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Department for Africa  
and the Middle East



**Finland's strategy for  
development  
cooperation and  
humanitarian assistance  
in the  
Syrian crisis**

2021–2024

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This strategy covers the Finnish response to the developmental, peace building and humanitarian needs of the conflict in Syria** and in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon and Jordan. The promotion of human rights is at the core of this strategy, as their fulfilment contributes to a more just and subsequently more stable world.

**The conflict ravaging Syria since 2011 is one of the worst humanitarian and refugee crises of our time.** Throughout the conflict, **tactics causing deep human suffering have been widely used.** All parties to the conflict have **violated human rights and international humanitarian law.**

The Syrian regime's military gains have altered the dynamics of the conflict. Efforts have been made to advance the political process in order to solve the conflict, namely by forming the Constitutional Committee. To date, these attempts have not amounted to tangible results. Only a **credible political solution**, as defined in UN Security Council Resolution **2254** and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, will ensure stability in Syria.

It is in Finland's strong interest to support solutions to end the war in Syria and to alleviate the suffering of the people affected by it. The conflict not only shakes the regional stability, but also **has direct implications on stability and security in Europe.** As an EU member state, **Finland participates in formulating and implements the policies adopted by the European Union.** Both nationally and on the EU level, Finland emphasizes the need to continuously reflect on policies and the instruments used. Adapting to changes is necessary in order to achieve the desired results.

Since the formulation of the previous strategy four years ago, the need for an increasingly effective resilience response to the Syrian crisis has been emphasized. A lesson that has been learnt is that the protraction of the crisis must strengthen the **collective determination to develop more impactful and inclusive responses**, which serve the immediate needs of the people as well as support a future return to development pathways. We need to work on the **triple nexus, humanitarian – development – peace**, in order to be more effective.

Another lesson learnt arises from **support to peace building** efforts. Despite the war still going on, it has been important to build platforms for Syrians for their voices to be heard. Building common ground and capacities for inclusive dialogue processes is important and allows envisioning a shared future.

The third lesson, which has become ever more prevalent, is that **women and persons belonging to vulnerable groups** continue to pay a disproportionately high price in the long and devastating conflict. This is why it is essential to support **the agency of women** and build the capacity, confidence and skills of women, children and persons with disabilities.

Finland's strategic goals regarding Syria are the following: 1) **the inclusiveness of the peace processes** and accountability; 2) the promotion of **gender equality**; 3) the promotion of **resilience building** and strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; 4) the promotion of the **rights of people belonging to the most vulnerable groups**; and 5) the fostering of **innovation in finding new solutions** to humanitarian and resilience challenges.

The three impact areas are **1) peace building; 2) the enhancement of women's rights; and 3) the rights of children and rights of persons with disabilities (PwDs)**.

Finland's development cooperation and humanitarian aid to alleviate the consequences of the Syrian conflict are impacted by a set of premises. First, Finland has **no bilateral political-level contacts with the Syrian regime**, and therefore its interventions are not based on a mutual agreement or approved national plan. Secondly, there have been several ongoing, multi-layered, highly active armed conflicts in Syria, which are separate on the one hand and intertwined, on the other (ISIS, regional backers). Thirdly, the conflict is **regional**, both politically and in terms of the large forced migration and refugee flows to the neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. This has caused major instability and scarcity of resources in these countries, greatly increasing their **fragility**. Fourthly, the conflict and its spillover effects are unfolding in the **EU's neighbourhood**, with their rapidly changing dynamics influencing the EU – including Finland. Finally, the **scale of displacement and hence response needs is massive**. The appeals for Syria (UN's Humanitarian Response Plan, HRP) and its neighbouring countries (Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, 3RP) amount to almost USD 10 billion in 2020. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to increase humanitarian needs. In Lebanon, the Beirut blast of 4 August 2020 intensified the country's economic and political crisis.

