People-to-People Humanitarian and Development Cooperation:

Prospects of Encounters between Syrian and Swiss Civil Society Organisations

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Abstract

This paper is exploring the role and potentials of civil society organisations (CSOs) in international humanitarian and development cooperation. Despite the importance of CSOs in the Syrian humanitarian response, these organisations are often denied agency and opportunities in participating in international decision making. Research on the Syrian civil society is emerging, however, lacking the link to international cooperation. This paper, using Swiss and Syrian CSOs as a case study, analyses the emergence of the Syrian civil society and explores ways in which the integration of civil society cooperation in the international humanitarian system can reduce reverse effects of the current system.

The study shows that perceptions and realities of civil society highly depend on the political, historical, and cultural context. Nonetheless, Swiss and Syrian CSOs both adhere to values of transparency, trust, and good communication. Values that inherently give rise to relations on eye-level, improve participation, and change the current donor-receiver power imbalance.

" Syrian civil society has to learn everything new and is discovering everything from the beginning. For this, we need the support from other societies. We need to build bridges between people directly, not through the media, in order to understand each other. We are not afraid of the future of Syria because Syrians are strong and ingenious, we can rebuild Syria. "   (int. 7)

Content

Introduction

In summer 2015, Syrian employees and volunteers in humanitarian organisations started a social media campaign concerning the donor culture. With the hashtag #That's_what_the_donor_wants people expressed their perceived dependency on donors. After more than four years of conflict, donor-beneficiaries relationships became increasingly complex, and most of local Syrian organisations and humanitarians stand somewhere in between as executing agents. As conditions in the field became less transparent, civil society on the ground felt increasingly left out of decision making. The requirements demanded by donors fit no longer the conditions on the ground and the culture of people affected by the conflict. Syrian civil society plays a crucial role in the humanitarian response in Syria, however, the value of Syria's civil society remains underestimated.

How can the Syrian civil society be included more equally in the humanitarian cooperation? What role can Swiss civil society organisations play in it? In what ways can Syrian and Swiss civil society benefit and learn from each other?

This paper argues that a people-to-people cooperation between Syrian and Swiss civil society organisations (CSOs) needs to be integrated into the current system in order to make humanitarian action and development fairer and more effective. In chapter 1, the concept and importance of civil society will be discussed taking into account cultural dimensions and theories from Peace Studies. Then, current debates and challenges in international humanitarian and development cooperation will be outlaid (chapter 2). In chapter 3, the key findings are presented and applied in chapter 4 to show opportunities and challenges of integrating civil society in international humanitarian and development cooperation.

Methodology

Scope and Goal

This paper uses data collected between August and October 2015 in Turkey and in Switzerland. In the Turkish border town Reyhanli, Geo Expertise[1], a Swiss non-profit association, conducted interviews with local NGOs in order to carry out a study on the role of Syrian civil society in the humanitarian response. The research is part of Geo Expertise's civil society support programme[2] for Syria, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This paper analyses the prospect of an integrated people-to-people cooperation between Swiss and Syrian civil society organisations (CSOs) using a qualitative approach based on primary and secondary resources.

In Switzerland, representatives of associations and foundations, which have projects or partners abroad and work in the area of development or humanitarian aid, have been interviewed. In the case of the Syrian CSOs, interviews have been conducted in Reyhanli and Antakya, Turkey, with representatives of humanitarian organisations that work inside Syria (especially in opposition-controlled areas) and for Syrians in Turkey and Lebanon.

The study does not aim to ignore or downplay the importance of international organisations and government agencies in the humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis, but to explore the benefits and challenges of a more direct contribution by civil society actors in humanitarian and development cooperation.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data needed for the research qualitative methods were employed. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of local CSOs are considered the best method to collect data in the given timeframe.

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[1] http://www.geoexpertise.org/
[2] https://www.scssp.org/en/home

The questions were elaborated to let the interviewee as much freedom as possible to tell the stories from their personal point of view. As the research adopts a culturally sensitive lens, the questions were supposed to be as open as possible and the guidance minimised. The questionnaire was structured in three parts: an overview of the organisation and its activities, details about local and international cooperation, and a part about the perception and role of civil society. Both, Syrian and Swiss CSOs, were asked the same set of questions, with some adaptations, in order to draw comparative conclusions.

In Turkey, most interviews were conducted in Arabic with the help of an interpreter. In Switzerland, interviews were conducted in German, French or English. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, except two interviews in Switzerland were conducted on skype.

The interviews took on average around 50 minutes, reaching from only 20 minutes due to emergencies up to 120 minutes.

The organisations asked to participate in this study were, on the one hand, local Syrian CSOs based in Reyhanli (18) and Antakya (2), and on the other hand, small Swiss CSOs (9) engaging in international partnerships. This gives a total of 29 interviews, In Switzerland, organisations were found through research, thanks to the availability of information. In Turkey, Geo Expertise's list of local CSOs were used to connect with local organisations. From the list, a sample of around 30 organisations were contacted from which 20 agreed to participate in the study.

In general, organisations were interested to participate in the study. However, sometimes a slight confusion of the word 'research' could be felt. It seemed that some Syrian organisations thought we were probable donors, even though we clearly explained the goal of the research. Also in Switzerland, organisations seemed to be sceptical as soon as Syria was mentioned. Moreover, in Switzerland many organisations declined an interview because of a lack of time.

Intercultural studies acknowledges that biased responses are inevitable, especially in studies with researchers and participants from different cultural backgrounds. However, the risk could be minimised by working closely with the local team and translator who are playing an important role in bringing the researcher and the respondents closer together.

Due to security risks in the Syrian context, it was agreed to apply strict anonymity and confidentiality. Nonetheless, almost all interviews were allowed to be registered.

Theoretical Framework

Peace Approach

Peace does not begin with the end of a violent conflict. All processes during the armed conflict will affect 'peace-building' later on. Therefore, this paper uses the concept of *conflict transformation* instead of differentiating between 'peace-making', 'peace-keeping', and 'peace-building'. Conflict transformation understands conflict as a potential for change and argues that conflicts are inherent to societies, however, societies can chose to deal with conflicts violently or peacefully (Lederach, 2003). The simple re-establishing of the status quo before the conflict is not sustainable according to the conflict transformation theory because underlying injustices and structural violence have been there long before the conflict breaks out and will again erupt in violence if they are not addressed (Bonacker et al., 2011: 24-6).

Different authors in Peace Studies stressed the importance of locally rooted community-based approaches to development and aid in order to address these underlying injustices and structural violence. In his article on development, Johan Galtung (1998) presents 15 theses on development in which he supports the idea of a diversified and culturally adaptable approach to development. In the same sense in which Vincente Martinez-Guzman argues there is no single "peace" but "many peaces" (Martinez-Guzman, 2001), Galtung says there is not one "development" but "developments". He defines development as the "unfolding of a culture"

(1998: 127). As there is a multitude of cultures, his argumentation implies the need for pluralistic development. Moreover, he adopts a need-based approach to development (128), but, going beyond existential and exclusively human needs, including the environment, dignity and culture. This holistic understanding of development is crucial in Peace Studies, and applies as well to humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian assistance is also an important part of every violent conflict and brings in new actors and resources. Humanitarian goals are basically the same as in peace work, both want to protect people from violence and enable them to live in dignity. The difference is that peace work goes beyond the emergency situation and applies more long-term strategies. During violent conflict, however, peace work is often coupled with relief work due to the latter's short-term and measurable outcomes needed to reduce immediate suffering, but also to receive funding. (See: Schweizer, 2010 and Paffenholz, 2009)

Civil Society in Humanitarian and Development Cooperation

Civil Society is a very complex and vaguely defined term, but nevertheless it is usually linked to community-based forms of taking part in social and political life. In a later part, the concept will be discussed in more detail. This part sheds some light on why civil society is considered an important part of international cooperation.

Galtung's 15th thesis on development (1998: 136) states:

> The best providers of development assistance are probably voluntary people's organizations engaging in people-people rather than expert-expert dialogues, providing assistance closer to basic needs, and being ready to accept reciprocity.

According to this statement, direct cooperation between civil society groups in different countries could provide a more effective development assistance. I take this statement as the starting point of this paper, and use the data collected to elaborate on this hypothesis.

This statement alone doesn't justify the importance of civil society in development and humanitarian assistance. John Paul Lederach, another important peace scholar, argues in his book *The Moral Imagination* that relationships are the heart of social change (Lederach, 2005: 75). He presents two ways of visualizing social relationships: one that is closer to the common pyramid-model, the second an alternative spider-web-model. Both models can explain the importance of civil society in social change.

The pyramid-model starts from the traditional bottom-up and top-down approach, in which on the top there are a few elites and on the bottom the mass of grassroots. However, Lederach brings in a third approach: the middle-out approach (2005: 79). According to Lederach, there are people who move between the top and the bottom and therefore link the two levels. These people can assume a crucial role in society. The same is true for local CSOs, there are some organisations that have the possibility to link the local community to the international NGOs or governmental institutions. These organisations play an important role in linking the local to the global, and can function as mediators between different levels of development and humanitarian cooperation. Of course not all civil society organisations can play this role, but often, the ones that can assume this function are part of what is considered civil society.

The spider-web-model is more difficult to comprehend, but more appropriate to take into account the complexity of social relationships. Lederach's allegory of the spider-web points out the different connections and the smart flexibility that makes the web resilient (Ibid.: 85). In that sense, we can see civil society as a net of relationships between the state, the market and the family. CSOs can be seen as the connections in this web which make the net resilient and flexible at the same time. Instead of defining civil society negatively - civil society as non-governmental, non-profit or non-military - Lederach incites us to adopt an inclusive vision and look at the connections between the different spheres.

Applying this to development and humanitarian assistance, it can be argued that the focus of assistance needs to lie on the connections, relationships and communication between different actors on different levels of cooperation. Meaning, there should be multiple and diverse platforms and networks, including global, local, political, economic, religious, cultural, environmental, government and grassroots actors to meet and engage in dialog (Lederach, 2003).

