Communiqué
Syrian Humanitarian Action & Recovery Conference
Local solutions for lasting impact
December 1-3, 2025 | Damascus

From 1 to 3 December 2025, more than 150 representatives of Syrian civil society working in the fields of humanitarian action and early recovery, along with representatives of the Syrian and German governments and supporting international NGOs, gathered in Damascus for the *Syrian Humanitarian Action and Recovery Conference – Local Solutions for Lasting Impact.*

The conference was hosted by the following umbrella networks of Syrian civil society: the *Syrian NGO Alliance*, the *Syria NGO Forum*, the *Syrian Networks League,* the *NES NGO Platform,* the *Union of Charitable Associations in Aleppo,* and the *Union of Charitable Associations in Damascus and Rural Damascus*. It was facilitated by *Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe*, *International Council of Voluntary Agencies* (ICVA), and the *Syrian Localization Lab*.

As the centerpiece of the conference, Syrian local actors held a series of consultative sessions to formulate a shared vision on localization and strengthening local leadership, aiming to transition from pure relief work toward sustainable development in alignment with the *triple nexus*: humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding.

The following communiqué stems from extensive discussions involving local and international organizations and specialized networks. It is grounded in practical experiences, a precise understanding of challenges and opportunities across all Syrian geographies and communities and is collectively owned by all participating parties.

Methodology

The consultative sessions relied on a **rotating group methodology**, in which participants were distributed across four main thematic areas:

1. Quality of partnerships and Local Leadership
2. Funding and Resource Mobilization
3. Community Participation and Empowerment
4. Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

Each group was accompanied by a facilitator and rapporteur to ensure the accumulation of ideas, maintain continuity in discussions across rotating groups, and document outputs in a way that enables their integration into this statement.

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Key Outcomes

1. Quality of Partnerships and Local Leadership

Discussions revealed structural gaps within partnership systems, including the absence of a clear national plan or strategic framework for advancing localization, insufficient coordination mechanisms, unclear roles among donors and organizations, and a general disregard for the diversity of local contexts. Participants also highlighted a continued tendency to treat Syrian organizations merely as implementers, resistance to forming new partnerships, and the lack of unified tools for assessing organizational capacities.

2. Funding and Resource Mobilization

Discussions exposed the fragility of funding, constant shifts in donor policies, ongoing financial constraints, complex banking processes, and heightened competition among organizations due to limited resources and the absence of clear licensing standards.

Proposed solutions included: diversifying funding sources (endowments, private sector, national and international funds), adopting long-term institutional funding, improving data quality to identify community and institutional needs, governmental and non-governmental alike, as an essential aspect of localization.

Participants stressed the need to establish joint, locally led financing mechanisms that allow small- and medium-sized Syrian organizations to access predictable, multi-year funding directly, managed with transparency and with strong, collectively endorsed civil society representation.

3. Community Participation and Empowerment

Participants emphasized strengthening the relationship between civil society and local communities, which is currently strained by challenges such as limited access to data, limited genuine community participation, and the mismatch between many adopted models (both international and local) and certain local contexts. At the same time, experiences demonstrated the effectiveness of community engagement in policymaking, planning, implementation, and monitoring to ensure the quality and sustainability of interventions.

4. Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

Sessions concluded that capacity building must extend beyond technical training to include the strengthening of: good governance, strategic planning, knowledge management, context analysis, conflict management, and digital transformation.

They also stressed the need for well-qualified leading institutions and networks, clear internal procedures, balanced wages across institutions, compared to the private sector and across regions, and effective M&E systems focused on impact, not just simple output tracking.

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Proposed Guiding Principles for Localization in the Syrian Context

1. Localization is fundamentally a redistribution of power and responsibility. It entails shifting from an internationally driven hierarchical model to a participatory one rooted in local leadership, real community engagement in decision-making, and equitable sharing of risks and resources.

2. Localization is an inclusive national system. It requires a unified national framework, reliable data, effective coordination mechanisms, an enabling legal and financial environment, and transparent organizational classification based on roles and capacity.

3. The local community is the center of the process. Communities are partners in needs assessment, priority setting, intervention design, and monitoring. Rebuilding trust requires transparency, impact measurement, and effective feedback mechanisms, along with enabling Syrian institutions to act as facilitators so communities can design and oversee the interventions they need.

4. Local leadership requires governance, knowledge, and autonomy. This includes strengthening institutional capacities, active governing boards, strategic planning, knowledge management, and internal policies ensuring professionalism and sustainability.