# 1 CRISIS CONTEXT

The conflict in Syria began in 2011 when peaceful demonstrations were **violently repressed** by the Syrian regime, igniting a nationwide civil war. The warring parties have since received support from **external powers**, which has further exacerbated the conflict. The conflict is now an international one, involving **several state players as well as militias**. Throughout the conflict, tactics causing deep human suffering have been widely used – deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including on humanitarian and medical staff and facilities, the use of weapons of mass destruction, siege and sexual and gender-based violence. All parties to the conflict have violated human rights and international humanitarian law, and the Syrian regime has in a fundamental way failed to protect the civilian population during the conflict.

The Syrian regime's military gains have altered the dynamics of the conflict. The regime now controls the majority of Syrian territory with the exception – at the time of writing – of most of the northeast and northwest of Syria. Efforts have been made to advance the **political process according to UN Security Council Resolution 2254**, namely by forming the Constitutional Committee. To date, neither attempts to build a constitution nor any other aspect of the political process has amounted to tangible results. The parliamentary elections of 2020 brought about allegations of fraud and political interference, and expectations for the 2021 presidential elections are low.

Despite territorial losses, the terrorist group ISIS – alongside other extremist organisations – remains a threat to the people of Syria. Finland is a committed member of the United States led **Global Coalition against ISIS** and participates in its activities. Finland also participates in working groups on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, as well as in Counter-ISIL Communications.

The international community has reacted to the violations of international humanitarian law by the warring parties in Syria through different measures, including counter-terrorism activities and targeted restrictive measures. Targeted restrictive measures are an important tool in the EU's and other countries' policies. They aim to address the Syrian regime's violent repression of the Syrian civilian population. All counter-terrorism activities and restrictive measures should be **in compliance with all obligations under international law**, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, and they **should not impact principled humanitarian action**.

The war in Syria has created an **unprecedented development, humanitarian and refugee crisis**. UN estimates that more than 400 000 people have lost their lives.

More than 80% of the Syrian population now live below the poverty line, and 90% are dependent on external aid. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), the number of food insecure people in Syria had risen to 9.3 million in April 2020, close to half of the population of the country. Currently over 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria. More than 6 million people are internally displaced, and almost 6 million people have left the country. According to the [UNDP Human Development Report of Syria in 2019](#), the middle-income country has suffered a massive developmental decline since 2010, setting development gains back by decades.

The reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (Col) on the Syrian Arab Republic reveal gross **human rights violations in Syria**. Millions of people have been affected by violations by the parties of the conflict. In order to work against impunity, the Col on Syria was established as early as August 2011 by the Human Rights Council resolution S-17/1 to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011. In December 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 71/248 establishing the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM).

The Commission of Inquiry has also reported that throughout the conflict, women, girls, men and boys have been subjected to sexual violence. **Rape and abuse of civilians has been a widely used war tactic** for creating fear, punishment and humiliation.

Women and girls continue to pay a disproportionately high price in the long and devastating conflict as a consequence of gender inequality and discrimination. Traditionally, the political elite in Syria and the region consists predominantly of men, while **women are marginalized in the political sphere**. As a consequence, men also dominate the peacebuilding process.

The war has led to diminished sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and the lack of protection for women and girls. This results in a number of harmful chain effects, for example, the increase in child marriages or preventing girls from going to school. The **COVID-19 pandemic** has further increased the risk of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as other forms of violence and abuse of women and girls in the region.

Syrian women carry an increasing responsibility of providing an income to their families, yet they experience higher rates of poverty than men. Among the refugee

population in Jordan and Lebanon, Syrian refugee women obtain only a minor share of the work permits granted to refugees.

According to UNICEF, **grave violations of children's rights** continue unabated in the context of the Syrian crisis. These include the recruitment to armed forces, abductions, killings and maimings. Nearly 6 million Syrian children have been born since the conflict began. They have grown up knowing nothing but war and displacement. In 2020, 7.3 million Syrian children required humanitarian assistance. 1.75 million children were out of school, and another 1.35 million children at risk of dropping out of school. The situation of persons with disabilities is similarly grave. The number of persons with some level of disability is estimated at over 2.8 million. Over 400,000 of them are amputees.