In this sense, considering civil society as a space of dialog and relationships, Ropers (2002: 104-105) points out four functions that civil society can offer to societies for becoming more peaceful and inclusive:

- According to Locke's writings, a strong civil society can offer *protection from arbitrary state power* and promote the rule of law

- A thriving and confident civil society also stimulates an *open and discursive approach to conflicts* through the specific socialization of its citizens, who become accustomed to dealing with differences non-violently, according to de Tocqueville

- Taking Habermas' theory into account, civil society also provides a framework to *articulate disadvantaged or minority interests* and fosters the emergence of shared values.

- A diverse civil society also promotes "acquired", instead of "ascribed", affiliations and overlapping membership, and hence, *counters the division of society* along pre-defined lines

This theory claims that a diverse, confident and flourishing civil society is a promoter for inclusive and peaceful societies. That doesn't mean society will become homogenous or conflict-free, but that society will be able to deal with differences peacefully.

Chapter 1: Civil Society – Many Meanings and Realities

In this chapter, different conceptualisations of civil society will be discussed. The dominant Western approach shall be put into perspective by Arab and Islamic approaches. After that, a situated approach to the concept of civil society will be discussed, based on the findings of this study, which will serve to define the concept for this paper.

1.1 A European Approach

The history of civil society in the Western hemisphere can be traced back for centuries. Often it is said to have emerged in form of professional associations such as guilds in medieval times. However, as well in the Islamic world, guilds played an important role. Therefore, the early stages of civil society cannot be considered as a uniquely Western experience (see: Hinnebusch, 1993).

The enlightenment and the idea of a Social Contract changed the perception of civil society. John Locke considers civil society as the realm of political association with the function to rectify insufficiencies of the state of nature through mutuality of contract and consent (Seligman, 2002: 14). The early philosophical debate was predominantly about the relation between the individual and society, whereas civil society was understood as a normative model.

With Marxism, the debate about civil society obtained a global dimension. Especially Gramsci's thoughts include reflexions on global civil society, either as a part of the hegemonic capitalist system or as a counter-hegemonic force (Katz, 2006: 333). There is evidence for both, civil society as integral part of the dominant system but also as a space where the dominant system is challenged. This debate is still going on and it would be interesting to analyse which CSOs engage within the framework of the dominant structure and which ones try to provide alternatives.

Habermas admits the importance of civil society not only because civil society aggregates individual opinions, but because it creates a public opinion through specific communicative actions (König, 2012: 22). But at the same time, Habermas perceives civil society as a normative concept and recognises that the concept often fails to reflect reality (23).

Like Habermas, Foucault escapes the choice between idealism and realism. According to Foucault, civil society does not exist in it-self and is not inherently good. He perceives civil society more as potentialities (Villadsen, 2015: 9). Thus, civil society does not have an inherent function, but rather, civil society adopts functions depending on the political, social and cultural context and the power relations in which civil society emerged.

1.2 Arab Thoughts

One of the few studies on Syria's civil society before the Uprising was conducted by Raymond Hinnebusch in 1993, in the aftermath of the Cold War. As mentioned above, guilds, religious brotherhoods and professional associations have existed for centuries also outside the Western world. In Syria, many of them adapted and survived all kinds of political systems and turmoil (Hinnebusch, 1993: 243). However, cultural and political dynamics influenced the transformation of these associations in the Arab world in another way than in the West.

In Islam, the community is very important and civil society in this context reflects the relational complexity that exists between society and the individual (Hanafi, 2002: 173-174). As Hanafi (2002) puts it: "The importance of civil society derives from the need to balance the desires and needs of the individual with the will and needs of society" (180). In this sense, civil society assumes a similar function to the Social Contract.

Islam used to be very pluralistic and civil society, especially mosques and religious schools, were engaged in a vivid dialog on the different conceptions of and approaches to Islam until in the 5th century of Islam a single hegemonic ideology consolidated (Ibid., 186). Only in the last century there have been new attempts to revive pluralism within Islam.

According to Hanafi (2002), Islamic and Western conceptions need to engage in a dialog because each one can learn something from the other; for instance is the Western conception of civil society based on rights, and less on duties, whereas in Islam duties are often more important than rights (188). Engaging in a dialog, a conception and reality of a responsible and dedicated civil society could emerge.

On the other hand, the findings by Rishmawi and Morris (2007) show that Arab civil society is not only challenged by problems related to the West and the dominant perceptions. On the contrary, the emerging and changing landscape of Arab civil society also faces important internal obstacles, some of which are (Rishmawi and Morris, 2007: 34):

- Lack of coordination and exchange with other groups that are active in the same field, but also within the organisation;

- Limited institutionalisation that often weakens organisations when the founder leaves;

- Politicization of civil society by political parties;

- Donor-driven approach of many CSOs; and

- Legal and political limitations that hinder the organisation's functioning and limit its space for action.

Arab societies are changing and adapting to a more globalised but also participatory world. Arab civil society, in its diversity, is engaging in dialogs with the West and other cultures and is discovering an identity and conceptualisation that fits in its own historical, political and societal background.

1.3 Situated Approach

After having discussed some aspects of the concept, it should be clear that civil society is shaped by the cultural, political and societal context. Therefore, I will now discuss the meaning of "civil society" for the people interviewed in the Syrian and Swiss context.

1.3.1 Syria

Being asked "What does the term civil society mean to you? What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear it?" most of the interviewees had to think for a moment. Everyone has heard the term before, but for most respondents it was difficult to formulate their ideas.

There were predominantly two perceptions of the term: On the one hand, civil society was understood as humanitarian organisations (which reflects the reality on the ground), on the other hand, civil society was seen as 'the people'. 10% of the interviewees understood civil society as active citizens in a society.

Level of education, political awareness, and connections with international organisations influenced their perceptions. Persons with higher education, more political experience or direct ties to INGOs have a more differentiated understanding of the concept, whereas persons with lower level of education, limited political experience or no connections to INGOs more often understood civil society as 'the people'.

The absence of state structures in rebel-held areas, where most CSOs operate, and the absence of an independent civil society prior to 2011, explain the conception of civil society as "society". Due to the absence of state structures, civil society's role is perceive to take over state functions such as service provision, protecting people from violence, promoting values of solidarity and respect, and democratic rule. The experience of wide spread violence and high levels of destruction explain the special concern of civil society's role in promoting mutual understanding and support mentioned by many respondents. Moreover, a study on the civil society shows very well the diversity of Syria's 'new' civil society (see: Khalaf et al., 2014).

1.3.2 Switzerland

Switzerland has a long tradition of an active civil society. The legal system makes it particularly easy to create associations, which is why most CSOs take the form of associations. Moreover, associations reflect the Swiss culture of direct democracy. However, there has been important

changes in society over the past decades which question whether or not associations remain the most appropriate form for CSOs engaging in international cooperation. This will be discussed more in depth later in this paper (see: Chapter 4).

In Switzerland, 22% of the interviewees understood civil society as active and committed citizens in a given society. Other than in the Syrian context where the emphasis is set on the relation between civil society and society, Swiss interlocutors reflect on the relation between the state and civil society. Respondents mentioned civil society as anti-state or counter-hegemonic force (int. 25, 29), as taking responsibility in the absence of a capable state (int. 22, 23, 28), and as a space for interaction and dialog in democracies (int. 24, 27).

Also in Switzerland, the conception of civil society depends on the educational background, personal political awareness or on the specific experience in an international context. Especially the last one influences the person's opinion about the function of civil society. For instance, if the CSO works in "failed" or "weak" states, civil society is seen as an important element in taking over state functions (int. 23, 28).

1.4 Concept for this Paper

Even though this paper considers civil society in its broad and complex whole, the definition needs to be narrowed down according to the civil society actors essential for this paper. However, I try to situate these organisation in the broad societal, regional and global context that influences them.

As seen in the examples from Syria and Switzerland, the conception of what is civil society depends on the cultural, political and societal context, on the exposure to the global context and on personal experience. All these factors play a role and explain why there is no single definition of civil society.

For the purpose of this paper, two types of CSOs are considered:

- In the Syrian context, CSOs are represented by *formal and informal voluntary groups with a minimum of internal structure and international links that work in the humanitarian field*. Due to the recent emergence of the Syrian civil society in the current form, CSOs are in constant transformation. New organisations appear, others disappear, and again others grow and change. As it is usual for an emerging civil society, there are some groups that are based on family ties or acquaintanceship. Most CSOs started out as an initiative of friends or neighbours to help the people in need. Over time CSOs develop a more institutionalised form of organisation and start to constitute unions and networks. Hence, the CSOs interviewed are very different concerning the level of institutionalisation and formalisation, and very similar in their creation and evolution.

- In the case of Switzerland, I consider *registered associations and foundations which have projects or partners abroad and work in the field of development or humanitarian assistance.* It is interesting to notice that, similar to the Syrian civil society, an important part of Swiss CSOs were founded by an individual or a group who wanted to help people suffering from violence or injustice. Most CSOs in Switzerland can look back on a long history and are well established. Hence, they have a clear, specific mandate and identity. This, however, does not mean that they are not evolving anymore. Also Swiss CSOs are continuously adapting and changing, however, due to their long experience, changes happen slow and considerate. There are also some organisations that appeared out of an international movement and could be considered to be INGOs, however, they work independently and therefore, I considered them as CSOs. On the other hand, one CSO reached a size and institutionalisation similar to an INGO.

Chapter 2: Debates and Challenges of the Current System

There are a lot of challenges in the current humanitarian and development cooperation. In order to understand the value people-to-people cooperation can add to international cooperation, some current debates need to be considered.

2.1 Humanitarian and Development Assistance: A Holistic Approach

The distinction between humanitarian or development assistance is not always very clear, and must be considered in a comprehensive way. Especially in the context of protracted social conflicts, humanitarian relief needs to be coupled with development in a specific moment in time or in specific places (Branczik, 2004). The needs and possibilities depend heavily on the context and must be taken into account in the emergency response. Certainly there is no recipe that tells you when to add development and how much. But usually, when taking into account the needs of the people and the demands of local authorities in the conflict area or refugee hosting communities, the importance of long term assistance becomes gradually more important. Especially in poor host countries, refugees and the host communities suffer both from the conflict and international agencies need to take claims of both seriously.

