



**SYRIA**  
DEVELOPMENT  
CENTER



# SYRIA'S LIFE LINE

THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE END OF UN CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS  
FOLLOWING NON-RENEWAL OF UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL  
RESOLUTION 2533 (2020)

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview (‘HNO’) report of 2021, Syria remains one of the world’s most complex humanitarian emergencies. The situation in Syria is characterized by ongoing hostilities which have killed hundreds of thousands of people, one of the worst displacement crises of our time, and widespread destruction of civilian and productive infrastructure, including homes, schools, health facilities, water supplies and irrigation systems.

Today, 13.4 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance – a 21 per cent increase compared to 2020 – with needs exacerbated by marked economic decline. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in northwest Syria (‘NW Syria’) has increased from 2.8 to 3.4 million people. Internally displaced people (‘IDPs’) constitute 2.7 million, many of whom are living in over-crowded conditions with limited access to essential services. As of February 2021, approximately 1.7 million IDPs were living in 1,385 camps or informal sites (including 24,800 people displaced in January and February 2021 alone). Women and children represent 80 per cent of this caseload while more than 22,000 IDPs are reported to be persons with specific needs. The expanding impact of the COVID19- pandemic has further complicated the lives of people in humanitarian settings in NW Syria.

History of UN cross-border operations in Syria

The humanitarian response in Syria has consisted of a centralized hub based in Damascus and cross-border response organized from neighbouring countries to areas inaccessible to the Damascus government. Throughout the Syrian war, the conflict dynamics and geographic fragmentation of the country limited the capacity of Damascus-based actors to reach populations residing outside of government-held territory. Moreover, the UN reported in 2014 on the “continued, arbitrary, and unjustified withholding of consent to relief operations and the persistence of conditions that impede the delivery of humanitarian supplies to destinations within Syria”. This was in reference to the obstructive actions of the Damascus government. These conditions prompted the implementation of UNSCR 2165 in 2014, authorizing the delivery of humanitarian aid from four border crossings: ‘al-Ramtha’ on the Syria-Jordan border; ‘al-Yarubiyah’ on the Syria-Iraq border; and ‘Bab al-Salam’ and ‘Bab al-Hawa’ on the Syria-Turkey border. While Syrian and international NGOs (‘iNGOs’) had already been implementing cross-border interventions before this resolution, it formalized the role of the UN, and specifically the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (‘OCHA’), in leading the coordination of the cross-border response. The UN requires a legal framework such as the one provided by UNSCR 2165 to carry out cross-border operations, given that the Syrian government has withheld consent to cross-border aid delivery.

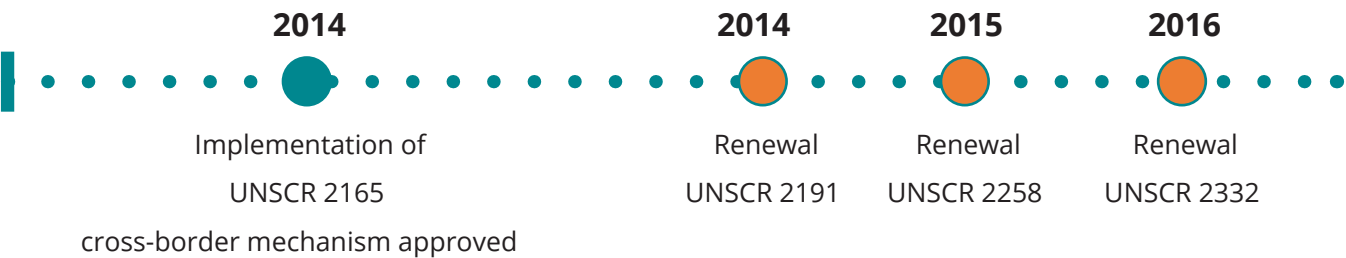
Since 2014, cross-border authorization has been renewed seven times. Russia has continuously sought to end UN cross-border operations over the years, ostensibly based on the idea that it violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Damascus government. Through these efforts, Russia seeks to legitimate its support of the Syrian government. Eventually, the efforts of Russia to limit the cross-border mechanism succeeded in January 2020, when – under the threat of a total veto – the scope of UN cross-border operations was reduced by UNSCR 2504. This decreased the extension period from twelve to six months and eliminated authorization for the border crossings from Jordan and Iraq. After