**Principled humanitarian assistance in Syria is being increasingly challenged.**

The humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are under pressure, for instance due to security concerns, politicisation of aid, polarisation of the conflict as well as counter-terrorism and other restrictive measures. Access to populations in need is difficult. Over the years of the conflict, civilian movement as well as the transport of goods and assistance have been prevented, among others, by violence, sieges and blockades.

**The Syrian war has affected the region since its beginning.** The neighbouring countries' capacities to accommodate the substantial number of Syrian refugees are at their limits. These countries, particularly Lebanon and Jordan, which host the largest Syrian refugee communities, continue to contend with a range of **socio-economic challenges**, including slow or negative economic growth and high unemployment levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has weakened the host communities and governments' resilience further. Simultaneously it has increased humanitarian needs.

Finland has funded humanitarian assistance to people affected by the Syrian crisis through UN organisations, Finnish NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, both with earmarked and unearmarked core funding. Finland will continue to support those most in need. Finland's humanitarian assistance is always needs-based and impartial. By nature, humanitarian aid is not a component of Finland's long-term cooperation programming in Syria and its neighbouring countries.

The Finnish assistance to the rest of the MENA region is covered in the **Strategy for Development Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa**, which focuses on longer-term development assistance to the region.



## 2 FINLAND'S RELATIONS WITH SYRIA, LEBANON AND JORDAN

Currently, Finland has **no diplomatic or expatriate staff in Syria**. A Chargé d'Affaires is accredited from Beirut. Finland and Syria established diplomatic relations in 1953.

As an EU member state, Finland participates in formulating and implements the policies adopted by the **European Union** regarding the conflict in Syria, as expressed in various Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) conclusions as well as in the 'EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat' and the EU Strategy on Syria as adopted by the FAC on 3 April 2017. Other key strategies include the European Consensus for Development and Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus.

**Finland has good relations with Lebanon**, dating back decades. Finland and Lebanon established diplomatic relations in 1954. Finland reopened its embassy in Beirut in 2015. Finland has an honorary consul in Lebanon, and this has contributed to activating trade, cultural and academic relations. Trade with Lebanon has focused on paper and pulp, and business relations in the sector date back to the 1930s. Beirut hosts the Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME), which was based in Damascus until 2011. FIME strengthens Finnish knowledge on the Middle East and Lebanon through research and courses.

Finland has participated in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (**UNIFIL**), founded in 1978, in the years 1982–2001, 2006–2007 and again since 2012. With some 200 soldiers, the current Finnish contribution to UNIFIL constitutes Finland's largest ongoing crisis management intervention. In addition to UNIFIL, Finland has military personnel in the UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization), another UN peacekeeping mission present also in Lebanon.

Since the Syrian crisis, Lebanon has become an important partner for Finland's crisis response, most notably in terms of resilience building and crisis management. It is also a significant recipient of humanitarian assistance. Finland helps Lebanon to bear the burden and consequences of the Syrian conflict through different UN organizations and the EU.

Similarly, **Finland has good relations with Jordan**. Finland and Jordan established diplomatic relations in 1959. The emphasis of Finland's bilateral relations with Jordan is on political cooperation. Finland's trade with Jordan has potential to grow.

**Jordan** is an important partner for the international community, including the EU and Finland, in the contexts of regional stability and dialogue, Syrian conflict, as well as the Middle East Peace Process. Jordan hosts some 650,000 Syrian refugees, in addition to some two million Palestine refugees that benefit from Finnish support to UNRWA. The Zaatari refugee camp, the largest Syrian refugee camp with around 80,000 people, is located in Jordan. Finland assists Jordan in addressing some of the consequences of the Syrian conflict.

Finland is represented in Jordan through its Embassy in Beirut and through an Honorary Consulate General in Amman.