Taking into account the theories of conflict transformation, this paper considers a broad conception of humanitarian and development assistance going beyond basic needs and adopting long-term perspectives on structural and cultural transformations.

2.2 Contradictions of the Politicization of Humanitarianism

In recent years, the term "humanitarian" has been politicized, nonetheless it is still perceived more neutral than "development". Traditional humanitarianism is based on four principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. However, the concept of *human security* and *humanitarian intervention* have challenged the principles of neutrality and independence

and exposed humanitarian workers and beneficiaries increasingly to security risks (Vaughn, 2009: 264).

International actors in conflict situations can be both, an element of security due to the international visibility of human rights abuses and violations of the international humanitarian law, but also a factor of risk depending on the politicization, the agenda or the origin of the organisation (Branczik, 2004).

On the other hand, depoliticization of humanitarianism also encompasses dangers. Even though most actors in the humanitarian field are aware that their work is influenced and shaped by world politics, the depoliticization of humanitarianism enables them to operate in a depoliticized space (Barnett, 2005: 724). Depoliticization leads, however, to a 'normalisation' and 'naturalisation' of the issue, especially by employing technical expertise in humanitarian response. And hence, hampers participation and leaves local communities alienated from the response.

2.3 Importance of Terminology

The term 'aid' can be problematic, especially in protracted crises. The term implies a sense of passivity and dependency. A lot of Syrians in the Turkish border town where the study was conducted expressed a feeling of worthlessness due to the fact that they receive aid but cannot work or decide on what they need. Often, local communities are not efficiently integrated in the humanitarian response.

'Cooperation', which means 'working together', would respect the beneficiaries more if the wording was taken seriously. In international cooperation the terms defining the relationship between the different actors are not very clear. Collaboration, cooperation, partnership or coordination mean different things in different contexts. Alain Fowler, in a paper elaborated for United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), recommends a

clarification and diversification of the possible relationships between organisations. He suggests the following categories:

- Development Ally;

- Project Funder;

- Programme Supporter;

- Institutional Supporter; and

- Partner (Fowler, 2000: 44-45).

The reason behind such a stratified definition of possible relationships is that all sides must be honest with themselves and the others concerning expectations and promises (Ibid., 46). Often expectations on both ends of cooperation do not coincide and ultimately lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and distrust.

2.4 Trade-Off between Professionalism and Participation

People who suffer from injustice are often not given the opportunity to frame their experience themselves, framing is often done by NGOs and the media (Chandhoke, 2002: 46). Many Syrians are disappointed about how refugees and the Syrian conflict are being portrayed in Europe. But what is even more harmful than simplified framing is to tell people what they need. Even though all INGOs praise participation, the rhetoric is far from practice. By telling people what they need and talking in a jargon only professionals in humanitarian assistance understand, and by applying rigorously complicated bureaucratic processes, INGOs give affected people a sense of being incapable of knowing their needs and disempowering the local community (Ibid., 47).

Participatory cooperation faces the dilemma between professionalism and participation. People working in the international cooperation should be professionally trained and representing the local communities at the same time. But in INGOs the participative element is often limited or

missing. CSOs in their diversity can be placed anywhere on the continuum between highly professional and highly participatory, depending on their approach, history, goal, etc.

As Alzoubi (2015) points out in his speech during the Humanitarian Congress in Berlin, Syrian civil society is young and lacks a professional background, which is very important in order to avoid reverse effects of humanitarian action, nonetheless, Syrian CSO are closer to the people in need, have access, know what they need and are willing to take the risk.

2.5 Conditionality and Donor Dependency

A common criticism addressed to donors are the conditions and hidden agendas attached to funding. The problem of conditionality has become especially evident through the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes attached to their development support. In a critical research on the World Bank, Mutazu (2007) uses Stokke's definition of conditionality:

> "The use of pressure, by the donor, in terms of threatening to terminate aid, or actually terminating or reducing it, if conditions are not met by the recipient. It is a means of changing the priorities or even the values of the recipient" (9).

Every fund has some conditions attached, however, these conditions should take into account the receiver's capabilities and needs and not impose standards, processes and values only to make work easier for the donor.

NGOs adapted, among others, two strategies to avoid donor dependency: increasing the number of donors to avoid dependence on one single donor (diversification) and decreasing the number of donors in order to have less conditions attached to the funding (concentration).

Even though diversification reduces the risk and increases stability, there are also serious dangers to this approach. A study conducted in Uganda shows that with an increasing number of small donors, NGOs and the communities they serve become increasingly dependent

(Busiinge, 2010: 43). This dependency undermines community entrepreneurship, local ownership and the sustainability of the programs (Ibid. 95).

2.6 The Problem with Accountability

To whom are INGOs accountable? What happens when people suffer from injustice induced by aid agencies? These are very important questions which often remain unanswered. It is obvious that INGOs are accountable to funders, but only rarely to beneficiaries (Chandhoke, 2002: 48). Even though there are several initiatives to improve the accountability problem[3], the complex bureaucratic processes vanish the traces of clear accountability.
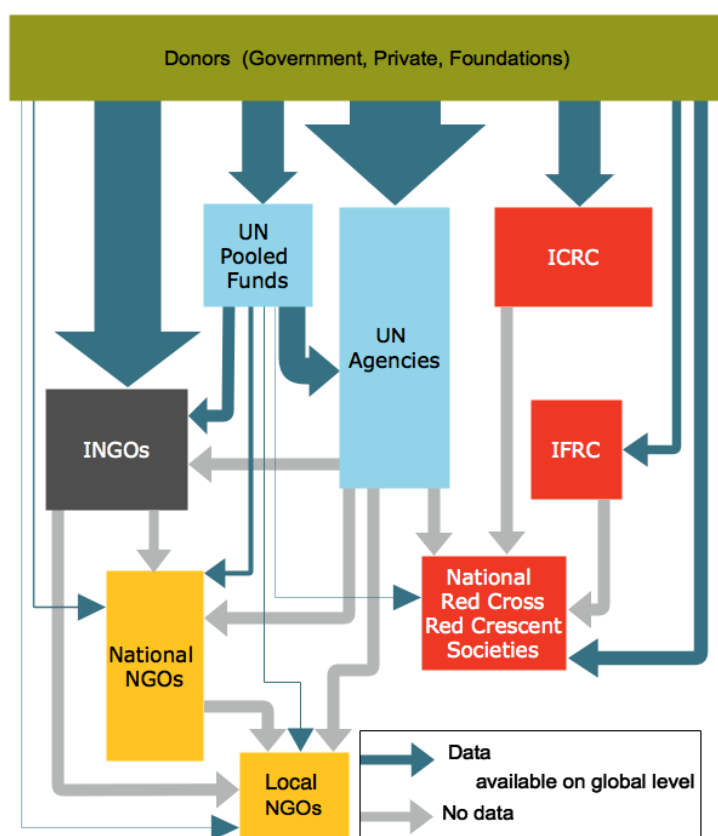

Figure 1: Funding Flows. Source: local2global.info

In most cases of humanitarian and development projects, the way from the first instance donor to the actual beneficiaries is difficult to trace back. Money, decisions and resources go through various organisations and offices in different countries before they reach the people in need. If a project has negative effects on a community, it is difficult to find someone accountable for it.

Also, a lot of international aid gets 'lost' in the system. The "Local2Global" initiative shows the aid flows in the humanitarian system (Figure 1). From all internationally available funds, only a very small amount is directly given to national or local NGOs. The vast majority of funds

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[3] For instance: Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP)

goes first through many institutions, agencies and organisations, before it reaches beneficiaries or local actors. In order to improve accountability, it is important to establish rules together in partnership (Alzoubi, 2005) or to include arbitration or mediation in cooperation contracts (Fowler, 2000: 47)

2.7 The Role of the State: Regulation and Redistribution

Civil society has been predominantly considered as a space outside of state control and in form of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, the relation between civil society and the state are much more complex and diverse than these simplified perceptions allow to see. The state influences the space, rights, financing and other resources civil society can access and civil society can hold the state accountable or can undermine the state by building parallel institutions.

In the absence of redistributive mechanisms civil society will face concentration of resources and knowledge in a limited number of actors and give smaller organisations no chance to build up. Here, the state needs to assume an active role in regulating civil society in order to promote its diversity.

On the global level, there are no redistributive mechanisms and hence, the international humanitarian system is very unequal. Local2Global considered the humanitarian system as a state and calculated the Gini-Coefficient in order to measure inequality (Figure 2). A Gini-
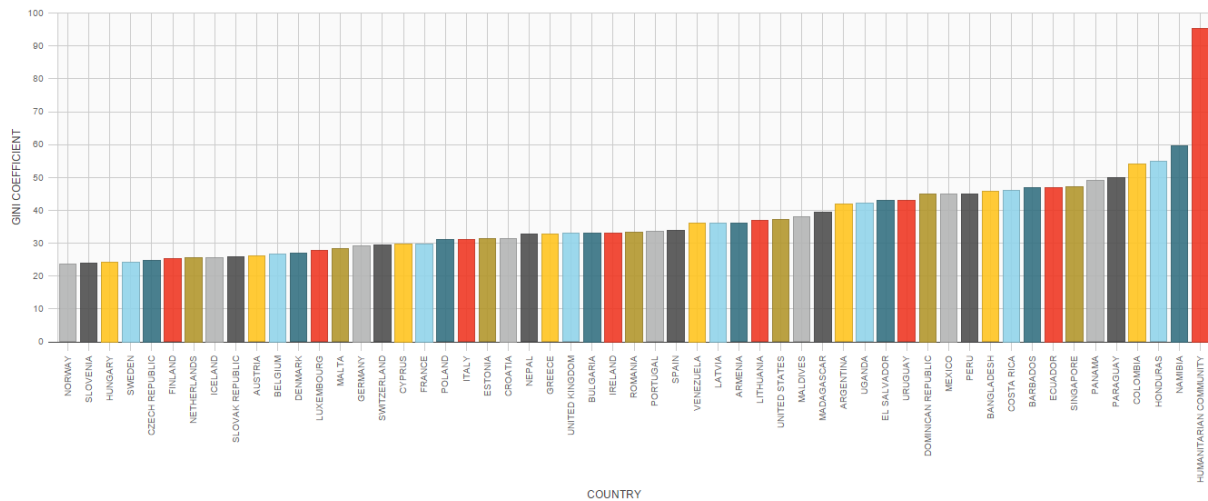
Figure 2: Gini-Coefficient of Humanitarian Community Compared to Other Countries. Source: Local2Global

Coefficient close to 100% means that the wealth is concentrated in very few actors. In the humanitarian community, "just 0,5% of the humanitarian actors registered with OCHA FTS are reported to receive more than 50% of the total known humanitarian funding in 2013" (Els and Carstensen, 2015).

