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ANNEX

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

Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Syria

1. IDENTIFICATION

Action:	Assistance to earthquake affected communities in Syria
Action Reference:	NDICI CR 2023 / 08
Cost:	EUR 10,000,000 (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

The action seeks to address the devastating impact of the earthquakes that hit Northern Syria in February 2023, exacerbating pre-existing challenges in the region which has suffered from more than a decade of armed conflict and socio-economic instability. An estimated 8.8 million people were reportedly directly impacted by the earthquake¹. Almost one million of those were displaced due to increasing socio-economic insecurity and with it the associated risks of harmful coping mechanisms, raising local conflict dynamics and radicalisation.

The action will provide support for post-earthquake human security and resilience needs, in particular for trauma-affected children, youth and caregivers. Interventions will focus on the provision of safer spaces where vulnerable individuals can access basic services such as protection, health, education, wellbeing and livelihoods. It will also aim to increase the capacity of local actors and first responders to address community-driven and conflict-sensitive disaster planning and response, along with social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

The action will be complementary to ongoing humanitarian and longer-term efforts - in line with the EU Strategy on Syria and the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Syria of 2018.

¹ [Syria Earthquake Needs and Response Overview - March 15, 2023 - Syrian Arab Republic | ReliefWeb](#) and [Supporting a Resilient Earthquake Recovery for the People of Syria | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#).

Activities and locations will be refined over time, based on updated need assessments, in close consultation with the EU Delegation to Syria, other European Commission services, and likeminded actors.

3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

3.1 BACKGROUND

An unprecedented earthquake with several aftershocks hit Northern Syria in February 2023 causing significant physical and psychological damage to already traumatised communities in the Governorates of Aleppo, Hama, Idleb, and Lattakia, with an overall impact on 8.8 million individuals.

This tragic event has worsened the longstanding humanitarian and security crisis as the region suffers from prolonged armed conflict, radicalisation, displacement, as well as competition over scarce natural resources, and outbreaks of diseases. Moreover, reconfigured humanitarian aid routes have shaken the pre-existing political balance, thereby increasing the sense of insecurity and uncertainty among the affected populations.

In this difficult context, pre-existing grievances coupled with current challenges have the potential to further undermine people's human security and resilience, resulting in increased harmful coping mechanisms, rising community tensions as well as radicalisation, isolation, and abuse.

Children and women, especially family members left separated and children left orphaned and unaccompanied, are in urgent need of a protective environment as they become even more vulnerable to exploitation, forced labour, and trafficking. Moreover, children are at high risk of experiencing memory and communication problems because of loss and psychological distress making it harder to return to school when some level of normal life resumes.

Affected communities need dignified living conditions to be restored and for livelihoods to return to some level of normalcy. This will require area-based and community-driven interventions through the rehabilitation of key services and infrastructure for the benefit of the communities.

At the same time, the earthquake has created an opening to strengthen solidarity and social cohesion among Syrians who came together to respond to the unprecedented consequences of the earthquake, pointing to the need to seize this moment to strengthen civil society initiatives, promote community well-being and peacebuilding.

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

The aftermath of February's devastating earthquakes have radically worsened the longstanding socio-economic and security crisis in northern Syria that has already suffered from more than a decade of armed conflict and deep instability. In addition to the immediate needs, there is a deep concern over the ability of the affected communities to cope with the current situation without relying to harmful coping mechanisms and violence, 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 (l), (m), (p) and (r) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (l) support for measures to ensure that the specific needs of women and children in crisis and conflict situations, including preventing their exposure to gender-based violence, are adequately met; (m) support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of armed conflict, including measures to address the specific needs of women and children; (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, and (r) support for measures in response to natural or man-made disasters which pose a threat to stability, and to threats to public health linked to pandemics, in the absence of, or by way of complement to, Union humanitarian and civil protection assistance.

3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In line with the EU Strategy for Syria and as recalled in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 2018², 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.

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 of 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 the dangers cause by the earthquake; or due to a change in the political situation (i.e shift	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.