## 3 FINLAND'S STRATEGIC GOALS

### 3.1 The inclusiveness of the peace processes and accountability

**Finland's goal regarding Syria is to help parties to the conflict reduce violence and begin an inclusive process for achieving lasting peace and stability.**

Finland works as part of the European Union and with other partners, such as the UN. The support can take different forms; it can focus on grassroots actors, promote dialogue processes between parties, or strengthen mediation activities. **A sustainable resolution to the Syrian conflict can only be attained by Syrians.** Permanent solutions to conflicts require addressing the underlying political, economic and social problems. Only a **credible political solution**, as defined in UN Security Council Resolution **2254** and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, will ensure stability in Syria. Finland continues to support the role of the UN Special Envoy for Syria towards this end.

There are significant barriers that hinder the participation of women in the peace and statebuilding processes. Finland has a strong focus on promoting women's ownership of and participation in peace processes, in line with UN Security Council Resolution **1325** (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.

**Finland's goal of accountability aims to bring justice for the victims of serious international crimes committed in Syria since the beginning of the conflict in March 2011. It also aims to hold the perpetrators of the crimes accountable.**

Finland has supported the work of the IIIM since its establishment in 2016 and continues to support viable efforts for accountability.

### 3.2 The promotion of gender equality and the rights and status of all women and girls

To advance gender equality in its Syria crisis response, Finland uses a dual strategy which includes the **financing of specific interventions** as well as the **mainstreaming of the promotion of gender equality** across the whole of the crisis

response. Finland's support focuses in particular on women and girls in vulnerable situations, including but not limited to women and girls with disabilities.

**Finland advances the rights of women in its political dialogue** with governments, civil society and other partners, as well as in EU and UN fora. Gender equality is similarly promoted in all development planning and management, including in the steering mechanisms of various projects and programmes.

Finland continues to promote the rights and needs of women and girls and especially SRHR in humanitarian crises and as part of its development cooperation. Promoting the rights of all women and girls to quality and non-discriminatory health services, especially **sexual and reproductive health services, is a key focus area for Finland**. Finland has been a long-time supporter of UNFPA Syria's work on SRHR.

### 3.3 The promotion of resilience building and strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus

Syria and the entire sub-region continue to grapple with the tremendous and long-lasting impacts of the crisis. Vulnerable populations, including millions of refugees in Syria and the neighbouring countries, need constant life-saving assistance. Longer-term durable solutions need to be found. Conflict and fighting have to cease, and an inclusive political solution must be negotiated.

In this context, **the adoption of a resilience approach and the promotion of a humanitarian-development-peace nexus to the crisis response is critical**. Short-term humanitarian assistance and longer-term stabilization/development support need to be coordinated and integrated in an effective and holistic manner, to ensure that the response contributes to the resilience of communities and societies that are hosting Syrian refugees.

**Finland continues to promote a resilience approach to the Syria crisis response, in particular through strategic cooperation with the UNDP**. Since 2016, Finland has been supporting resilience through the UNDP's Sub-Regional Response Facility for the Syria Crisis (SRF), which is responsible for the coordination of the resilience activities of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in Response to the Syria conflict. With the continued support of Finland, the SRF continues to play a key role in advocating for and supporting enhanced resilience programming and monitoring within country response plans.

**Finland mainstreams the resilience approach throughout its Syria crisis response.** In all supported initiatives, Finland seeks to bolster the resilience of affected societies and communities. At the organizational level, the different departments and units within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs actively cooperate in order to ensure a holistic and coordinated resilience-focused approach to the Syria crisis response. This strategy, drafted jointly between the regional unit and the unit for humanitarian assistance, is a manifestation of such cooperation.