The role of the states and the international community should be to avoid concentration of resources and promote redistribution. However, in the neo-liberal tradition, any kind of state intervention is considered bad, despite the evidence that inequality is increasing globally and locally (see: OECD, World Bank, UN)

2.8 Project-Based Approach and Short-Term Thinking

Projects constitute the majority of development and humanitarian assistance. The project approach is very open and includes small scale community projects the same as large scale government projects. Therefore, the project approach allows all parts of society to engage in development and humanitarian assistance according to their possibilities.

However, there are also some disadvantages that have appeared over the past years. For instance, the project approach fostered short-term and result-oriented dynamics as most projects are not longer than three years and do not take into account the more important long-term

impacts. Especially peace work struggles to receive funding, because they often fail to show results within two or three years.

Another common criticism is the inflexibility of the project approach. The commonly used 'logframe' is directed to identifying clear goals and indicators to measure the success and impact of the project. This in itself is highly desirable and leads to carefully thought proposals. However, it encourages a very linear logic. Once established, these goals and indicators cannot easily be changed when the situation changes on the ground (Bakewell and Garbutt, 2005 :12). This is particularly problematic for humanitarian cooperation in an ongoing conflict, where the situation constantly changes.

2.9 Difficulties Linking the Local to the Global

Local to Global Protection (L2GP) asked international organisations to share information on how much of their funding goes to local and national NGOs. Only UNHCR, UNICEF, NRC, DRC and ACT provided the required information. But it is clearly visible that only a very small amount of the funding goes to local CSOs (Figure 3).
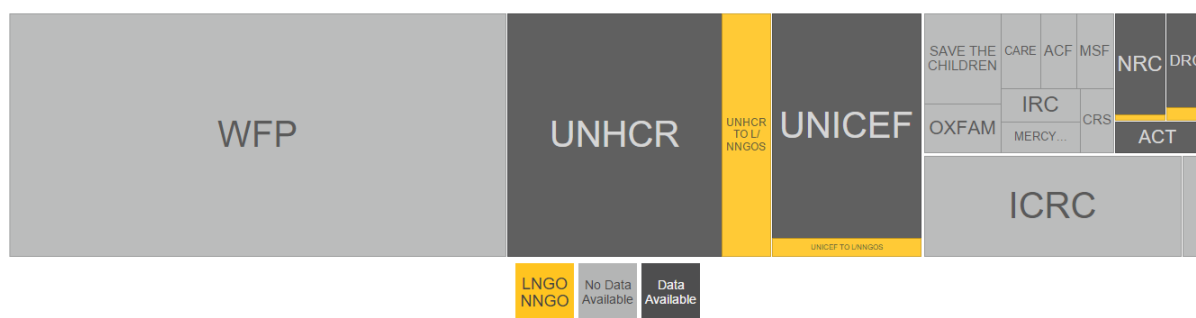
Figure 3: Percentage of Funding going to Local or National NGOs. Source: Local2Global.info

The challenges of local partnerships are manifold. Even in the Syrian context, where partnerships with local actors are inevitable to gain access to vulnerable people, the formal humanitarian response fails to establish reciprocal links and partnerships with local CSOs. Critics by local actors concerning 'partnerships' with INGOs include the lack of participation, inadaptability, unequal power balance, partnerships only on paper, and unwillingness of capacity building (see: Svoboda and Pantuliano, 2015: 16)

Definition of 'local' varies from one case to another. Similar as the term 'civil society' it is a collective term that may lead to conceal diversity. It is important to take into account the political use of localism as well as the local inequalities and power relations (Mohen and Stokke, 2000).

Chapter 3: Key Findings

After having discussed the debates on international cooperation, I will apply the data collected in order to embed direct CSOs cooperation in the broader picture of international cooperation.

3.1 Establishment of CSOs

Date of creation
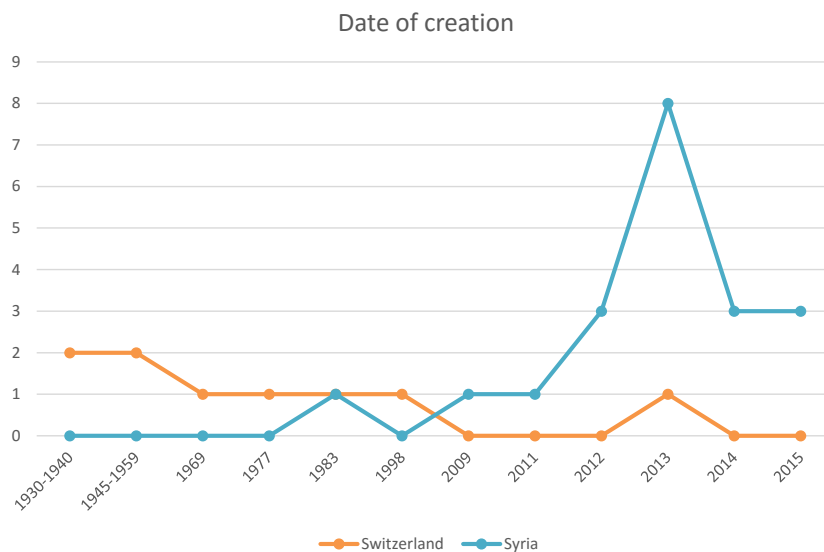
Figure 4: Date of Establishment

In Switzerland, CSOs tend to have a long and rich history. Two of them have been established before World War II. Over the years, many changed their name, objectives or legal form (from association to foundation).

Due to the political situation in Syria, almost all organisations emerged after the uprising in 2011, except for one organisation that was active before the crisis and an international organisation. The year 2013 seems to represent a turning point for Syrian civil society. Many CSOs formalised and registered in Turkey at that time, however, they were working inside Syria since the beginning of the conflict.

3.2 Women's Participation

The participation of women in CSOs depends partly on the types of activities carried out by the organisation. In Switzerland, most CSOs have more the 50% participation of women. Depending on the type of activity, it can also be a challenge to have more women than men. Especially carrying out protection functions and accompaniment can be challenging in some

contexts if there are no men (int. 23). The organisation with the lowest rate of women's participation is a technical CSO employing mostly engineers.

In the Syrian context, CSOs with a high percentage of female workforce tend to work in the field of education and orphan care. Some organisations said that they are open to employ more women, but the work is often not suitable for women, especially inside Syria (int. 3, 10).

Particularly in Reyhanli, women have more possibilities to find employment, due to numerous schools, kindergartens, and orphanages hiring mostly women. But partly as well because of INGOs demanding women's participation as criteria for funding. To some extent it changes gender roles in families and creates new conflicts.

3.3 Geographic Scope of Cooperation

In general, Swiss CSOs are more globally linked, either as donors or partners. Moreover, also relatively small CSOs have access to international platforms. This is basically due to their long history, built-up
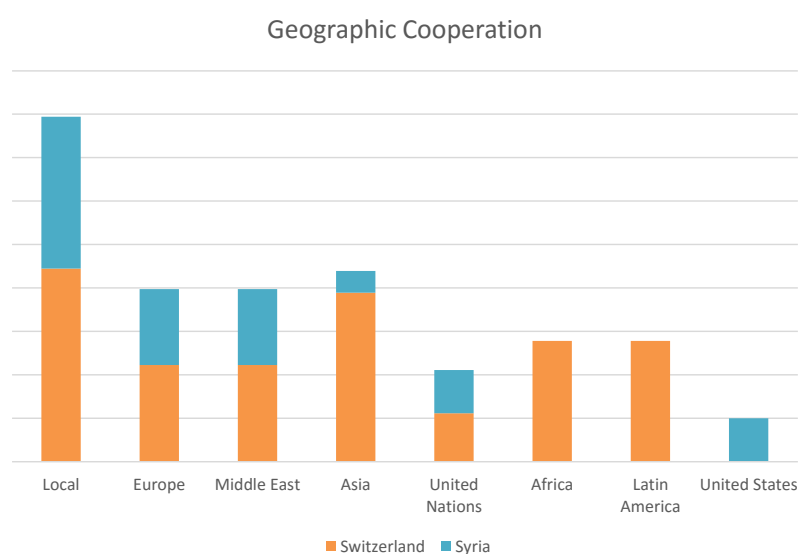
Figure 5: Geographic Scope of Cooperation

connections and expertise. The only Swiss CSO participating in the research that is relatively new, is still very locally rooted and is just about to expand to other parts of Switzerland. Moreover, local cooperation is mostly used for fundraising purposes, whereas in international cooperation Swiss CSOs are donors and/or partners of local organisations.

Syrian CSOs have more local ties than international. Even though, especially through the Syrian diaspora, international links are increasing rapidly, local cooperation is especially important in

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order to carry out work inside Syria. Contrary to Swiss CSOs, Syrian organisation have donors in other parts of the world and partners locally.

