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ANNEX

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe

Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Syria

1. IDENTIFICATION

Action:	Continued support for stabilisation and safe reintegration in North-East Syria
Action Reference:	NDICI CR 2022 / 21
Cost:	EUR 15,000,000.00 (European Union (EU) contribution).
Budget Line:	14 02 03 10
Duration:	Maximum 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
Lead service:	FPI

2. ACTION SUMMARY

In the eleventh year of the conflict in Syria, living conditions of ordinary Syrians have worsened dramatically as a result of continued hostilities, deteriorating socio-economic conditions, and the external repercussions of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. In the North-East region, human security in communities and existing displacement camps is further deteriorating. Recurrent attacks on security forces and civilians flag the risk of the resurgence of Da'esh, thus the high level of vulnerability to radicalisation and recruitment, especially for vulnerable children and youth.

This action aims to continue support to area-based, and people-centred stabilisation efforts in North-East Syria to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities, internally displaced persons and returnees, and mitigate the vulnerability to radicalisation and recruitment in areas in al-Hasakeh, Raqqa, and Deir-Ez-Zor liberated from Da'esh by the Global Coalition. Particular attention will be devoted to providing immediate and durable solutions for those women, children and youth who are ready to leave camps and reintegrate into communities.

Three components are foreseen: the first one aims at promoting safer access to protection and learning spaces for children and youth vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment. The second component will strengthen the social and economic resilience of host communities, internally displaced persons, and returnees in an effort to address urgent and longer-term

needs. Finally, the third component will ensure that land mines and explosive remnants of war are removed from community infrastructure to ensure safer access to services for the target populations in urban and rural areas.

3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

3.1 BACKGROUND

In North-East Syria, human security continues to deteriorate and is particularly vulnerable to a resurgent Da'esh. Few years after the fall of its self-declared caliphate, Da'esh continues to stage terrorist attacks and intimidate civilians while taking advantage of the current political and socio-economic fragmentation in the region. The al-Sina'a prison attack in Al-Hasakeh in early 2022 was a reminder that it is still a threat to regional stability. The risk of recruitment related to violent extremism in particular in Al-Hol remains, with vulnerable women, children and adolescents particularly susceptible to radicalisation.

The severe risk that violent extremism regains power also increases as the population continues to suffer from insufficient access to basic services, livelihoods and economic opportunities, further aggravated by damaged critical infrastructure, including schools, health and water and irrigation facilities. An unprecedented food insecurity also affects the population¹, at a time when food security is becoming a global geopolitical challenge, including as a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

Children and youth are among the worst affected. War-related physical and social destruction of communities has left them with limited access to services, and deprived of meaningful social and economic opportunities, resulting in high rates of unemployment and school drop-out, as well as risks of exposure to negative coping mechanisms, and high levels of psychological distress.

Traumatised women and children released from displacement camps are in high need of rehabilitation and reintegration in the communities. They often encounter hostility when they return home, partly because communities resent their affiliation to violent extremism and partly because they are perceived as a burden as communities barely manage to cope for their own.

In this extremely challenging context there is a clear imperative to continue support to area-based, and people-centred stabilisation efforts by improving the living conditions of all segments of the population, including residents, returnees, and internally displaced persons. Interventions so far focused – among others – on child protection, psychosocial support, improved learning spaces, community-engagement including as part of the reintegration process, youth's economic empowerment, mine action and mine risk education. Increased openness within communities when discussing de-radicalisation opportunities and reintegration of families of former Da'esh-affiliates is a positive sign, including the changing mentality of women who had returned from camps who wish to ensure a better future for their children.

This action will scale-up core existing efforts to address local grievances and improve the living conditions of all segments of the population. Additional efforts will be devoted in the

¹ According to the UNSG's report to the Security Council on 16th June 2022 on the humanitarian situation in Syria, 12 million people – 55 percent of the population – are considered food insecure.

mine action sector that will ensure a coordinated response of mine actors for a safe access to community infrastructure. Activities will be carried out also as part of the EU's overall efforts to implement the Humanitarian-Development-Peace 'nexus' by giving strong emphasis to resilience building and conflict- mitigation, while addressing immediate and longer-term needs of the target populations.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS UNDER THE RAPID RESPONSE PILLAR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT

The deterioration of the security, economic and social conditions of people in North-East Syria are further aggravated by internal and external conflict dynamics as well as natural and manmade disasters, constituting an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4) (a) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, points (g), (h), (j), (m) and (p) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (g) support for measures necessary to start the rehabilitation of key infrastructure, housing, public buildings and economic assets, and essential productive capacity, as well as other measures for the re-starting of economic activity, the generation of employment and the establishment of the minimum conditions necessary for sustainable social development; (h) support for civilian measures related to the demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants and their families into civil society, and where appropriate their repatriation, as well as measures to address the situation of child soldiers and female combatants; (j) support for measures to address, within the framework of Union cooperation policies and their objectives, the socio-economic impact on the civilian population of anti-personnel landmines, unexploded ordnance or explosive remnants of war. Activities financed under the Instrument may cover, inter alia, risk education, mine detection and clearance and, in conjunction therewith, stockpile destruction; (m) support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of armed conflict, including measures to address the specific needs of women and children, and (p) support for measures to address the potential impact of sudden population movements with relevance to the political and security situation, including measures addressing the needs of host communities.

3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In line with the EU Strategy for Syria and as recalled in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 18 February 2019², the Action should not entail activities amounting to reconstruction.

The action builds on the assumption that Syria's conflict parties and stakeholders do not prevent international support efforts; that the security situation in Syria allows for sufficient access and safety to support peacebuilding and stabilisation activities; and that local non-governmental actors have sufficient capacity to work together and receive support.

² Foreign Affairs Council, Meeting n°3673, Brussels, 18/02/2019.

In light of the most recent geopolitical dynamics, the action builds also on the assumption that the geopolitical events do not fundamentally alter the military or political trajectory of the Syrian crisis.

Risks	Risk level (high, medium, low)	Mitigation measures
Internal and external armed attacks impact the ability of implementing partners to work on the ground, as well as the ability the target groups and beneficiaries to participate in the planned activities.	High	Implementing partners constantly monitor the security situation and have contingency plans in place with provisions to reduce, redeploy and/or suspend activities depending on the impact of the security developments.
Access permissions to area of operations blocked/denied due to a change in the political situation, or shift in control of territory between different actors.	Medium	Implementing partners will continue to closely monitor the political and security situation with contingency plans to reduce, redeploy and/or suspend activities depending on the impact of the situation.
Lack of access to beneficiaries due to access restrictions or unwillingness to engage.	Low	Implementing partners are used to operate under the uncertain operating environment, and have proven a positive level of acceptance by the local communities and local administration in the targeted regions.
Disruption of money transfers systems, inability to access cash.	Medium	Sufficient cash reserves will continue to be ensured.
Risk of bribery, robbery, burglary of facilities and loss of assets.	Medium	Implementing partners rely on contingency plans based on past experiences. They will vet contractors and diversify supply chains.
Lack of coordination among donors resulting in duplication of efforts or inefficient allocation of resources.	Low	The measure has been designed in close coordination among EU actors, Member States and other partners. Implementing partners will continue to be part of existing coordination mechanisms with likeminded aid actors.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to continue stabilisation efforts in North-East Syria to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities, internally displaced persons and returnees, and mitigate the risks of any further radicalisation by extremist groups.

4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 4.2.1 To improve the living conditions of children and youth vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment by extremist groups;
- 4.2.2 To improve the socio-economic conditions of host communities, returnees and internally displaced persons in areas at high risk of further radicalisation and recruitment by extremist groups;
- 4.2.3 Reduce the threat from landmines and explosive remnants of war for communities in urban and rural areas.

5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The foreseen activities will be implemented on the bases of an area-based approach as a result of needs assessments and conflict analysis, and in an effort to strengthen coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs (the triple nexus).

The main expected results/outcomes include:

Expected Result (1): Vulnerable children and youth have access to a safer environment, including as part of their reintegration process from Al-Hol and similar camps.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Provision of gender-sensitive and child friendly protection and psychosocial support services;
- 5.1.2 Provision of safe and protective recreational and learning spaces, including with life skills programmes for adolescents;
- 5.1.3 Capacity building of community-based organisations to address the needs of children, youth and caregivers;
- 5.1.4 Advocacy towards relevant local and international stakeholders to support release and reintegration pathways for children and youth in detention;
- 5.1.5 Small-scale rehabilitation of basic community infrastructure³.

Expected Result (2): Communities, internally displaced persons and returnees have access to a safer environment and become more socially and economically resilient.