### 3.4 The promotion of the rights and the inclusion of people belonging to the most vulnerable groups, including children and persons with disabilities

**Finland promotes the rights of those** in vulnerable positions and situations in its crisis response. Specifically as regards to children, **Finland supports the No Lost Generation projects implemented by UNICEF in Syria and the refugee host countries.** The projects seek to promote children's right to education in a holistic manner. By 2020, Finland had contributed 22 million euros to UNICEF NLG projects in the region.

Similarly, Finland supports the UNDP in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in a holistic manner, including through the rehabilitation of those that have acquired a disability but also through addressing existing legislative, cultural, and other barriers. Furthermore, **disability inclusion is mainstreamed across Finnish-funded development projects in the Syria crisis response.** In humanitarian assistance, Finland also advocates for disability mainstreaming.

### 3.5 The fostering of knowledge, private sector engagement and innovation in finding new solutions to humanitarian and resilience

## challenges in the responses to the Syrian crisis

**Finland promotes the innovative pilot projects of the private sector in order to find new ideas and solutions to humanitarian and development challenges.** This new area of interest is developing.

Since 2016, Finland has cooperated with the UNDP's Sub-Regional Response Facility for the Syria Crisis (SRF) in fostering innovation related solutions to the humanitarian crisis. For example, Finland and the UNDP have organized Innovation4Crises workshops in Jordan, in which solutions to humanitarian and resilience challenges have been sought. The SRF will continue to promote this agenda in the next phase of the strategic cooperation between Finland and the UNDP, beginning in early 2021. Building upon lessons learned, the SRF will also seek to move forward the Innovation4Crisis initiative.

## 4 EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE PROGRAMME

Finland focuses on three impact areas, which **are closely connected**.

The crisis and its effects are addressed by 1) supporting the inclusivity of the peace and political processes in Syria in order to achieve sustainable peace; 2) improving the access of women and girls to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, supporting initiatives that combat sexual and gender-based violence, and advancing livelihood opportunities for women; and 3) supporting people in the most vulnerable situations affected by the Syrian crisis. This particularly includes children and persons with disabilities.

### IMPACT 1: Building conditions and capacities for an inclusive, peaceful and democratic Syria

(SDG 16, TARGETS 1, 3, 6, 7; AND SDGs 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 8)

#### Description [Theory of Change]

The Finnish contribution aims to make the peace and political processes in Syria more inclusive in order to achieve a sustainable peace. Wider Syrian participation in generating ideas and solutions will increase the national ownership of conflict resolution. This goes for various ethnic groups, as well as for women. Dialogue and mediation provide actors with the possibility of finding common ground on various issues of concern. Finland's role in the conflict is to advance a sustainable political solution by promoting inclusive dialogue and mediation efforts, while emphasizing Syrian ownership.

To date, an elite consisting mainly of men has dominated the Syrian political process. Securing women's meaningful participation in the Syrian peace and state-building processes is essential, not only in terms of gender equality, but also because their participation increases chances for a more sustainable peace. Overlooking the gender dimensions of conflict dynamics in a political process risks perpetuating gendered forms of violence, discrimination and marginalisation in the aftermath of agreements.

## **OUTCOME 1.1: More inclusive, Syrian led and Syrian owned peace processes**

### **(SDG 16)**

An inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned peace process is needed for building an inclusive, peaceful and democratic Syria. To try to achieve this, various peace-building activities take place on the grass root level. The activities include mediation and dialogue processes between parties. Finland empowers prominent Syrian actors, who are independent from the parties of the Syrian conflict and their external patrons, to take part in discussions about the future of Syria. The empowerment of other Syrian parties' is also supported and their dialogue with different conflict actors facilitated. Grass roots activists can also become influencers in the conflict bringing communities' perspectives to the political negotiations.

The Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB) has played a prominent role in bringing women's voices into the political process. The assumption is that the current political process will continue in some form, and that the WAB will continue to be perceived as a neutral, credible interlocutor on Women, Peace and Security by different conflict parties and stakeholders. This will enable their continued access to the political process. Having more women in public and political roles is expected to bring about the advancement of gender inclusive policies and legal change.