intense negotiations in July 2020, the UNSC failed to approve aid delivery through Bab al-Salam and only renewed the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for twelve months through the passage of UNSCR 2533. Almost all humanitarian actors working on the Syria crisis have expressed grave concerns about the gap that would emerge from the dismantlement of the UN role in cross-border programming. In a briefing to the Security Council in March 2021, the UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, Mark Lowcock, highlighted that failure to renew the UNSCR jeopardised the delivery of around one thousand UN aid trucks which cross ‘Bab al-Hawa’ monthly to reach 85 per cent of the four million people in need of assistance in NW Syria.

After the passage of UNSCR 2165, the international community established the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (‘SCHF’), a financial lifeline for civilians displaced by fighting. In 2019, the SCHF allocated 117\$ million to non-governmental organizations (‘NGOs’) working in NW Syria, 70 per cent of which was distributed through local Syrian NGOs. Failure to renew the cross-border mandate puts this funding mechanism at risk and threatens the solvency of many Syrian NGOs at the frontline of the response, creating a vacuum of service delivery and putting upwards of a million people at risk of acute food insecurity.


UN humanitarian agencies provide the logistical and procurement backbone for humanitarian operations. For example, the World Food Programme (‘WFP’) purchases and delivers the bulk of the food delivered by NGOs in NW Syria. Between January and May 2020, an average of 1,350 truckloads of food and goods crossed into Syria; in May, nearly 1,800 truckloads of aid were delivered, the highest figures to date, highlighting the urgency to maintain the cross-border operation.

To study the expected impact of the end of UN cross-border operations following non-renewal of UNSCR 2020) 2533) in NW Syria, the Syria Development Centre (‘SDC’) partnered with local NGO, Shafak. The study aimed to assess impact on overall humanitarian operations, in addition to each humanitarian sector in NW Syria. Scenario planning and roundtable discussions were employed to create the framework with which the tools for the study were designed.




# METHODOLOGY

The study recruited a mixed methods approach to evaluate the impact of the non-renewal of UNSCR 2020) 2533) on humanitarian work in NW Syria. The qualitative and quantitative elements were deployed in parallel between April and June 2021. The potential strengths of local NGOs that may built on to enable scale-up in response to non-renewal were also assessed through a case study of Shafak, a local Syrian NGO. The following methods were used:



**SCENARIO PLANNING**

We started the study with a scenario planning and roundtable discussion workshop that was attended by Syria Development Centre researchers, Shafak Senior Management and two external humanitarian professionals. The workshop identified various scenarios that can result from the non-renewal of UNSCR 2533 in relation to potential impacts on each humanitarian sector and humanitarian operations in NW Syria. These scenarios were then used to develop the quantitative and qualitative tools in the study.



**QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS**

These surveys were developed and distributed in the form of an online questionnaire which was sent to a randomly selected sample of 250 of Shafak employees and volunteers. The response rate was %90.



**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)**

We conducted four FGDs with (1) representatives of local councils in the 'Idlib' governorate, (2) field staff in the 'Idlib' region, (3) field staff in the 'Azaz' region, and (4) Shafak management staff at headquarters in Gaziantep. Each FGD was attended by 15-10 participants. We ensured a representation of women and IDPs within all FGDs.



**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIS)**

We conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with (1) senior professionals working in the humanitarian sector in NW Syria, (2) members of local communities in NW Syria, and (3) Shafak heads of departments. We interviewed 14 men and 11 women.

Following data collection, quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel 2020. Qualitative data was transcribed and then analysed using grounded theory. Finally, a joint analysis was carried out through a workshop between Shafak and SDC researchers. This report summarizes the key findings of this study. A detailed version of the findings is also available and can be shared upon request.



# FINDINGS

Our findings support the warnings by most aid agencies of a looming humanitarian catastrophe if the UN Security Council fails to renew a resolution allowing lifesaving aid delivered cross-border to reach Syria. The ‘Idlib’ province alone is home to nearly 3 million Syrians who rely on deliveries of food and other essential commodities brought across the border from Turkey, including nearly 1 million people internally displaced within the ‘Idlib’ province since January.