Activities (indicative):

³ This activity will be implemented in close consultation with community members of different ages, gender and diversities, including people with disabilities, to prioritize community recovery needs and develop related community action plans. Community members will have equal opportunity to participate in the small-scale rehabilitation activities.

- 5.2.1 Provision of gender-sensitive protection, psychosocial support, and non-formal education, including in displacement camps;
- 5.2.2 Promotion of a culture of non-violence, well-being and social cohesion in communities⁴, including as part of the reintegration process of returnees from Al-Hol and similar camps;
- 5.2.3 Awareness raising on positive alternatives to violent extremism and radicalisation;
- 5.2.4 Local economic empowerment, including with vocational training;
- 5.2.5 Capacity building to community-based organisations to serve individuals and communities;
- 5.2.6 Research and analysis to improve local knowledge, and to best promote deradicalisation and anti-radicalisation.

Expected Result (3): Essential community infrastructure is free from landmines and explosive remnants of war in rural and urban areas – in particular in schools and agriculture lands.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.3.1 Non-technical survey of non-surveyed areas to serve concerned humanitarian and development actors present in North-East Syria;
- 5.3.2 Technical surveys, search and clearance of critical infrastructure;
- 5.3.3 Stockpiling demolition of collected devices;
- 5.3.4 Small-scale rehabilitation of cleared infrastructure for community services;
- 5.3.5 Mine risk education in target communities;
- 5.3.6 Local capacity building to coordinate and manage mine action in North-East Syria.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁵.

6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The grants will contribute to achieving all three results in section (4) and (5).

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Potential applicants for funding are non-governmental organisations with consolidated presence in North-East Syria including in the Al Hol and similar camps, and with extensive experience to achieve one or more of the three expected results and specific objectives.

⁴ Involving coordinated efforts between community leaders, civil society and local authorities.

⁵ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission’s authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because **the action entails crisis management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation at the date of the Financing Decision.**

6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 15 000 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is **indicative**.

Indicative budget breakdown

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Component 1 - Objective 4.2.1: To improve the living conditions of vulnerable children and youth vulnerable to further radicalisation and recruitment by extremist groups.		
6.1.1 – 2 direct grants (direct management)	5 000 000	N.A.
Component 2 - Objective 4.2.2: To improve the living conditions of host communities, returnees and internally displaced persons.		
6.1.1 – 2 direct grants (direct management)	3 000 000	N.A.
Component 3 - Objective 4.2.3: To increase safe access to key community infrastructure in urban and rural areas.		
6.1.1. – 2 direct grants (direct management)	7 000 000	N.A.
Total	15 000 000	N.A.

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under direct management for all three objectives/components of this action as specified in section 4.2. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation in Syria**, with the support of the Commission for the conclusion of the contracts implementing the action.

6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner’s responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final

report. Each report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

6.5 EVALUATION

Having regard to the nature of the action, an evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.6 AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation.

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Requirements for European Union External Action (or any succeeding document) shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

Acknowledging that activities financed under this action may constitute a security risk for the implementing partner/beneficiaries, the communication and visibility plan for this action should develop a differentiated approach to satisfy the requirements from the legal obligations to which EU external funding is bound to without putting at risk the actions supported by this action.

7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The action complements humanitarian support provided by the EU to vulnerable people in North-East Syria addressing gaps in the areas of protection, education, psychosocial support, social cohesion, mine action and early recovery in North-East Syria. In particular, all three components of this action will complement actions funded by DG ECHO to address increasing needs, especially with regard to the support to vulnerable women and children in Al-Hol camp. The education aspect of the first and second component will also complement education and early recovery efforts provided by DG NEAR, including in Al-Hol camp. The last component on mine action seeks to bring together other mine actors present in North-East Syria to find complementarity on the mine survey exercise, in addition to the existing overall coordination efforts already in place. It is part of the EU's overall efforts to implement the Humanitarian-Development-Peace 'nexus' by giving strong emphasis to resilience building and conflict- mitigation, while addressing immediate and longer-term needs of the target populations.

Overall, the action also complements other donors' interventions in North-East Syria to promote stabilisation and minimise the vulnerability to radicalisation and recruitment by extremist groups. Coordination of this action will be ensured through regular exchanges with the EU Delegation, other EU services, EU Member States, and other actors, as well as existing coordination mechanisms on the delivery of aid in North-East Syria. The action is in line with current efforts by the Global Coalition against Da'esh in North-East Syria.