The Syrian ownership of conflict resolution has been reduced due to an unprecedented level of external actors' involvement in the Syrian conflict. Finland supports linking Syrian actors with external actors of the conflict and empowering the Syrian actors in formulating proposals, channelling their recommendations to different decision-makers and influencing policy planning.

### **OUTPUTS**

- building common ground among various actors in the conflict
- increased participation and leadership of women in peace and state building
- facilitating dialogues of independent Syrians on proposals for settlements based on Syrian interests

### **INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS)**

- developing policy options for compromises to support peaceful settlements and stabilization in Syria
- providing training to grass roots activists on peace building



- supporting Syrian women's engagement in the Syrian political process
- supporting local and independent women's rights organizations within Syria to continue to function and maintain the space they have to operate

## **IMPACT 2: Rights of women and girls strengthened**

**(SDG 5, TARGET 1, 2, 3, 6, A; AND SDGS 1; 3; 4; 10)**

### **Description [Theory of Change]**

In its Syria crisis response, Finland focuses on three key areas, which are of fundamental importance in the promotion of gender equality: 1) improving the access of women and girls to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services; 2) supporting initiatives that combat sexual and gender-based violence; and 3) promoting the rights of women to decent work, livelihood and income opportunities.

Providing sexual and reproductive health services reduces maternal and child mortality and improves the wellbeing of women affected by the Syrian crisis. Millions of Syrian women and girls continue to suffer from increasingly restricted access to these services, as well as from widespread gender-based violence (GBV).

In order to enhance the rights of vulnerable women, including the rights to decent employment and income, the national stakeholders in refugee host countries need to mainstream gender into their national humanitarian and resilience plans. Finland supports improved livelihood opportunities for refugee women, particularly in Jordan, where female employment is in general very low and refugees experience further obstacles in accessing employment. The programme includes strengthening the national stakeholders' capacity to mainstream gender into resilience building and sustainable development initiatives.

## **OUTCOME 2.1: Increased access to sexual and reproductive health services**

When women have increased access to sexual and reproductive health services of an adequate quality, they have better possibilities to exercise their other human rights, in addition to enjoying sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### **OUTPUTS**

- sexual and reproductive health and rights services in Syria made more available
- youth provided with better access to family planning services
- dignity kits delivered to women and girls of reproductive age

### **INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS)**

- supporting SRHR services (Finland has supported the provision of sexual and reproductive health services in Syria through unearmarked core funding to UNFPA, as well as earmarked funding to the UNFPA operations in the country.)

## **OUTCOME 2.2: Improved access to gender-based violence prevention and protection services**

Prevention of and response to gender-based violence require a holistic approach, including work for gender equality, the changing of attitudes in the wider society, women's economic empowerment and strengthened capacity in the security and justice sectors to deal with domestic violence and GBV.

Increasing the quantity of violence and protection services, as well as strengthening capacity to advocate against GBV by key stakeholders, improve access to GBV prevention and protection services. This contributes to the strengthening of women's and girls rights.

### **OUTPUTS**

- better availability of GBV prevention and protection services, including health, psychosocial and legal responses, in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan

- strengthened GBV prevention and protection capacities in the Armed Forces, Public Security Department and judiciary in Jordan
- local community based solutions created for GBV protection and prevention in Jordan
- strengthened capacity to advocate against gender-based violence

### **INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS)**

- UNFPA
- UN Women Eid bi Eid
- UN Women 1325 regional programme (reported under MENA regional strategy)

## **OUTCOME 2.3: Improved livelihood opportunities for women in Jordan**

Finland promotes the rights of women and girls by enhancing the access of women in vulnerable situations to decent work, livelihoods and income. In Jordan, Finland – together with other donors – supports UN Women to advance the rights of Syrian refugee women as well as other women in vulnerable situations to decent work and livelihoods. As the factors contributing to the poor status of women's employment are diverse, a holistic approach is required: Finnish assistance supports improved livelihood opportunities and also strengthens the capacity of Jordanian national stakeholders to mainstream gender into aid programming and advocates policies that advance employment among women in vulnerable situations.