² Foreign Affairs Council, Meeting n°3673, Brussels, 18/02/2019. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/33736/syria-conclusions-7956_18.pdf

Risks	Risk level (high, medium, low)	Mitigation measures
in control of territory between different actors).		
Lack of access to beneficiaries due to access restrictions or unwillingness to engage.	Medium	Implementing partners are used to operate under uncertain operating environment. Where not already done, they will seek 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 aid diversion, 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.	Medium	The measure has been designed in close coordination with other funding streams. Despite the limited access and the wide variety of actors involved, the implementing partners will try as much as possible to be part of formal and informal earthquake-related coordination mechanisms.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to address human security and resilience needs of vulnerable populations in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that hit Syria in February 2023.

4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 4.2.1 To increase the protection and socio-economic resilience of the most affected population, with a particular focus on children, youth, parents and caregivers;
- 4.2.2 To enhance the capacity of communities engaged in pre and post crisis situations with a conflict-sensitive approach.

5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The foreseen activities may be refined over time based on updated need assessments, in close consultation with the EU Delegation to Syria, other Commission services, and other likeminded actors.

The main expected results/outcomes include:

Expected Result (1): Vulnerable individuals, including children and youth, have access to a more protective environment and are able to rebuild livelihoods.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Provision of child protection, mental health and psychosocial support to children as well as parents and caregivers facing severe protection risks;
- 5.1.2 Delivery of education, vocational training and remedial support for students at risk of dropping out of school;
- 5.1.3 Delivery of coaching support for caregivers to improve their mental health and professional wellbeing;
- 5.1.4 Community-awareness raising on common protection and human security risks;
- 5.1.5 Capacity building of community-based organisations to deliver psychosocial support and social cohesion programming;
- 5.1.6 Rehabilitation of key infrastructure and services to rebuild livelihoods activities and to reduce disaster risks in the future;
- 5.1.7 Rehabilitation of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) infrastructure and services including water supply and sanitation, and solid waste management;
- 5.1.8 Rubble removal and processing.

Expected result (2): Local civil society have increased capacity and preparedness to address pre and post crisis situations in their communities in the future.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Capacity building of local civil society for community-driven and conflict-sensitive disaster planning and response management including with the identification of local conflict risks and vulnerabilities;
- 5.2.2 Awareness raising on communities' risks associated with natural disasters, including on natural disasters as drivers of local conflict dynamics;
- 5.2.3 Non-violent community communication to strengthen community cohesion;
- 5.2.4 Rehabilitation of key infrastructure for community service provision, including rubble removal and processing;
- 5.2.5 Mental health and psychosocial support to first line responders and volunteers on the ground to preserve their resilience to perform their work.

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 measures³.

6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The grants will contribute to achieving the expected objectives and results in sections 4 and 5.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Potential applicants for funding are non-governmental organisations with consolidated experience in crisis affected contexts in Syria, including with extensive experience to achieve one or more of the expected results and specific objectives.

(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.

(d) Exception to the non-retroactivity of costs

The Commission authorises that the costs incurred may be recognised as eligible as of 1st April 2023 because of the unforeseen needs in the aftermath of the earthquakes, namely to cover the costs of the response to address basic needs beyond the immediate humanitarian assistance.

6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 10 000 000**. 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
Objective 4.2.1 To increase the protection and socio-economic resilience of the most affected population, with a particular focus on children, youth, parents and caregivers.		
6.1.1 – Direct grant (direct management)	6 000 000	N/A

³ 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.

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Objective 4.2.2 To enhance the capacity of communities engaged in pre and post crisis situations with a conflict-sensitive approach.		
6.1.1 – Direct grant (direct management)	4 000 000	N/A
Total	10 000 000	N/A

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under direct management for both objectives 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

The 2021-2027 programming cycle has adopted a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

It will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

The 2022 "Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for external actions" reference document shall be used to establish the appropriate contractual obligations.

7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This action will ensure complementarity and avoid duplication through extensive coordination with other EU-funded efforts in response to the earthquake and in particular with the ongoing and upcoming programmes funded by the EU humanitarian aid and other NDICI funding.

Close policy coordination will be maintained with the EU Delegation to Syria.

Given the complex security situation in the targeted region, the activities will be based on thorough needs' assessments and conflict analysis accompanied by community participation to promote ownership and sustainability.