Most alarmingly across our sectoral analysis of impacts, there are numerous reports of increasing malnutrition and food insecurity. The closure of the border crossings is raising legitimate concerns of severe food insecurity as the World Food Programme (WFP) warns of a possible famine in Syria.

We present the findings of the study classified into three parts as relates to the potential impact of the non-renewal of the UNSCR 2533:

- 1. Impact on overall determinants of the humanitarian response
- 2. Impact on Syrian NGOs (includes case study of local Syrian NGO capacity to scale-up)
- 3. Sectoral impact and implications

## 1. Impact on overall determinants of the humanitarian response

The cross-border aid mechanism sustains the overall determinants of the humanitarian response in three critical areas: (1) funding, (2) procurement and logistics, and (3) coordination and technical support. The non-renewal of the UNSCR 2533 will negatively affect these three key determinants of the humanitarian response in NW Syria. The effects are mainly resulted from the suspension of operations of the UN agencies in the Turkey/Gaziantep humanitarian hub:

- In the last few years, there has been an increasing gap in funding reaching %60 of the humanitarian response plan as per the latest figures from UN OCHA.<sup>1</sup> Funding through UN agencies, most notably the Humanitarian Pooled Fund (HPF), usually covers a large part of the humanitarian response plan in NW Syria. The absence of this funding, in case of the non-renewal of the UNSCR 2533, will magnify this funding gap further.
- UN-led humanitarian responses and most UN agencies tend to have the mandate of serving all

<sup>1</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/northwest-syria-funding-gap-analysis-april-june-2021-enar>

affected areas in humanitarian crisis. Some locations in NW Syria, especially close to the contact line in Idlib governorate, are only covered by humanitarian interventions funded by UN-led mechanisms – such as the HPF. Most iNGOs prefer not to work in such difficult to reach areas, as the southern ‘Idlib’ governorate, and prefer to work in more stable areas, such as the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch areas. The non-renewal threatens to further detriment these already disadvantaged areas in Southern ‘Idlib’.

- The coordination of the humanitarian response in NW Syria will likely be negatively affected. The absence of the most important coordination bodies that fall under the UN agencies, most notably the UN OCHA platform and the UN-led clusters system, will result in a significant gap in the coordination of humanitarian interventions leading to overlapping, ineffectiveness and gaps in coverage.
- These gaps in coordination might also result in worsening relations between the humanitarian actors in the Gaziantep hub with increased competitions for funding and less harmonized strategies and field approaches.
- In the last five years, and after the Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, UN agencies introduced the “New Ways of Working” which translated into more sustainable humanitarian interventions. Losing a UN-led response will likely result in lack of sustainable projects that can address the triple nexus of humanitarian-development-peace
- Any proposed alternative mechanism for aid deliver in northwest Syria using cross-line interventions will be very unlikely to work. There is a precedent evidence from northeast Syria on the ineffectiveness of the cross-line aid in Syria.<sup>2</sup> The impact of this ineffectiveness of cross-line aid in northeast Syria was most profound during the COVID19- pandemic when health actors couldn’t receive health equipment and supplies through WHO-led cross-line intervention and had to rely instead of arbitrary cross-border interventions mediated by local authorities and international humanitarian actors.

<sup>2</sup> GOAL organisation. DON’T FAIL US NOW: Ireland’s vital opportunity to make a difference in North West Syria on the United Nations Security Council. (March 2021). Available at: <https://www.goalglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/03/2021/GOAL-Syria-March-2021-position-paper.pdf>

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TRIPLE NEXUS





## 2. Impact on Syrian NGOs

### Localisation and the ability of Syrian NGOs to scale up

Syrian humanitarian actors demonstrated the capability to develop and adapt to the rapidly changing context in NW Syria. The security challenging context presented significant difficulties preventing international actors from securing access, and leaving Syrian NGOs to be the main field actors. The proliferation of Syrian humanitarian, human rights, legal and development organisations that were established anew in the last ten years in NW Syria, and the ability of these organization to learn and develop their structures, policies and operations is commendable. This is an indicator of growing civil society efforts in NW Syria that should be supported to advance further and contribute to the triple nexus of humanitarian, development, and peace.