3.4 Sectors of Activities

Sectors of Activity
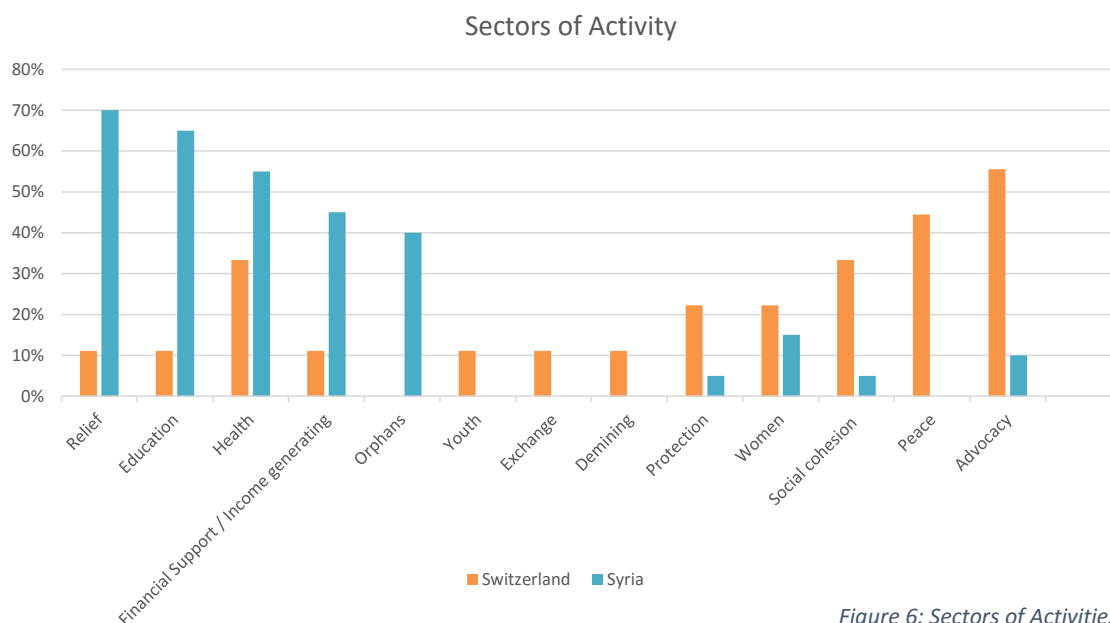
Figure 6: Sectors of Activities

Swiss and Syrian CSOs seem to engage in different areas. Whereas Syrian organisations are currently focusing on the most immediate needs in an emergency situation, Swiss organisations are active in more long-term sectors such as social cohesion, peace and advocacy. However, this is not a hindrance of cooperation, on the contrary. Both have expertise in different fields and therefore both can benefit from partnerships.

Particularly in advocacy there is unexplored potential in cooperation between Swiss and Syrian CSOs. Swiss CSOs, through their connections, can help Syrian CSOs to bring issues to international attention and participate in debates.

But also in peace work and protection Swiss and Syrian CSOs could share their expertise with each other in order to build capacities for conflict transformation and peace-building.

3.5 Shared Problems in Cooperation

Even though Swiss and Syrian CSOs operate in very different contexts and have a different background, some of the challenges they face in international cooperation are the same. Figure 6 shows the most important challenges that were mentioned by Swiss and Syrian CSOs.

The most important shared challenge is *political and legal difficulties* to operate. In Turkey, the situation worsened in summer 2015 with the flare-up of the conflict with PKK coupled with suicide attacks claimed by Daesh[4] throughout the country. However, even prior to 2015, there had been restrictions that affected humanitarian actors. But also Swiss CSOs working in other parts of the world mentioned restrictions and limitations imposed on foreign and local actors to impede partnerships and collaboration.

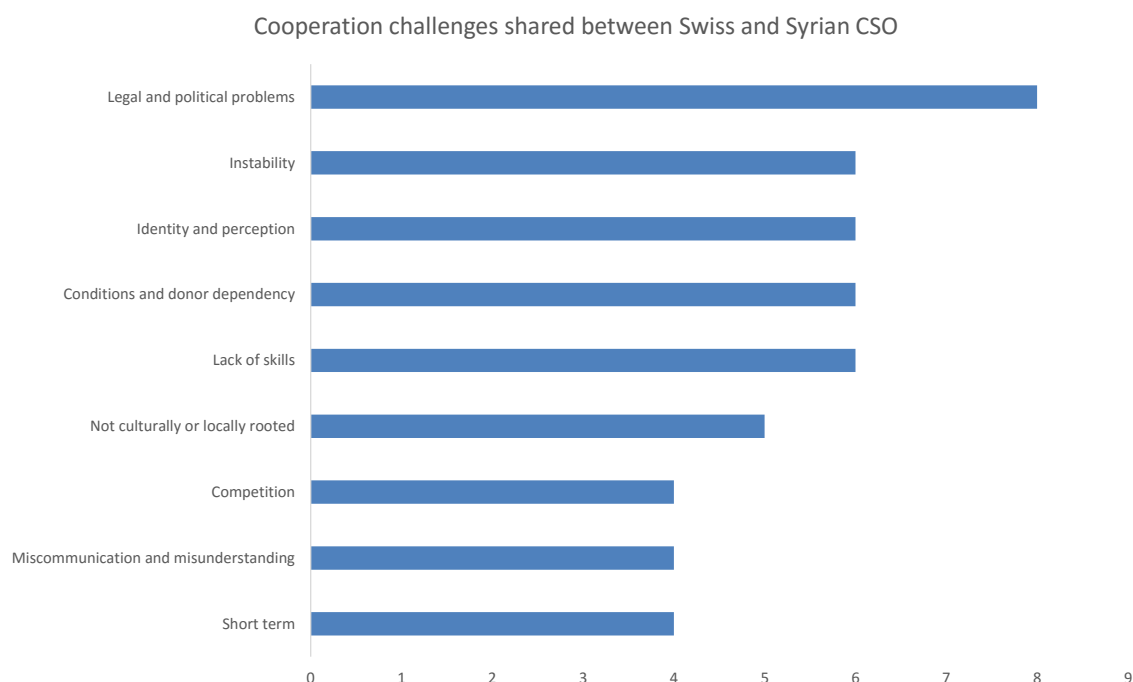Cooperation challenges shared between Swiss and Syrian CSO

Figure 7: Shared Problems in Cooperation

The fact that legal and political limitations are perceived to this extent as a problem for both CSOs, should encourage civil society actors to cooperate on a global level to advocate for more legal and political space.

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[4] Arabic acronym for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

Moreover, CSOs in countries with a relative broad space for civil society should assist other civil societies to improve their legal and political space.

> The role and importance of civil society depends on the space they have […] Countries like Switzerland or Germany, where civil society has a lot of space should help other societies to demand more space for civil society (int. 29)

Instability is another perceived challenge for both, Syrian and Swiss CSOs (Figure 7). Often instability is seen as something negative, however, instability is an inherent part of life and change, of course to different degrees. Equipped with a set of capabilities, embracing instability leads to innovation and creativity.

> Syrians need to build their capacities to be pioneers for the future (int. 7)

For Swiss CSOs, changes in partner organisations, in policies or in the political landscape can be a challenge (int. 2, 4, 5). However, by building up organisational skills and capacity, these instabilities can be dealt with better.

Also *identities and perceptions* present a major challenge to Swiss and Syrian CSOs. In Switzerland, identity issues appear on two levels: on the organisational level or on the individual level. On the organisational level, it is mostly about political identity. In the current system of depoliticized humanitarianism, having a clear political identity or goal can pose a problem (int. 24). Moreover, on highly politicised issues, it is difficult for bigger organisations with diverse supporters, to adopt a clear position (int. 29). On the individual level, working in an intercultural climate implies a balance between adapting and keeping one's identity at the same time and avoid to speak 'in the name of someone' instead of giving marginalised communities a voice (int. 21).

In the Syrian context, identity issues appear particularly on the organisational and societal level. Predominantly the simplification of the Syrian conflict promoted by international media and

the stereotypical perception of Arabs and Muslims as 'terrorists' lead to a misperception of Syrian CSOs. For Syrians this simplifications are perceived as unfair and disrespecting.

> And the media shows all Syrians as violent and Islamist, but that is not true. So donors are very suspicious in supporting Syrian associations (int. 3)

> There is a problem of media representation of Islam and Syria (int. 5)

> Also people are afraid to help Syrians because they are represented as terrorists in the media (int. 15)

The extent of media influence on public perceptions show precisely how important intercultural dialog is in order to avoid destructive stereotyping and prejudices.

The key characteristics of Syrian and Swiss CSOs engaging in international cooperation show that despite different experiences and contexts, there are many shared values and potentials for cooperation. The next chapter will discuss in more detail how cooperation between Swiss and Syrian CSOs can improve the humanitarian response.

Chapter 4: Swiss and Syrian CSO Cooperation

> Syrian civil society has to learn everything new and is discovering everything from the beginning. For this, we need the support from other societies. We need to build bridges between people directly, not through the media, in order to understand each other. We are not afraid of the future of Syria because Syrians are strong and ingenious, we can rebuild Syria (int. 7)

In this part, benefits and challenges that direct CSO cooperation can bring about will be discussed. There are mainly six considerations:

- How to improve participation

- How to enact accountability

- How to counter dependency

- How to strengthen resilience

- How to build trust

- How to enhance coordination

4.1 Improving Participation

Participation is a word of many meanings in humanitarian assistance and development. As discussed in the theoretical part, participation is part of mainstream vocabulary of INGOs and development policies. However, real participation should establish links from the beneficiaries to government and INGO levels and be applied during the entire process of cooperation and not only in the needs assessment.

The present research elicited particularly two interesting aspects of participation: the importance of participation for security measures and the cultural aspect of participation.

