

Strengthening Civil Society Organizations and Improving Access to Water in Central Western Syria



Final Report

March 2016

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Syrian Civil Society Support Program: Central – western

Executive Summary

The objective of the program is to increase the capacity of the AKF and other organizations to improve access to water, support civil society organizations and strengthen their capacities to design and manage water assistance projects. Supporting civil society organizations is a long term commitment of the Foundation since its establishment in Syria in 2003. The development of civil society organizations was limited until 2011 and a large number of associations have emerged in the crisis with the aim of providing assistance to the population. The situation is however complex. Following the collapse of government public services unformal committees have been set up in many villages and cities to manage community services. Many associations have been created most are unformal (unregistered). The registering of associations which was a long and generally difficult process prior to the conflict is currently even more difficult. Most associations created during the conflict have no official existence but are active in various domains such as food aid, health and education. Registered associations require approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be eligible to manage humanitarian assistance programs. Large water supply projects require the approval of the Ministry of water resources. Humanitarian aid interventions conducted by international organizations, including projects aimed at restoring safe water, are largely controlled by the regime. Certain such as the restoration of water supply from the Hama-Homs pipe network appear to contribute to territorial control by supplying water to strategic areas, in relation to ethnic or sectarian groups, to the detriment of others

Access to drinking water is a critical issue in central western Syria. Discussions with AKF highlighted the need to increase the Foundation's capacity to support newly created unformal civil society organizations (local committees, associations). We agreed to train trainers in the design and management of water projects with the end objective of contributing to the definition of water assistance projects to be implemented by civil society organizations. The Aga Khan Foundation is one of the most active organizations providing humanitarian aid in the region. Its activities are currently focused on humanitarian assistance, including water infrastructure, mainly in the district of Salamiya. Expanding activities in central western Syria requires the involvement of civil society organizations many of which have emerged during the crisis.

The training session took place in Beirut mid-October and was followed by the identification by AKF of 18 potential projects that served as a base for civil society organization training in project design and management conducted by AKF's training team. As of end of February, the AKF team has supervised the elaboration by local committees of 10 drinking water supply projects.



Participants, trainers and Orontes program team members, Golden Tulip, Beirut, Lebanon



Conference room