The localisation agenda, that was further prioritised in the Humanitarian Summit in 2016, promises to empower local NGOs to take leadership roles in humanitarian responses. There have been some examples of good practices related to localisation in the cross border response in NW Syria, some of which are equitable partnerships between international and local NGOs, active engagement of local actors in the various coordination platforms, and some key funding schemes. The United Nations' Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF), which goes mainly to Syrian NGOs, has allowed local NGOs to expand their role in the humanitarian response.

Many actors see that stopping UN cross-border operations might be substituted by channelling assistance through other international organization directly to these local actors which constitutes a good opportunity to build the capacities and increase the impact of those actors. However, applying these changes successfully rests on careful and deliberate work to establish proper channels and good standards of implementation.

In case of the non-renewal of UNSCR 2533, Syrian NGOs will face challenges to expand further to deal with the following potential impacts of this non-renewal:

- Decreased funding in the short term since projects that are funded from the United Nations agencies constitute almost half of total funding.
- A significant part of the funding gap will be covered by iNGOs, but this requires will require efforts to conform to, because iNGOs have different policies that not all Syrian NGOs are familiar with.

- Asymmetry of power that will result from the loss of direct UN funding to Syrian NGOs.
- NGOs operating in certain sectors will be affected more than others. Health, education, and protection sectors will be greatly affected, as these sectors depend heavily on funding from UN agencies.
- Loss of institutional knowledge and context expertise due to loss of trained staff from NGO headquarters in Turkey and in field offices in NW Syria.
- Return of the scope of humanitarian work in NW Syria back to the emergency phase 'life-saving interventions' and the subsequent disinvestment in training, education, and sustainable solutions;
- Hindered trust-building processes between Syrian NGOs and the wider community that are built on the apolitical nature of humanitarian principles. Given the effect of politics on the delivery of humanitarian aid through the potentially successful non-renewal.

- Financial records audited by international auditing firms; KPMG, BDO, MAZARS, Moore Steven and TAGI.
- Ongoing contracts with many agreed and vetted HAWALA service providers resulting in wide access and strong financial capacity. In addition to experience in managing funds with various currencies and good relations with major banks in Turkey.
- Turkey staff are in line with Turkish legislation (Turkish citizenship and work permits) and many have permission to cross from Turkey to Syria for control and follow up.
- Independent department to manage financial affairs relevant to the requirements of the government of Turkey as per the Turkish Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Hence Shafak is able to respond actively to any changes relevant to Turkish governmental regulations governing NGO work.

### **Shafak: case study of local Syrian NGO capacity to scale-up**

In this report, we provide a case study of a leading Syrian NGOs in the humanitarian hub of NW Syria and the potential ability of this organisation to adapt and scale up in case of the non-renewal of the UNSCR 2533. We conducted an analysis of Shafak in relation to support services, operations, and programming alongside structures, policies, and procedures. We found the following highlights which may be built upon to enable scale-up:

- Wide geographical and cross-sectoral access and ongoing projects in NW Syria.
- Ongoing large cash and voucher based programming.
- Strategic partner for many INGOs that is currently implementing projects funded by BHA (FFP and OFDA), FCDO, ECHO, EU, F-MoFA, and GMoFA.
- Active actor in many OCHA-led clusters, sub-clusters and working groups.
- Comprehensive Active Framework Agreements in all major departments.
- Large pool of suppliers in both Syria and Turkey organised into approved supplier lists.
- Strong supply chains with strong fleet management.





### 3. Sectoral impact and implications

#### High risk areas for sectoral impact



##### **FOOD SECURITY, LIVELIHOOD, AND EARLY RECOVERY**

- Redirected funding towards emergency response for basic needs at the expense of early recovery and livelihood budgets
- Shortage of funds will threaten market functionality and the already fragile purchasing power of people in NW Syria, possibly leading to closures of smallest businesses and increasing unemployment.
- Many traders depend on importing materials and the availability of material liquidity. Ending cross-border humanitarian aid, will impact their activities and could encourage them to relocate to other locations.



##### **PROTECTION**

- Increased risk of Gender Based Violence and child protection needs due to potential lack of follow-up of efforts made to build the capacity of protection workers in the field (funds diverted to emergency needs).
- Potential poverty, starvation, and limited access to food may result in deterioration of morality and subsequent increase in crime. Subsequent increases may occur in domestic violence, forced marriage, drug use, child labor, beggary, child soldiering, and sexual harassment.





**HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

- Very likely shortfalls in the supply of medications and medical equipment, in addition to the lack of resources to cover the running costs of health facilities.
- Increase in the rate of malnutrition and weaker coverage of vaccination campaigns.
- Deterioration of health conditions of the people in NW Syria substantially increases the risk of crossing the borders towards Turkish territory and even towards European countries.
- Possible displacement fluxes might start either due to escalation of military operations and/or due to search for assistance if services provided in their locations are suspended.
- Eventual potential collapse of the health sector in light of the spread of the COVID19- pandemic



**EDUCATION**

- Significant increase in the rate of Out of School Children (OoSC) with threats of having children with no education.
- Having communities with illiterate and not educated members who will be a threat on the society through crimes and violation of rules and morals of their communities.
- The bad economic situation will lead the school children to look for work to support their families winning their bread. Furthermore.
- The quality of education would be severely affected with teachers' absence (since they cannot survive without incentives) and they will be looking for a source of income.



**WATER, SANITATION AND  
HYGIENE (WASH)**

- Those living in camps will suffer most due to the absence of sustainable access to water and sanitation services.
- Stopping the operation of pumping stations may occur as a result of the inability to cover running costs.
- Lack in regular maintenance may lead to a deterioration of the WASH infrastructure (water, latrines, tanks and sewage networks).
- A high risk of increase in the numbers of water-borne diseases especially in camps due of the lack of desludging and Sewage Water Management.



**EMERGENCY RESPONSE, NON-  
FOOD ITEMS (NFI) AND SHELTER**

- In-kind activities including NFI and hygiene kits distribution are liable to be lost.
- Weaker capacity for rapid emergency response for camp population (fire, floods and displacement).
- Winter response at high risk of deterioration as 4.2 million people in need of support during winter months (in-kind heating materials, clothes, and stoves would not be sufficient inside Syria).
- Huge inflation and fluctuation in price of heating materials, fuels, and NFI.

# IMPLICATIONS

## Human rights

As a consequence of the war, Syria has been fragmented into different zones each living a distinct reality and facing different challenges. Actors in control, including de facto authorities, have all been implicit in human rights violations. However, the fact that assistance to Syria is being channelled to different zones creates an important dynamic of competition over international assistance funds which constitutes leverage in the hands of the international community to enforce human rights conditionalities when necessarily. Leaving the Damascus government in full control deprives the international community from this leverage which constitutes a loss of essential room to manoeuvre, when dealing with various actors.

**THE ABILITY OF CHANNELING ASSISTANCE TO DIFFERENT AREAS OF CONTROL USING CROSS BORDER MODALITY CREATES AN IMPORTANT DYNAMIC OF COMPETITION OVER INTERNATIONAL FUNDS WHICH CONSTITUTES LEVERAGE IN THE HANDS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ENFORCE HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONALITIES.**

## Reconstruction

Major donors including the EU and USA have made it clear that no reconstruction funds will be released to Syria before a meaningful political transition process is underway. This puts emphasis on political transition as a critical condition shaping Syria policy for many key international actors. Ending cross-border assistance will contradict this orientation in several ways: (1) this will signal to the Damascus government that it is able to exercise pressure over the international community which is responding to its demands. (2) It will indirectly convey a message that the Damascus government is being recognized as the legitimate government of the whole of Syria through which all aid will be funnelled.

## Misappropriation of funding

The Damascus government has developed a policy and legal framework that allows it to co-opt humanitarian assistance and reconstruction funding to rewards its supporters; many of whom are on the list of international sanctions, advance its own narrow political and economic interests, and punish those it considers as opponents. Stopping cross-borders operations will see more funds being channelled through the Damascus government which will add to the risk of international aid funds becoming complicit in the atrocities committed by the government.