The importance of participatory methods in security appeared in several of the interviews. When asked about the security measures taken by Syrian CSOs (Figure 8), 30% of the interviewees were primarily concerned about material and infrastructure, 15% said that they operate in relatively safe areas, and 30% stressed the importance of local staff from which half said explicitly that locals know the risk and are willing to take it.
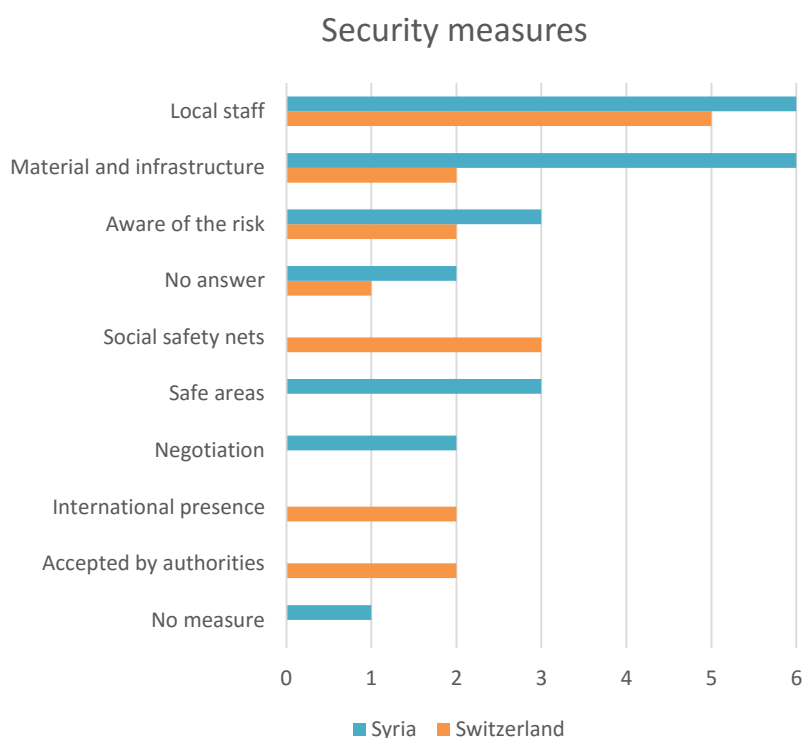
Figure 8: Security Measures

The same question asked to Swiss CSOs, 2/3 of the respondents confirmed the importance of relying on local people for security, 22% stressed the role of international presence and 22% mentioned the importance of building a social safety net on the local level.

This shows, that participation is not only important for assessing needs, but also crucial for taking security measures. Therefore, INGOs could benefit even more from a better participation and collaboration of local people.

In Switzerland, CSOs face another challenge concerning participation (Figure 9). The structure of most CSOs takes an associational form which is based on the long democratic tradition of Swiss society. Six CSOs participating in the study are official associations and three are foundations. The logic of associations is to give the members the possibility to take part in decision making. However, it becomes more difficult to find new members and to mobilise them to actively participate. One explanation might be that the professionalization of the civil

society sphere hinders participation of the members and increases the distance between the employees and supporters of the CSO (int. 23). 'Ordinary people' without a background in a relevant field of study may feel inadequately equipped to participate in decision making or may be overwhelmed by the complexity of issues. Another explanation can be the one predominantly given by young people: associations do not reflect the culture anymore (int. 24, 27).

Problems faced by Swiss CSO

- Not reflecting the culture
- Lack of commitment
- No new memberships
- Lack of political awareness
- Professionalism

7%
29%
14%
29%
21%
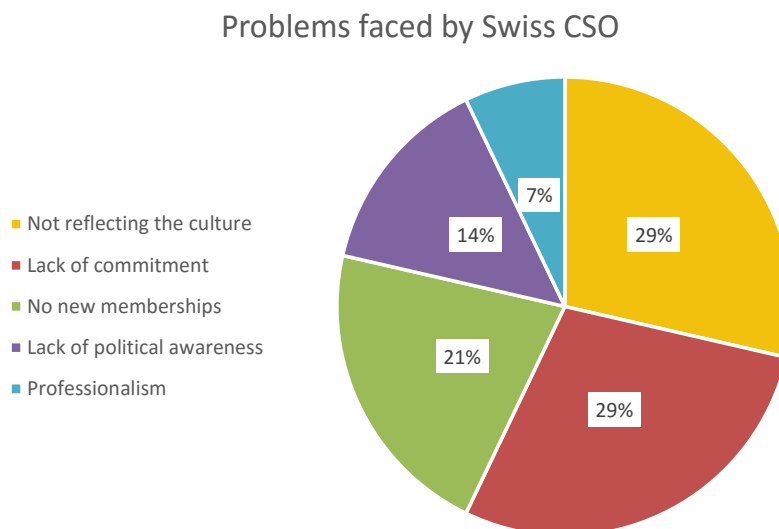
Figure 9: Problems of Swiss CSOs

As mentioned in the theoretical part, civil society is constantly changing. Cultural patterns affect the form CSOs adopt, but CSOs can also have an effect on society. Therefore, young professionals are considering to engage Swiss society more actively in political debates and revive activism among youth instead of changing the associational character of Swiss CSOs (int. 24, 27).

4.2 Enacting Accountability

CSOs are not a panacea. They are important actors, especially in conflict areas, but they also need to be straightforward with themselves and know which promises they can keep and which responsibilities they can assume. Almost 50% of Syrian CSOs perceive their responsibility in providing relief to people in need. However, this study cannot provide any conclusion on the accountability of Syrian CSOs towards beneficiaries, due to the missing data from beneficiaries. Given the emergency situation and the humanitarian crisis, Syrian CSOs haven't been faced with clearly reverse effect of their humanitarian work yet. In general, beneficiaries feel more

comfortable to demand accountability from CSOs they are familiar with, and also local CSOs can propose culturally adequate forms of dispute settlement than INGOs.

Another interesting point is the link between accountability and the quality of the organisation's work. Every CSO needs to know what they can offer in good quality and specialise in this field. However, in Syria most organisations offer everything and, hence, lose sight of quality (int.11).

Representatives of Swiss CSOs tended to respond in a more self-reflective and critical concerning their impact due to their decade-long experience. Concerns about the feedback loop for beneficiaries, cultural adaptability of their programmes, identity problems of staff, and their retreat once they are not used anymore came up in several interviews (int.21, 23). This could be due to many different reasons: due to their academic background, to exposure to mainstream discourses or to the absence of an immediate emergency situation.

Hence, accountability depends on the will of each organisation, on the demands from the beneficiaries, and on the legal/political framework.

4.3 Countering Conditionality and Dependency

> INGOs should give the Syrians a chance, train locals, think in the long-term, so that Syrians can work independently and be sustainable. (int 1)

> Our goal is to provide relief, but also to create jobs for Syrians and to minimise the dependency from donors (int. 10)

When asked about how successful cooperation should look like, the most frequent answers of Syrian CSOs were: no conditions attached, transparent, good communication, trust, and based on local needs (Figure 10).

During the interviews with Syrian CSOs, the problem of conditions and hidden agendas was omnipresent and addressed towards European, North American, and Arab donors, but also towards INGOs and aid agencies which use CSOs as executing organisations. Of course there

are always conditions attached to funding, but the conditions shouldn't go against the needs of the people and shouldn't hinder coordination between CSOs that work in the same field. (int. 4)

Coordination efforts among Syrian CSOs is often limited. 40% of the respondents said that the lack of coordination is a problem. If small, local organisations come together in a network, their strength to negotiate the conditions attached to funding could be increased. But in order to do so, CSOs need to trust each other and be self-confident. Particularly cooperation with Swiss CSOs could be interesting, because Syrian CSOs would gain access to international platforms and UN institutions through Swiss CSOs which have the required connections and experience and uphold values such as reciprocity, equality, and trust.

A common strategy to decrease dependency is to diversify funding and not depend on a single donor. Interestingly, the contrary was claimed: most schools have one single donor, because it is easier to comply with only one donor's conditions (int. 4). Whereas Swiss CSOs attempt to increase diversity of funding in order to be less vulnerable to financial crises. Associations depend partly on private donations that are less volatile than institutional funds and ensure basic income.

In addition, cooperation between small CSOs makes it easier for organisations to meet at eye-level and avoid dependency. They are inter-dependent from one another, and if both parties realise this, there won't be a power imbalance. However, the claim to meet at eye-level seems to be much more important for Swiss CSOs than for Syrian CSOs. This can explain the missing efforts of Syrian CSOs to counter dependency by trying to negotiate or cooperate among each other in order to be able to influence donors' decisions.

Syria

- Good communication 16%
- Transparency 13%
- Trust 11%
- Based on local needs/knowledge 13%
- No conditions 16%
- Reciprocity 2%
- On eye-level 3%
- Mutual respect 8%
- Shared goals 3%
- Organisational skills 3%
- Long term 3%
- Result-oriented 3%
- Flexibility 3%
- Integrity 3%

