



SYRIAN CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT PROGRAM

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

Final Report

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Syrian Civil Society Support Program: North – western

Executive Summary

Civil society organizations which have emerged since the beginning of the conflict make up a large reservoir of competencies and capacities that could play a much larger role in the implementation of humanitarian assistance. The only way to substantially improve the distribution of humanitarian assistance in Syria is to rely, much more than it is done presently, on local organizations which currently receive little support from international organizations. The lack of support is, at least partly, explained by the fact that the large majority of SCSOs do not comply with international standards in terms of accountability, reporting etc.

Regarding the water sector, the assessment of SCSOs undertaken as part of the program and the requests for technical advice received by the SCSSP team based in Reyhanli show that there is a large deficit in competencies in relation to the needs regarding the design and management of water projects. Access to safe water is indeed a critical issue in almost all parts of the Orontes river basin. Although combats have ceased in most areas, access to safe water has clearly deteriorated since the assessment conducted early 2014 because of the destruction of infrastructures and the generalized lack of energy. Many local organizations have difficulties in defining technical solutions to improve safe water supply. The two training programs on project design and management and on water resources aim at responding to this problem.

The training on project design and management takes a learning-by-doing approach. The first training cycle focused on 8 potential projects brought by the participants (6 drinking water and 2 irrigation water). The objective is to turn these potential projects into projects suitable for funding by international funding agencies such as SDC. The unexpected result is that 5 out of the 6 drinking water projects have been approved by Syrian organizations (funding organizations or Syrian NGOs benefiting from international funds generally provided by INGOs). Syrian funding organizations have so far mainly supported emergency relief, health and education projects. Their limited engagement in the water sector seems to be related to the lack of suitable projects rather than a lack of interest in water assistance. The 5 projects were approved on the basis of their technical characteristics. The management of the projects need to be tested and will probably require adjustments. The projects were submitted by the local Councils to Syrian organizations even though the management of the project was not in some cases precisely defined. The proposition made by the SCSSP team was to include operating and maintenance costs for two months in the budgets in order to give time to test and adjust the management.

The second cycle of the training in project design was completed end of February. As of 29 February, one of the 5 potential projects has been approved by an INGO (MercyCorps) the remaining four have been submitted to Syrian funding organizations.

Results of the program confirm the need and relevance for support in assessing and designing water supply projects and in the management and maintenance of water supply networks. Increasing 1 available funds for water projects does not appear as a first priority in the short

term to improve access to safe water in Northwestern Syria. Donors are indeed willing to support water supply projects and the funding capacity is currently not fully used because of the shortage of competencies in designing water supply projects. The overall availability of funds for water projects is difficult to assess but it is clear that the demand from donors supporting international NGOs and Syrian NGOs for water projects is not met regarding drinking water rehabilitation projects.

Assessing and designing water supply projects contribute to improve the access to safe water and to the strengthening of NGOs in allowing them to respond to donors' requests for water projects. Water projects are a means for medium or small size Syrian NGOs to develop and strengthen their relations with donors. In relation to the objective of increasing the number of Syrian NGOs active in the water sector priority should be given to medium and small NGOs when possible and appropriate. However, other options need to be considered. Projects such as the restoration of water supply in the city of Marrat an Munan are too large to be currently managed by medium size Syrian NGOs. Regarding International NGOs few such as GOAL have a technical water team, most have limited or no technical capacities in water supply and management. Supporting the assessment and design of water supply projects implemented by International NGOs such as MercyCorps or Archenova is not the first priority regarding the objective of strengthening SNGOs, but contributes to improving the access to safe water.

Restoring water supply for agriculture is an important issue which currently receives little attention from donors. The latter are indeed mainly focusing on emergency water supply. Priority should be given to the restoration of accessible irrigation schemes. The Qatar Red Crescent is examining a possible irrigation restoration program for which the team has provided information on irrigation schemes (accessibility, current state of infrastructures, needs ...). The objective is to provide the necessary background information for setting priorities and planning interventions.

There is a strong demand for training in various aspects of water supply management. The team has developed three management training curricula on water resources, water quality and pumping stations and networks. Two of the courses were given in Jobas (Idlib, Syria). A total of 89 persons have attended the 6 water supply management course.

The team has developed active collaboration with the UN OCHA WASH Cluster. Participants to the second cycle of the training in project design were selected and proposed by organizations (Syrian and International) contributing to the WASH Cluster. Further collaboration with the WASH Cluster is under discussion in the field of data processing regarding water projects implemented by participant organization to the cluster. Regarding irrigation projects the team will pursue its collaboration with the Qatar Red Crescent in providing detailed information on the needs and technical options to restore water supply. GOAL and Syria Relief have requested training courses in water management and project design for their team members and partners.



Training room in Jobas (Idleb, Syria)



Training room – Reyhanli – Turkey