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ESCWA

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

National Agenda for the Future of Syria – Phase II

Expected Accomplishments

1. **Influence:** International debate on the future of Syria reflects the priorities of a wide range of Syrian stakeholders.
2. **Relevance:** Planning for recovery is informed by continually updated assessments of local needs.
3. **Theory into Practice:** The resilience of Syrians is improved through effective and sustainable short to mid-term initiatives.
4. **Informed Policy:** Development interventions in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan benefit from an expanded knowledge base.

Evaluation

The project includes a **mid-term evaluation**, which will be undertaken after two years from its launch, and a **final evaluation** upon completion.

The purpose of the evaluations is to allow adjustments to the project and to gather valuable lessons learned for future programming in conflict contexts. An amount equivalent to 2 per cent of the total project budget has been allocated for these evaluations.

Estimated four-year budget:
\$13.5 million



Overview

Phase II of the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) will continue to engage Syrian stakeholders in the process of post-conflict transition by providing a forum for discussion on the strategic and logistical recovery, and on reconstruction needs. It will also promote the necessary conditions for such a transition.

Phase II has two main goals: (1) to ensure that the work done during Phase I is owned by a broad spectrum of Syrian stakeholders and remains relevant to the changing realities inside Syria; and (2) to translate the largely theoretical work done during Phase I into concrete tools that could guide the design of interventions in support of resilience, stabilization and reconciliation. This will be done so as to ensure the sustainability of such interventions and support political negotiations towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Background

Syria is on the verge of an irreversible disaster, unless efforts to mitigate the crisis achieve results soon. With official institutions failing to provide basic services, Syrians are seeking assistance from alternative, social networks based on tribal, ethnic and sectarian identities. Such developments are bound to have repercussions on the entire region.

In addition to the many economic and social factors that may have contributed to igniting the crisis, the Syrian institutional and governance structures suffer from serious deficiencies resulting from years of marginalization of large segments of the population. The project's description of the crisis addresses these complexities, and the reading of the rapidly changing situation on the ground is being regularly updated.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Syria has worsened to a point where the humanitarian efforts required to provide basic needs are unsustainable. Syrian actors and the international community are striving to urgently devise interventions to strengthen the resilience of the Syrian people, but this has proven to be difficult given the unstable situation.

The most realistic outlook for solving the crisis involves forging of a new social contract and an inclusive framework to allow Syrians to start rebuilding the country in a democratic manner. In this context, the NAFS programme is a tool to support the participation of Syrians in defining their future, as well as a forum to discuss the humanitarian situation and find ways to strengthen resilience under conflict.

Implementing NAFS Phase II

- The project is designed to **work in cycles**, whereby the outputs of one expected accomplishment both draw upon and feed into other expected accomplishments. For example, the technical-level political dialogue both benefits from the findings of, and provides input into, all other outputs.
- The project will be implemented in **partnership** with Syrian national institutions, civil society and private sector. The team will also work with international organizations, the United Nations Syria country team, existing United Nations coordination mechanisms and other international partners.
- All accomplishments are aimed at the realization of **human rights**, by seeking to reinforce the capacities of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and of rights-holders to claim their rights. The different project processes and activities are also guided by human rights principles.
- Attention will be paid to the specific needs and concerns of women and men, and to **gender issues**, at all stages of the project: in the preparation of the guidance notes; in the development of interventions in support of resilience, stabilization and reconciliation; and in the identification of the individuals to be involved in the technical-level political dialogue.
- The project will be implemented by a dedicated team, under the direct supervision of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme at ESCWA.

Influence

Phase I of NAFS was successful in **servicing as a forum for dialogue between people from different backgrounds to pave the way for a reasonable and manageable post-conflict situation**. The project team has received numerous requests from participants to continue to provide an avenue for dialogue and to disseminate its work more broadly among Syrians on the one hand, and to the international community on the other. Three main outputs will help to consolidate the project's influence.

- Building on the substantive and technical knowledge produced during Phase I, a **technical-level political dialogue** will be launched, aimed at identifying possible **areas and topics of common interest among conflicting parties**, and at generating new insights that could serve official national peace negotiations, in order to maintain or revitalize the momentum of such negotiations.
- **Building on the networks it has established** among Syrian community-based organizations, interest groups and experts, new networks will be created in and across the different sectors identified as crucial for post-conflict reconstruction and recovery. Both **virtual and physical platforms will be developed to enable debate and further validate the scenarios and policy options formulated in the strategic policy alternatives framework** of NAFS.
- NAFS will broaden the **dissemination of its work to international actors and among Syrian stakeholders**, and advocate for the use of its findings as a basis for national programming, with a view to **minimizing duplication of efforts and ensuring that immediate resilience and stabilization initiatives are sustainable and aligned with longer-term recovery and reconstruction plans**.

Relevance

To **ensure that the strategic policy alternatives framework developed during Phase I remains relevant** to the changing Syrian context until post-conflict reconstruction and recovery begin, the project will produce two main outputs.

- A **regular needs assessment** will be undertaken, based on a **comprehensive situation analysis at the sectoral and regional levels**, in order to gather accurate data about the changes on the ground, and feed those changes into the strategic policy alternatives framework.
- A **regular update of the strategic policy alternatives framework** itself will be carried out, to make sure it remains relevant and provides up-to-date scenarios and relevant policy options for the post-conflict phase.

Theory into Practice

To make use of the findings of Phase I in **designing concrete interventions geared towards strengthening the resilience of the Syrian people**, the project will generate three main outputs in Phase II.

- Working with experts and interested organizations, the project team will translate the policy options contained in the strategic policy alternatives framework into **guidance notes, in order to inform immediate resilience, stabilization and reconciliation programming**.
- The guidance notes will be used as a tool for designing projects at the local level, in cooperation with interested organizations. The **purpose is to propose initiatives that build on local resources and capacities to create livelihoods and coping mechanisms, provide essential services to citizens and strengthen local administrations**.
- Capacity-building trainings and materials will be developed to help Syrian partners use the guidance notes in the **design of such initiatives and the development of peacebuilding and mediation capacities**.

Informed Policy

To **influence decision-making** with regard to resolving the conflict and to strengthen the resilience of the Syrian people, the project will produce three main outputs.

- An **online Syria Information Hub will be created; it will include all the research and analysis completed during Phase I, and any training materials and tools developed by ESCWA or its partners to build the capacity of Syrian stakeholders**. The purpose of the hub is to make the same data, tools and training materials available to all.
- **GIS maps identifying key needs and resources in different parts of Syria to help donors, partners and Syrian stakeholders design targeted interventions** that would have the best possible impact on the ground.
- The project team will continue to **monitor the impact of the Syrian crisis on neighbouring countries**, with the aim of identifying key entry points for policy design.