Switzerland

- Good communication 14%
- Transparency 14%
- Trust 9%
- Based on local needs/knowledge 4%
- Reciprocity 14%
- On eye-level 14%
- Mutual respect 4%
- Shared goals 9%
- Organisational skills 4%
- Long term 4%
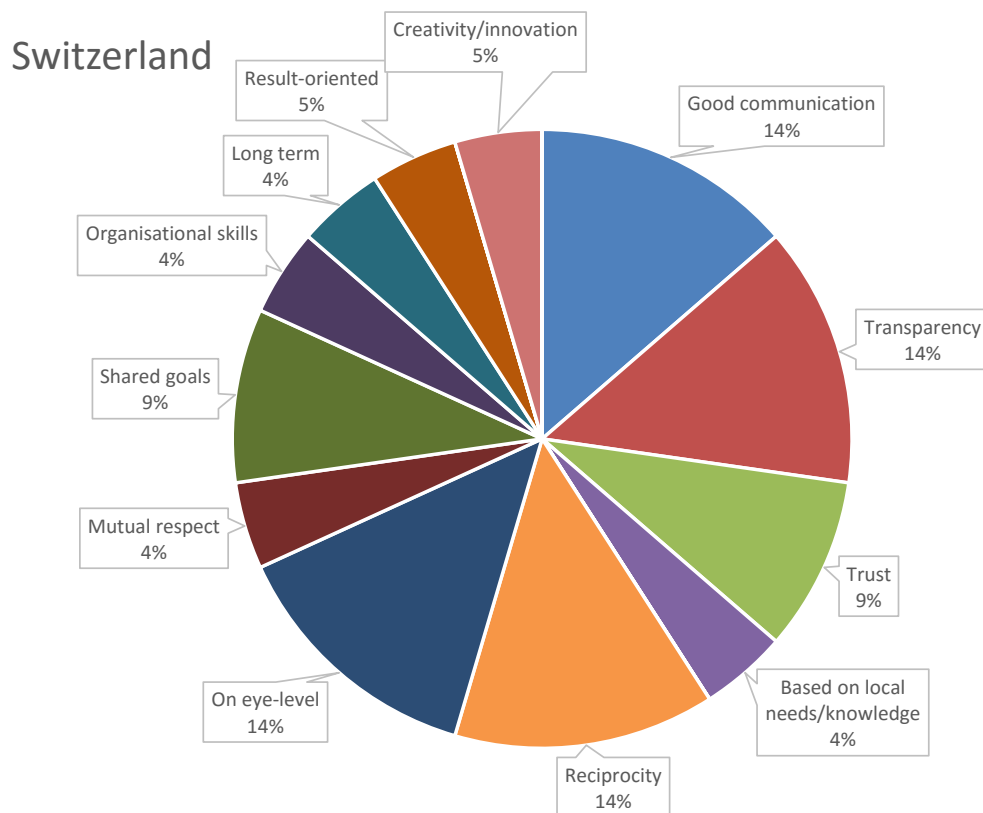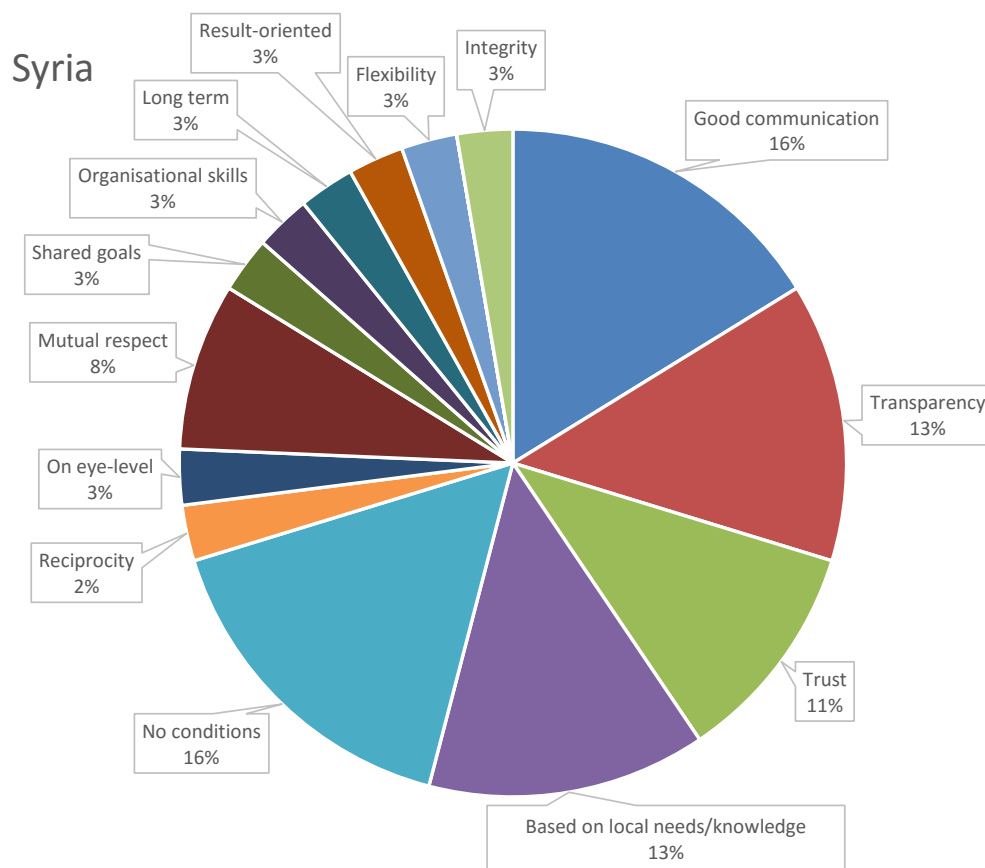- Result-oriented 5%
- Creativity/innovation 5%

Figure 10: How Should Successful Cooperation Look Like?

Also reciprocity is important for Swiss CSOs. Therefore, it should be possible for Syrian and Swiss CSOs to negotiate and cooperate in a way that both sides can benefit from the collaboration. Therefore, it can be argued that direct cooperation between CSOs implies a more balanced relation than in cooperation with INGOs or government agencies, where the power balance can be much more unequal.

4.4 Strengthening Resilience

Inflexible funding leads NGOs to overstretch their mandate and do things that are not really needed, but somehow demanded by donors (Fischer and Fischer, 2004: 2). A staff member of a Swiss CSO supports this idea of NGOs depending so much on the donor's money that they do not dare to ask for changes but rather try to hide the necessary changes to adapt to new circumstances at the expense of transparency (int. 24).

Moreover, funding criteria depends on the donor's definition of civil society. Often their definitions are restrictive and leave out a lot of groups that are considered CSOs in their reality (Muukonen, 2009: 685). Inside Syria, this is true for most civil society initiatives, because most of them are neither institutionalised nor officially registered anywhere. Therefore, they are not eligible for funds aimed to support civil society. This is also one of the reasons why many Syrian CSOs decided to register in Turkey.

The problem is not only that international donors seem to have rigid standards. According to one respondent, it is particularly difficult to cooperate with local organisations because they have all very specific goals and are not flexible (int.15). Nonetheless, CSOs are more flexible due to their close relationship with their supporters that makes it easier to explain changes in the programs or fund allocation.

Some argue that the result-oriented project approach, which is very common among Syrian CSOs, creates this rigidity. Applied in an instable and complex environment, the result-based

project approach increases inflexibility and short-term thinking, that leads to short-term analyses of the context, competition, no incentives to coordinate, and duplication of services which are on the agenda of the donors at the moment. On the other hand, the project approach also encourages innovation and local initiatives. But often, due to lack of coordination, these initiatives are missing an overarching goal. Alternatives to the result-oriented project approach can be found in programme approaches, which consist of diverse projects such as relief, capacity building, research, infrastructure, etc., but within a shared framework and over a longer period of time (several years). A second alternative, particularly in the context of violent conflict, could be a conflict transformation approach[5].

4.5 Building Trust

The desire for good communication and trust is very strong in Syrian CSOs (Figure 10). They want to be heard, taken seriously, and met at eye-level. Also for Swiss CSO trust is the most important in any cooperation, that's why they are very cautious in entering in a new partnership and prefer to have long lasting partners.

In conflict situations, it is difficult to build trust. A young Syrian who built up a network of CSOs inside Syria worked more than a year to build trust between these groups and another year to get support from the European Union (EU) (Field notes, 30.08.2015). The most serious obstacles to build trust are prejudices and stereotypes. Syrians today are very concerned about the image of Syria and Islam in the West and were eager to discuss and understand why they are perceived in this way. In order to rectify prejudices it is indispensable to engage in a dialog, only in this way it is possible to build trust.

Moreover, to build trust it is important for CSOs to assume a clear identity. A transparent and honest identity of who they are and what they stand for also facilitates coordination and

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[5] See: Johan Galtung (2000) *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means.* United Nations Disaster Management Programme

cooperation. However, the problem of CSOs being used for private or political purposes makes that more difficult. Often CSOs with a hidden agenda use the vocabulary of mainstream humanitarian organisations in order to get funding. Nonetheless, in close cooperation with strong participatory mechanisms, it would be easier to find out how serious a partner is.

4.6 Enhancing Innovation, not Imitation

During the conduct of this study, we came across many Syrian CSOs that were founded by young people, have a horizontal and democratic approach, are part of networks, and try to help everyone in need. And some others that are selective or elitist and more hierarchically structured. In general, CSOs formed by people that were part of Syria's 'old' elite can access more funding and support thanks to connections and resources. Adding to this the absence of state policies supporting redistribution, 'new' CSOs have a difficult stand and are likely to disappear if they cannot gain support from outside or mobilise local resources.

In Switzerland, the trend of resource concentration can also be found, however, in a different form. For example in the cooperation between the Swiss Development Agency (SDC) and NGOs. Already big and powerful Swiss NGOs have more resources to comply with the conditions attached to SDC funding and therefore they have more access to big projects whereas small NGOs have almost no chance to receive important SDC contributions (int. 25).

In order to promote a diverse civil society, government policies should not only provide space, but also enhance redistribution to avoid concentration of resources in only a few CSOs, and hence, promote a more equal system with stronger interaction between different levels and spheres.

Unfortunately, donor policies are often not aware of this and promote, even unintentionally, imitation. In Reyhanli, this problem is very common and visible. In 2014, there were only very few orphanages and kindergartens. However, when organisations realised that it is easy to get

funds for orphans and kindergartens, projects in these fields were mushrooming until they started to compete with each other for beneficiaries in 2015 (Field notes, 04.09.2015).

This example illustrates very well the tendencies and incentives to imitate projects instead of adapting to the changing needs of the people. Then, not only are the political situation inside Syria is changing, but also the needs of the people affected by the crisis is changing constantly. Without continued evaluations, assessments and a functioning feedback loop, service duplication and unaddressed needs are inevitable.

Conclusion: Civil Society as a Creative Space

The emerging local and diaspora civil society of Syria faces many challenges. Restrictive legal and political frameworks, misperceptions, and strict funding conditions are only some of the challenges discussed in this paper. CSOs try to adapt to changing contexts and security situation, risking a lot to help the population in dire need. Challenged by the difficult circumstances, many CSOs found creative and innovative ways to deliver aid and improve the community's resilience. However, local resources are limited and foreign support often fails to take into consideration the emotional needs of Syrian CSOs. It is not enough to provide them with money and material goods and consider them only as executing agents without a right to participate actively in the programmes and decision making. To the same extent it is important to admit that Syrian CSOs have acquired relevant experience and to recognise their contribution to international debates.