**Local governance and civil society cohesion**

Host to one of the most intense conflicts in modern history, Syria has been fertile ground for the development of diverse forms of governance. Coping with state-failure and humanitarian necessity coupled with the lift of the heavy-handed Damascus security apparatus in the north, gave rise to a latitude of new governance structures and organized civil society groups. These have been playing important roles both in terms of delivering service and assistance to people, and in terms of contributing to the political and peacebuilding process. These actors benefited significantly from being central partners with the UN on multiple fronts. Stopping cross-border operations might see the power of local governance structures diminishing which could mean losing their potential for peace building and recreating a gap in representation.

**STOPPING CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS MIGHT SEE THE POWER OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND CIVIL SOCIETY DIMINISHING, WHICH COULD MEAN LOSING THEIR POTENTIAL FOR PEACE BUILDING.**

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

All Syrians in need, without discrimination, must be reached with humanitarian assistance by all means necessary. In light of the possible non-renewal of UNSCR 2020) 2533), increased coordination and cooperation between humanitarian actors is the best way to achieve this goal. It is in this spirit that we present the following recommendations:

- Donor governments must collectively increase flexible, multiyear funding for the Syrian humanitarian response, particularly the United States and United Kingdom, which significantly decreased financial pledges at the 2021 Brussels Conference on Syria.
- All donor countries, along with UN agencies, and international NGOs, should revive and implement key findings and recommendations from organizations that have exhaustively documented aid obstruction in Damascus, such as Human Rights Watch, Chatham House, and Amnesty International.

- Any funding mechanisms that are designed and endorsed by donor governments to operate in a scenario of UN withdrawal from the cross-border response must aim to maintain funding to Syrian NGOs and simplify compliance requirements when possible. In addition to providing capacity training for organizations so that they may meet those compliance requirements.
- All donor agencies should ensure that any possible funding redirected to international NGOs entails fair and proportional funding to Syrian NGO partners of iNGOs. This is to mitigate the asymmetry of power that will result from the loss of direct UN funding to Syrian NGOs, all cross-border donors should preserve strategic lines of communication with Syrian NGOs and hold iNGOs accountable to pursue equitable partnerships.
- It is of vital importance to engage with local Syrian NGOs more and understand strategies and capacity which has been extensively improved after more than 10 years of crisis. Due in part to capacity building programs supported by UN agencies and INGOs.
- Syrian NGOs must be included in needs assessment and planning processes, coordination meetings should be held in neutral locations to facilitate Syrian NGO participation, and input from Damascus and Turkey should be harmonized by the Jordan hub to ensure balanced representation. These steps will serve to increase trust and strengthen cooperation between actors.
- Greater emphasis on early recovery aid is another adjustment that would ensure the sustainability of aid to all of Syria through a cross-border mechanism. Relative stability in Syria has shifted the population's needs from immediate humanitarian assistance to early recovery projects with more sustainable outcomes, including support for livelihoods and the restoration of basic social services, education and health care.
- In summary, Syrian NGOs call on the UNSC to reauthorize the cross-border resolution for another 12 months, and to reinstate the closed crossings, 'Bab al-Salam' in the northwest and 'al-Yarubiyah' in the northeast, to ensure Syrians in need, wherever they are, can access lifesaving aid and humanitarian actors are able to intervene and respond effectively to many crisis like COVID-19 and so on.

**SYRIAN NGOS CALL ON THE UNSC TO REAUTHORIZE THE CROSS-BORDER RESOLUTION FOR ANOTHER 12 MONTHS, AND TO REINSTATE THE CLOSED CROSSINGS.**



# DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

## Advocacy

- All humanitarian, human rights and other civil society actors involved in the humanitarian response in NW Syria should intensify efforts to push governments to put more diplomatic pressure on the five permanent members of the UNSC to extend the cross border resolution.
- If the UNSC fails to extend this resolution, advocacy efforts should ask UN member states to vote on this resolution through the UN General Assembly instead. This will allow the resolution to avoid Russian and Chinese vetoes.
- Messages should clearly link the humanitarian impact of the non-renewal of the UNSCR 2533 with the potential political and military impacts. In addition to the consequent implications on the early recovery phase in the conflict.