### **OUTPUTS**

- livelihood opportunities created and vocational trainings offered for women in vulnerable situations in Jordan
- strengthened capacities in the government to implement gender policies in Jordan

### **INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS)**

- UN Women Eid bi Eid
- UN Women 1325 regional programme (reported under MENA regional strategy)

## **IMPACT 3: The rights of children and persons with disabilities, have been enhanced**

**(SDG 1; SDG 4, TARGET 1, 4, 5, 6; SDG 10, TARGET 2, 3; SDG 5)**

### **Description [Theory of Change]**

The rights of children affected by the Syrian crisis are bolstered by improving education opportunities through an integrated approach that combines better access to education with social protection and social support. It is recognized that children in vulnerable situations are dropping out of school due to not only conflict and absence of school buildings, but various other factors, including poverty, psychosocial and cultural factors. The basis for social stability and long-term economic growth is created through educating children.

With Finland's support, the rights of persons with disabilities are bolstered through a combination of service provision and of enhancing the inclusion of the disabled within the wider society. In order to enhance the rights of PwDs, a comprehensive approach is required that both improves the state of rehabilitation services as well as addresses the institutional and cultural aspects. Supporting PwDs towards independence and socioeconomic participation will strengthen socioeconomic recovery and enhance the resilience of both the PwD and his/her family, as well as the wider community.

## **OUTCOME 3.1: Access to learning and personal development opportunities for children has improved**

By adopting an integrated approach to supporting the most vulnerable children's access to quality formal and informal education, the rights of these children can be bolstered more effectively. The most vulnerable children and their families will receive child protection and social support services. When access to education is compounded with a more holistic support, the actual participation in education is expected to improve.

## OUTPUTS

- the delivery of formal and informal education services increased for children affected by the Syrian crisis in Syria and Lebanon
- strengthened child protection and social support for most vulnerable children and their families

## INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS)

- UNICEF NLG Lebanon
- UNICEF NLG Syria

## OUTCOME 3.2: The rights of persons with disabilities are enhanced

Finland supports the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities affected by the Syrian crisis. PwDs should be able to actively participate and contribute to socioeconomic development and to enjoy their right to enjoy a life free of violence, stigma and discrimination. In Syria, persons with disabilities face multiple components of marginalization and vulnerability.

Firstly, the rights of PwDs are enhanced by allocating support to initiatives that strengthen their functionality and independence, for example, through medical rehabilitation interventions and psychosocial support. In Syria, the capacity to provide medical rehabilitation is extremely limited.

Secondly, Finland supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society by promoting their socioeconomic integration into society through livelihood support and the promotion of access to labour market basic services, as well as through promoting knowledge sharing, capacity development and awareness raising.

## OUTPUTS

- functionality and independence of Persons with Disabilities enhanced through physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support
- Persons' with Disabilities access to livelihood opportunities increased

## **INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS)**

- UNDP: livelihood support through skills training, vocational training, employment services, and through creating job opportunities; knowledge sharing, capacity development and awareness raising.
- NLG Lebanon, UNICEF
- humanitarian assistance
- promoting disability inclusion through Finland's policy dialogue with other governments, civil society actors and implementing partners, including through the steering mechanisms of various development and humanitarian projects and programmes in the UN and EU

## 5 Risks, monitoring and evaluation

### 5.1 Risk management

**All development cooperation involves risks.** Development cooperation is often conducted in complex and difficult conditions – in countries where the administrations may be weak, people live in extreme poverty and corruption is a problem.

The risks involved in the implementation of Country Programmes are assessed and monitored closely, but sometimes they materialise despite the precautions taken. Anticipating and managing risks is an essential part of the implementation of the Country Programmes: Risk assessments are done regularly and impact the programme design and decision making process at all stages. Risk mitigation measures, their success and materialized risks are reported annually.