5. Funding must be sustainable, diverse, and equitable. It should include international, national, and local financing; national and international funds; revenue-generating activities; endowments; private sector partnerships; and long-term institutional funding that supports stability and growth.

6. Partnerships must be fair and transparent. They should be grounded in clear roles, joint decision-making, mutual transparency and accountability, knowledge exchange, and respect for Syria's geographic and cultural diversity.

7. The government's role should be enabling, not dominating. The government should regulate and facilitate civic work without obstructive interference or politicization, while respecting civil society's independence and ensuring a safe environment.

8. National cooperation is essential for successful localization. This includes coalition-building among organizations, partnerships with private sector, unions and universities, and knowledge exchange across national and local actors.

9. Localization is a long, cumulative process. It requires gradual trust-building, institutional reforms, and continuous development of policies and capacities.

10. Localization reshapes the relationship between civil society, communities, government, and donors. This relationship must be grounded in transparency, fairness, local ownership, and mutual accountability.

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Policy Recommendations

To the Syrian Government:

- Develop a national registry and transparent classification system for organizations in cooperation with civil society across all geographies, ensuring full inclusiveness and non-exclusion, based on capacities and geographic areas of work

- Simplify and digitize administrative procedures related to registration and reporting and enhance government staff capacity in this area

- Introduce tax incentives for private-sector and institutional financial contributors to civil society

- Create a governmental knowledge platform containing all laws, decisions, and procedures relevant to civic work

- Develop educational curricula and training programs that include humanitarian and social work concepts

- Prepare a comprehensive national needs-and-response plan based on reliable data

- Enable funding through safe and transparent channels free from politicization

- Adopt a participatory approach with civil society grounded in trust, clarity, and respect for autonomy

To Donors and International Organizations:

- Diversify and renew local partnerships, providing fair opportunities to emerging and small organizations

- Harmonize partner capacity assessment standards to reduce duplication and conflicting evaluations

- Adopt long-term (institutional/programmatic) funding that supports capacity building and sustainability

- Strengthen community accountability and feedback mechanisms led by local organizations

- Respect Syria's geographic and cultural diversity and avoid "one-size-fits-all" models

- Invest in producing local knowledge and context analysis tools

- Support locally led pooled funds accessible to small and medium Syrian humanitarian actors, enabling direct funding while allowing INGOs to serve as technical partners or intermediaries when needed

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To Syrian Civil Society Networks and Organizations:

- Strengthen internal governance and transparency and adopt clear policies for human and financial resource management

- Acknowledge varying organizational needs based on size and capacity and adopt mentorship and peer-learning models

- Build sectoral and geographic coalitions to reduce harmful competition and enhance complementarity

- Engage communities in all stages of the project cycle: needs assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation

- Institutionalize a culture of evaluation and continuous learning, using findings to build institutional knowledge

- Conduct strategic planning for potential funding disruptions and reduce reliance on a single funding source

Signatories:

Syrian NGO Alliance / تحالف المنظمات السورية
Syria NGO Forum / منتدى المنظمات غير الحكومية في سوريا
Syrian Networks League / رابطة الشبكات السورية
NES NGO Platform / منصة منظمات شمال وشرق سوريا
Union of Charitable Organisations in Aleppo / اتحاد الجمعيات الخيرية بحلب
Union of Charitable Organisations Damascus & Rural Damascus / اتحاد الجمعيات الخيرية في دمشق وريفها

Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe
International Council of Voluntary Agencies – ICVA / المجلس الدولي للوكالات التطوعية
Syria Localisation Lab / مختبر لتعزيز القيادة المحليّة

Action for Humanity / العمل من أجل الإنسان
Al Diyar Association / جمعية شباب إعمار الديار
Al Mubara Association for Orphan Care & Social Development / جمعية المبرة لرعاية الايتام والتنميهالاجتماعيه
Al-Fatih Islamic Association / جمعية الفتح الإسلامي
Almostakbal Association / جمعية المستقبل للمعوقين جسديا
Al-Nada Development Association / جمعية الندى التنمويةً
Amal Organization for Relief and Development / منظمة أمل للإغاثة والتنمية
Ashna for Development / آشنا للتنمية
ASHTI / مؤسسة العمل من اجل الاستقرار والوئام والتكامل التحويلي

facilitated by:

