and Response Summary', <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2021-needs-and-response-summary-february-2021>.

7. OCHA, 'Syrian Arab Republic', <https://www.unocha.org/syria>.

8. Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAAP), 'Syria Disability Prevalence and Impact - Summer 2021 Report Series', and 'Disability and Displacement in Syria 2021 IDP Report Series' 2021.

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 recent UN survey found that households with members with disabilities spent approximately 1.5 x more than they received from all income sources combined.⁽⁹⁾

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 issue 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 accessing 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.

9. Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP), 'Syria Disability Prevalence and Impact – Summer 2021 Report Series', and 'Disability and Displacement in Syria 2021 IDP Report Series' 2021.

10. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action', October 2019, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines>.

The IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action⁽¹⁰⁾

The Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action were endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary global mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, in October 2019. They provide guiding principles for better inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action and set out essential actions that all humanitarian actors must take in order to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

After the paradigm shift that was introduced by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which changed policy and policy implementation from a charitable and medical approach to one based on rights, and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (2016), the IASC Guidelines are an important step in mainstreaming and operationalising inclusive practises.

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

Recommendations

Donors should:

- Be **more adaptive** in the way they manage grants, taking into account the **volatile and evolving context** in Syria, and giving humanitarian actors **sufficient scope to adapt** locations, types of livelihoods activities implemented and partners supported;
- 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-centred action that includes a barriers and facilitators analysis of areas of operation**; and **promoting local capacity** development and ownership while respecting humanitarian principles;
- Ensure **considerations related to disability are taken into account** in project review and prioritisation 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, and train staff on inclusion of persons with disabilities** using the Inclusive Anticipation Taal Action (IATAC) approach;

- 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;
- **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.



Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection and
Humanitarian Aid

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