## Localisation

The good practices related to localisation in the humanitarian response in NW Syria should continue to be supported and called up. Any alternative mechanisms of the UN-led cross border response should ensure a continuation of support for Syrian NGOs and Syrian civil society at large. The localisation agenda with its seven components of (1) funding, (2) equitable partnerships, (3) capacity strengthening, (4) participation and inclusion, (5) engagement and influence in coordination mechanism, (6) visibility, and (7) engagement in policy debates and formation.<sup>3</sup>

Practical steps to move towards these components in the context of NW Syria include:

- Increase the proportion of direct funding provided to local NGOs.
- Devote more resources capacity strengthening of local organizations.
- Protect humanitarian and health workers through enhanced protection mechanisms of critical civilian infrastructure, such as health facilities.
- Work with the private sector to streamline reporting requirements for banks and to verify the legitimacy of humanitarian partners.
- Increase the coverage of local NGOs' overhead costs in recognition of the challenges of working in Syria

<sup>3</sup> Van Brabant, K, and S Patel, 'Localisation in Practice: Emerging Indicators and Practical Recommendations', Global Mentoring Initiative, 2018



Localisation process should be seen as a goal in itself, given the key role Syrian NGOs play in the current humanitarian response and the key role they should, and will, play in the future of Syria.

**UN agencies**

- UN agencies involved in the humanitarian response in NW Syria should be part of advocacy efforts to renew UNSCR 2533.
- In case the resolution is not renewed, UN agencies should ensure gradual and phased transition of the current and planned humanitarian interventions. This exit strategy should be developed in close coordination with the other humanitarian actors involved in the response to ensure continuation of lifesaving services and transition of key functions and services.
- In case the resolution is not renewed, and the UN agencies were asked to operate from Damascus, these agencies should transparently report on their humanitarian access in NW Syria. This is to allow for an evaluation for the effectiveness of any potential cross-line humanitarian interventions that may be claimed to be an alternative for the cross border ones.
- UN agencies, and considering the highly sensitive context in Syria, should continue to comply with the core humanitarian principles. This includes prioritising beneficiaries on the basis of needs and vulnerability, avoiding direct and indirect forms of funding or support to any party to the conflict, and acting independently of the Damascus government interferences.

**UN AGENCIES SHOULD AVOID DIRECT AND INDIRECT FORMS OF FUNDING OR SUPPORT TO ANY PARTY TO THE CONFLICT, AND ACT INDEPENDENTLY OF THE DAMASCUS GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCES.**

**Donors**

- Donors should continue to support the population of NW Syria, which includes groups, such as IDPs in self-settled camps, that are considered to be the most vulnerable in the Syrian crisis.
- In case the UNSCR 2533 is not renewed, donors should explore alternative mechanisms to fund the cross-border humanitarian response in NW Syria. This includes establishing a multi-donor funding platform for the cross border response as an alternative for the UN-led one.
- Donors should scale up their funding and support to iNGOs and NGOs that prove to be ready to

fill the gaps resulting from the possible withdrawal of the UN agencies.

- Donors should encourage collaborative consortiums for funding applications. These consortiums should demonstrate equitable multidisciplinary partnerships for international and local actors.
- Donors are encouraged to further adopt the localisation agenda and the triple nexus approach of humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

**Humanitarian actors**

- The humanitarian actors of the cross-border response in NW Syria should establish alternative coordination platforms instead of the UN-led ones. This could be through scaling up existing coordination platforms such as the NGOs forum, the Syrian NGO Alliance, and other potential platforms.
- To avoid the potential impact on interrelation between humanitarian actors, equitable partnerships and collaborative consortiums should be scaled up.
- Humanitarian actors should increase their fundraising activities to cover potential gaps in funding.
- INGOs to prioritise the cross-border response in NW Syria within their global landscape.
- INGOs and NGOs should scale up more Cash Based Interventions (‘CBIs’) or vouchers, led by the UN bureau in Istanbul.
- Scale up livelihoods projects to graduate beneficiaries smoothly to livelihoods.
- iNGOs should review their policies and procedures related to accessibility and coverage to ensure hard to reach areas in NW Syria are not left behind.

**ESTABLISHING A MULTI-DONOR FUNDING PLATFORM FOR THE CROSS BORDER RESPONSE COULD BE AN ALTERNATIVE FOR THE UN-LED ONE.**

**INGOS SHOULD REVIEW THEIR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO ACCESSIBILITY AND COVERAGE TO ENSURE HARD TO REACH AREAS IN NW SYRIA ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND.**