As civil society is changing constantly, also well-established Swiss CSOs face new challenges. Increasing professionalization of associations is widening the gap between the administration of CSOs and the members. There are two ways of adapting to these changes: changing the legal form from association to foundation or making an effort in integrating the members. However, the first option is not really a solution to the problem. Civil society should be a space for all

citizens and should find a balance between specialised professionals and people representing the concerned communities. Particularly by engaging in an exchange of ideas and experiences with a re-emerging civil society such as in Syria, Swiss CSOs can reflect on the ways of increasing the grassroots participation and of balancing rigid stability with the willingness to take risks.

If we use the image of a spider web to understand civil society it seems obvious that all elements are interdependent and that the connections between them make civil society resilient. Thus, civil society is a space for exchange and dialog between different levels and interests. It is a space to meet, learn, and engage with differences. In a globalised world, civil society does not follow strict national boundaries and is more than ever important to reduce prejudice and oversimplifications of complex issues such as armed conflicts and migration. Particularly here lies the potential of cooperation between Swiss and Syrian civil society. Engaging in an active dialog and understanding each other's needs can help both sides to deal with cultural and political differences more peacefully as well as to advocate for social change.

This paper explored the possibility of people-to-people cooperation, channelled through CSOs. There are many important benefits such a direct collaboration can have for both civil societies. It shows particularly how CSOs can bring a more participatory approach to the international humanitarian and development system, and hence, avoid reverse effects. The study shows, that despite the historic, political and cultural differences, Swiss and Syrian CSO adhere to similar values concerning cooperation such as good communication, transparency, trust, and mutual respect. This, together with the different foci in their work, lays the foundation for cooperation on eye-level, which is often missing in the current international aid system.

However, further research should include beneficiaries' point of view in order to analyse further CSOs capabilities in engaging with communities and in enacting accountability.

Recommendations

To INGOs:

- Accept and promote real and active participation

- Promote a clear and transparent identity

- Develop diverse but genuine forms of cooperation

- Include arbitration or mediation in cooperation contracts

To donors:

- Avoid funding criteria that affect people in need negatively

- Agree on conditions through dialog

- Abstain from creating incentives that hinder coordination

- Offer flexible funding mechanisms

To governments:

- Create space and redistributive mechanisms for a diverse civil society

- Urge other states to promote a thriving civil society

To CSOs:

- Be confident to demand participation

- Coordinate with all actors on the ground (including the government where possible)

- Diversify the types of collaboration (not all need to be financial)

- Be aware of your limitations and act responsibly

- Create networks and platforms to engage in exchange and dialog with other local and

  foreign CSOs

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Annex

Nr.	CSO	Year of Creation	Offices	Regional Scope	Registration	Size	Women's Participation	Sector	Intern. Links
					Syrian CSO Table				
1	Syrian CSO 1	2013	Antakya (HQ), Istanbul, Gaziantep	Antakya, Reyhanli, inside Syria (80%)	Yes (Turkey)	70 employees, many volunteers	80%	Orphans, Relief, Education, Women, Health, Advocacy	Yes
2	Syrian CSO 2	2015	Antakya (HQ)	Antakya	N/A	5-8 employees, 5 volunteers	Majority	Education, Women, Health, Income generating	No
3	Syrian CSO 3	2013	In Idlib (HQ), Reyhanli	Only inside Syria (rural Aleppo, Idlib and Hama)	Yes (Interim Government)	7 main staff, many volunteers	No	Health, Relief, Education	Yes
4	Syrian CSO 4	2014	Reyhanli (HQ)	Reyhanli and Idlib	Yes (Turkey)	43 employees	Vast majority	Education	No
5	Syrian CSO 5	2013	Reyhanli (HQ), Ghouta, Homs, Deir Ez Zor, Idlib	Turkey, inside Syria (retreat from Eastern areas)	Yes (Turkey)	25 employees, many volunteers	Some	Relief, Health	Yes
6	Syrian CSO 6	2009	Reyhanli (HQ), Damascus Homs, Aleppo, Idlib	Turkey and inside Syria	Yes (Turkey)	30 employees, more than 200 volunteers	20%	Relief, Financial Support, Orphans	Yes
7	Syrian CSO 7	2013	Ghouta (HQ), Reyhanli	Ghouta, rural Damascus, Idlib Lattakia, Homs	Yes (Turkey)	80 employees, many volunteers	2%	Health, Relief, Income generating	Yes
8	Syrian CSO 8	2012	Reyhanli (HQ), Idlib, Aleppo	Especially Homs, but also Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Arsal (Lebanon)	Yes (Turkey)	8 employees, 10 volunteers	N/A	Relief, Education, Orphans	No
9	Syrian CSO 9	2011	Istanbul (HQ), Reyhanli	Istanbul, Reyhanli, Ghouta, Homs, Idlib, Aleppo, Lattakia	Yes (Turkey)	20 employees, many volunteers	20%	Relief, Education, Women, Health, Orphans	N/A

Nr.	CSO	Year of Creation	Offices	Regional Scope	Registration	Size	Women's Participation	Sector	Intern. Links
					Syrian CSO Table (cont.)				
10	Syrian CSO 10	2013	Reyhanli (HQ), Houli, Homs, Ghouta, Aleppo. Lebanon: Arsal, Trablous, Akkar	Homs (especially), Yarmouk, Ghouta, Arsal and Akkar (Lebanon)	Yes (Turkey)	a lot of employees and volunteers	Yes	Relief, Education, Health, Microcredit	No
11	Syrian CSO 11	1983	Kuwait (HQ), in 46 countries	Turkey and Syria	Yes (Turkey)	1 employee	No	Relief	No
12	Syrian CSO 12	2012	Reyhanli (HQ)	Idlib, rural Lattakia	Yes (Turkey)	900 employees, many volunteers	30%	Relief, Education, Income generating	No
13	Syrian CSO 13	2012	Gaziantep (HQ), Reyhanli, Idlib, Trablous (Lebanon)	Turkey and inside Syria	Yes (Turkey)	100 employees, more than 2000 volunteers	50%	Relief, Health, Education, Advocacy, Income generating, Protection	N/A
14	Syrian CSO 14	2013	Istanbul (HQ), Reyhanli, Kilis	Inside Syria and Turkey	Yes (Turkey)	15 employees	50%	Education	N/A
15	Syrian CSO 15	2014	Gaziantep (HQ), Reyhanli, inside Syria	Turkey, Syria (Aleppo, Idlib)	Yes (Turkey)	24 employees, no volunteers	Vast majority	Relief, Health, Education, Orphans, Income generating	No
16	Syrian CSO 16	2013	Antakya (HQ), Aleppo Houli, Reyhanli	Turkey and inside Syria, especially in besieged areas	Yes (Turkey)	63 employees, many volunteers	50%	Health	No
17	Syrian CSO 17	2013	Reyhanli (HQ), Homs, Damascus	Mostly inside Syria, Reyhanli	Yes (Turkey)	5 employees	No	Relief, Income generating	Yes

Syrian CSO Table (cont.)								
Nr.	CSO	Year of Creation	Offices	Regional Scope	Registration	Size	Women's Participa-tion	Sector	Intern. Links
18	Syrian CSO 18	2014	Reyhanli (HQ), Kuwait, Urfa, Lattaquia, Idlib, Hama, Aleppo	Turkey, but mostly inside Syria	Yes (Turkey)	160 employees, volunteers in Syria	12%	Relief, Orphans, Financial Support, Education, Health	No
19	Syrian CSO 19	2015	Reyhanli (HQ)	Reyhanli	(through another organisation)	16 employees	99%	Education, Social cohesion, Orphans	No
20	Syrian CSO 20	2015	Reyhanli (HQ)	Reyhanli	Yes (Turkey)	25 employees, no volunteers	> 50%	Orphans	No

					Swiss CSO Table				
Nr.	CSO	Year of Creation	Offices	Regional Scope	Registration	Size	Women's Participa-tion	Sector	Intern. Links
21	Swiss CSO 1	1959	Luzern (HQ), Fribourg, Bellinzona	Africa, Asia, Latin America	Association (ZEWO)	N/A employees, 300 volunteers	60%	Exchange, Advocacy	Yes
22	Swiss CSO 2	1977	Bern (HQ)	India and Bangladesh	Association (ZEWO)	2 employees (part time)	100%	Microcredit Health	No
23	Swiss CSO 3	1983	Bern (HQ), 15 countries	Latin America, Nepal and Indonesia and Kenya	Association (ZEWO)	5 employees, 3-4 interns, 35 volunteers	> 50%	Protection, Advocacy, Peace	Yes
24	Swiss CSO 4	1937	Zürich (HQ), Nicaragua	Central America, Israel/Palestine Vietnam	Association (ZEWO)	3 employees, local volunteers and members	N/A	Health, Advocacy, Women	Yes
25	Swiss CSO 5	1938	Bern (HQ)	Mediterranean Region and Switzerland	Association (ZEWO)	12 employees, volunteers (experts, locals)	99%	Peace, Advocacy, Women	Yes
26	Swiss CSO 6	1969	Olten (HQ)	Colombia, Bangladesh, Palestine, Haiti	Foundation (ZEWO)	4 employees and 2-4 volunteers	66%	Education, Youth, Health, Peace	Yes
27	Swiss CSO 7	2013	no (HQ)	Basel	Association	6 volunteers, 10 members	N/A	Social Cohesion	No
28	Swiss CSO 8	1998	Tavannes (HQ), Genf	Africa, Balkans, South East Asia and newly in Syria	Foundation (ZEWO)	20 employees, some volunteers (civil servants and retired)	15%	Demining, Protection	Yes
29	Swiss CSO 9	1946	Zürich (HQ), Lausanne, Aarau, Basel, Amriswil, Bern and in 16 countries	Switzerland, Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East	Foundation (ZEWO)	429 employees, 334 volunteers	N/A	Relief, Peace, Advocacy	Yes