In the context of the Syrian crisis, a key strategic level risk is the constantly changing dynamic of the armed conflict, which directly affects the implementation of the Programme. The likelihood of armed violence in Syria's neighbouring countries is lower but cannot be ruled out. The regional and political developments both in Syria and the neighbouring countries pose a strategic level risk and, in Lebanon, the increasing political instability represents a likely operational risk. A pandemic can also affect the implementation of the programme as do the effects of climate change. A significant operational as well as financial risk is corruption, which is prevalent in all of the three countries that this strategy addresses, especially in Lebanon and Syria.

As Finland's efforts are aligned with those of the wider international community and its commitment to fund Syrian crisis response, the successful implementation of Finland's programme depends on other international actors. A breakdown of consensus, firstly, in the UN-led aid architecture; and secondly, in the EU's regional strategy for Syria, is therefore a significant strategic level risk.

In the context of Programme implementation, the risks are managed through careful planning, screening and selection of partners and funding channels. All Programmes report on the use of funding and the results of their work. The Ministry and Embassies follow the progress, the use of funds, and the reliability of reporting through steering groups, monitoring visits, independent evaluations and reviews and regular communication. The Ministry also commissions external auditing companies to perform audits.

## 5.2 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

**The MFA's Syria crisis team is in charge of monitoring the performance of the Regional Strategy.** This work follows the MFA's principles and guidelines, especially the Guidelines on Results-based Management, the Manual for Bilateral Programs and the Evaluation Guidelines. (In joint arrangements,) Finland will participate in joint reviews and evaluations, and aims to support the development of local monitoring and evaluation frameworks and capacity.

The Country Programme is monitored closely. Monitoring and evaluation activities are identified in the monitoring and evaluation plan, which is updated and followed up regularly.

The MFA Syria crisis team, including the relevant desk officers at the Ministry's Unit for the Middle East (ALI-10) and the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance (KEO-70), as well as the officials at the Embassy of Finland in Beirut, conduct regular monitoring exercises to follow up on the implementation of the projects funded by Finland. The partner organisations conduct evaluations on the Finnish-funded projects. These evaluations benefit the Ministry by producing valuable information.

The collective monitoring and evaluation cycle of Finland's Country Programmes and Regional Strategies includes monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities, which are carried out simultaneously and in a fixed format for all Country Programmes and Regional Strategies. These include yearly reports, biannual synthesis reports, mid-term reviews and external evaluations.

In preparing the **annual results report** of the Regional Strategy, the country team assesses not only the Programme performance as per the results framework but also assesses the validity of the theories of change and related assumptions and risks vis-à-vis the context. The theories of change may be adapted to changed circumstances or implementation strategies, if deemed necessary. The annual report is discussed within the respective regional department.

**A synthesis report of the annual reports is prepared as a joint effort by the regional departments every two years.** The departments synthesise main findings or trends found in all of the Country Programme and Regional Strategy yearly results reports.

Country teams carry out a **mid-term review** of the Country Programmes and Regional Strategies. The results and recommendations of the mid-term reviews are used for deciding if changes are needed in the impact areas. The MFA Evaluation



Unit may carry out an evaluation of Country Programmes towards the end of the Country Programme and Regional Strategy cycle.

## 5.3 Tentative financing plan

The financial frame for 2021–2024 is approximately 30 million euros. The financing plan includes the development cooperation that is programmed under the Syria Crisis Response portfolio of the Department for Africa and the Middle East. It does not include humanitarian aid, private sector instruments or Finnish CSOs' MFA funding.

A significant share of Finland's Syria Crisis Response funding has been channelled through humanitarian assistance. The total humanitarian assistance amounted to 12,4 million Euros in 2019 and to 11,7 million Euros in 2020. It was channelled through UN organizations (UNFPA, UNHCR), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Finnish NGOs.