Auel Al-Khair Association / جمعية اهل الخير بحلب

Baladna Organization / منظمة بلدنا

Binaa for Development / بناء للتنمية

Brain & Heart Foundation / مؤسسة فكر وقلب

Charitable Society for Sustainable Development / الجمعية الخيرية للتنمية المستدامة

Child Rights Foundation / مؤسسة حقوق الطفل

Dan for Relief and Development / مؤسسة دان للاغاثة و التنمية

Dar al-Fatah Orphan Care Association / جمعية دار الفتاة اليتيمة بحلب

Dawam al Ni'ma Association / جمعية دوام النعم

Developmental Charitable Association of Al-Ihsan / جمعية الإحسان الخيرية التنموية

Elaf for Relief and Development / إيلاف للإغاثة والتنمية

Engineering for Services Organization / منظمة الهندسية للخدمات

Field Ready / الابتكار الإنساني في الميدان

Ghaith Syria Foundation for Sustainable Development / موسسة غيث سوريا للتنمية المستدامة

GOAL GLOBAL/ جول

GOPA-DERD/ بطريركية أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للروم الأرثوذكس- دائرة العلاقات المسكونية والتنمية

Hand in Hand for Aid and Development / يدا بيد للاغاثة والتنمية

Horan Humanitarian Foundation / مؤسسة حوران الإنسانية

How I strive for excellence-Foundation / مؤسسة كم أسعى للتفوق

Humanitarian Development Cooperation - HDC / التعاون الإنساني والإنمائي

IHH/ هيئة الإغاثة الانسانيه

Ihsan platform / احسان

Inanna Foundation / مؤسسة إنانا

Independent Doctors Association/ منظمة الأطباء المستقلين

IYD/ هيئة الإغاثة الإنسانية

Kiwan/ كيوان الخير

Kobani for Relief and Development / منظمة كوباني للاغاثة والتنمية

Lights for Development and Construction / اضواء للتنمية والبناء

LWF Syria / الاتحاد اللوثري الخيري

Multiple Actions to Rebuild Society Organisation – MARS / مارس

Massaha Intiative / مبادرة مساحة

Matar Relief and Development Organization / منظمة مطر للأغاثة والتنمية

Mercy Without Limits / رحمة بلا حدود

Midad Al-Ma'rifah Association / جمعية مداد المعرفة

Mosaic Human Relief and Development / موزاييك للاغاثة والتنمية الانسانية

Muzun for Humanitarian and Development / مزن للأعمال الإنسانية والتنمية

Nour Alehsan Charity / نور الاحسان الخيرية

Olive Branch / غصن زيتون

Pen and Creativity Foundation / مؤسسة يراع وإبداع

POINT / بوينت

Qanawat Alkhayr Foundation / مؤسسة قنوات الخير

Salam for Hope Foundation / سلام للأمل

Salam Humanitarian Foundation (SHF) / منظمة السلام الانسانية

Sanad Humanitarian Foundation / مؤسسة سند الإنسانية

SDI / المؤسسة الدولية للتنمية الإجتماعية

Shafak / شفق

Shams Organization for Rehabilitation and Development / منظمة شمس للتأهيل والتنمية

Shawishka Women's Association / جمعية شاوشكا للمرأة

St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee – EPDC / هيئة مار افرام السرياني البطريركية للتنمية

Sustainable Development Charity / الجمعية الخيرية للتنمية المستدامة

Swaedna Organization for Relief and Development / منظمة سواعدنا للإغاثة والتنمية

SYCAC / سكك

Syrian Agency for Rescue – SAR / الوكالة السورية للإنقاذ

Syrian Diabetes Care Association / الجمعية السورية لرعاية السكريين

Syrian Pioneers Lattakia / الريادي السوري

Syrian Society against Cancer in Aleppo / الجمعية السورية لمكافحة السرطان بحلب

Syrian Society for Social Development - SSSD / الجمعية السورية للتنمية الاجتماعية

Syrian Youth Council / مجلس الشباب السوري

Taa Marbouta / تاء مربوطة

Take my Hand Foundation / مؤسسة خذ بيدي

Together for a better society Organization / منظمة معاً لمجتمع افضل

TOTOL Development Organization / منظمة توتول للتنمية

Um Al-Zennar Relief and Development Center – URDC / مركز أم الزنار للإغاثة والتنمية

Violet Organization for Relief and Development / منظمة بنفسج للاغاثة والتنمية

War Child Alliance

Watad foundation / مؤسسة وتد

WATAN / منظومة وطن

White Hands Relief and Development Association / جمعية الأيادي البيضاء للإغاثة والتنمية