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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



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<p>Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP Syria</p>
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1. Context for EU action gender equality and women's empowerment in the country

Over eleven years into the conflict, the situation for women in Syria remains particularly challenging with their legal, social and economic status as well as their physical safety and dignity being constantly under serious threat. In 2019, Syria's Human Development Index value was 0.567 (out of 1). On position 151 of 189, Syria ranks in the medium category in terms of human development. The Gender Development Index value for Syria in 2019 was 0.829 (out of 1), placing it into group 5 (Medium Human Development).

Syria had a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.547 in 2018, ranking it 154 out of 189 countries, placing it in the low human development category.¹ This finding is underlined by the following examples:

- 37.1% of adult women in Syria have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 43.4% of their male counterparts.
- Female participation in the labour market is 14.4% compared to 74.1% for men.
- For every 100,000 live births, 68 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 38.6 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19.
- Women hold only 10.8% of the parliamentary seats and 7.1% of the seats in local government. The 2020 parliamentary election resulted in a reduced representation of women, as 27 female candidates secured a seat, compared to 32 in 2016.
- Within the current Syrian cabinet, women are even more poorly represented, holding only three seats (10%) out of 30.

Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) mandated the United Nations to facilitate a Syrian-led political process, that, *inter alia*, sets a process for drafting a new constitution. The Constitutional Committee was founded on an agreement between the regime and the opposition Syrian Negotiations Commission. As called for forcefully by the UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen, almost 30 percent of members of both the large and small bodies of the Committee are women.²

The conflict has exacerbated gender inequality and it has deeply affected the traditional or customary roles of men and women while creating new vulnerabilities across the broader population. Changes in household composition due to conflict-related deaths, displacement, forced disappearances, and military recruitment resulted in many households in Syria experiencing a gendered restructuring because the loss of significant sources of income led more Syrian women to pursue income-generating activities to cope with the situation. However, anecdotal evidence shows that women's evolution from homemakers to breadwinners, although widespread, did not lead to women's empowerment and the full enjoyment of rights. From food insecurity to loss of educational opportunities, lack of safe water or health services, and high rates of gender-based violence, women and girls are facing the brunt of the crisis. Physical violence, sexual violence and sexual exploitation have all increased since the beginning of the conflict, and new forms of violence have emerged. Rape in Syria was - and continues to be - used as a weapon of war. Children of both sexes are especially vulnerable in these violent contexts, where, for example, families experience different traumas and difficulties. In 2018, 69% of communities surveyed by OCHA, reported early marriage as a concern³.

In terms of gender policy at **national level**, Syria's constitution of 1973 granted equal rights to all its citizens (Art. 24 and 25). While the Constitution was amended in 2012, it continued to call for equality and to formally acknowledge equal opportunities: Article 33 (4) states that: *'The state shall guarantee the principle of equal opportunities among citizens'* and that *"Citizens shall be equal in rights and duties without discrimination among them on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion or creed"*. However, the relevance of this article is questionable due to the state of emergency in place since 1963.

¹ The Gender Inequality Index is "a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market", whereas the Gender Development Index is a special twist of the Human Development Index.

² While some sectoral data will be provided in the next sections, it is important to underline a general lack of updated and comprehensive data due to the protracted situation in the country.

³ OCHA, [The Humanitarian Crisis in Syria](#), 2018.

Although the emergency law was lifted in 2011, it was replaced with a counterterrorism law that gives the state a mandate to suppress dissent.

No specific legislation currently exists that prohibits gender-based discrimination. There is no legislation that specifically addresses all forms of gender-based violence (domestic, marital rape, child marriage and so on) and several individual laws even contain discriminatory provisions. While so-called ‘honour-killings’ is acknowledged as a problem, the penal code allows for mitigated punishment of this crime and only requires a minimum sentence of two years. The Penal Code considers rape as a felony and it is subject from 2 to 15 years in prison, but it also provides certain impunity if the perpetrators of rape choose to marry the victim (article 508). Abortion is prohibited by articles 525–532 of the Penal Code, including for women who have been raped. Prostitution is prohibited by article 513 of the Penal Code and the Law on Suppression of Prostitution of 1961.

The Personal Status Law (PSL, Law no. 59) was promulgated in 1953 and amended most recently in February 2019. The PSL regulates civil matters such as marriage and its dissolution, paternity, nursing, legal capacity, guardianship, custodianship and inheritance which follow Islamic principles (Sharia Law). While the PSL applies in theory to all Syrians, some religious groups, such as Christians and Druzes, follow their own rules related to inheritance rights and marriage. While other religious groups often refer to and apply their own rules to inheritance, in general, the conservative segments of society follow a combination of the PSL and their respective religious rules. For example, Muslim people often consult sheikhs or their religious leaders for *fatwa* (Islamic justification) in specific cases of marriages and matters related to inheritance.

In terms of property rights, Law 10 (2018) which created the legal framework for implementing land readjustment in Syrian cities, raised concerns and has been described as discriminatory. Law 10 pools all the land in a specific location and re-plans it as a single unit with all necessary housing, commercial areas, infrastructure and services. The original owners usually receive a smaller but more valuable plot in the same planning area. In Syria, under Law 10, landowners’ properties are valued and converted into shares in the re-planned area. The law may negatively impact the rights of many Syrians to adequate housing, adequate standards of living, and freedom of movement. Another aspect is that the law may exacerbate displacement, homelessness and result in more informal settlements. There are indications it could also inhibit returns due to the difficulty in proving ownership. The law could especially affect women, as a group that has limited access to ownership and documents.

Article 75 of the Labour Law recognises the principle of equal pay for equal work, and article 67 prohibits employers from dismissing a worker because of her pregnancy. Articles 121 and 122 state that women are entitled to maternity leave, which employers are liable to pay. The entitlement is 120 days for the first child, 90 days for the second child, and 75 days for the third child. This entitlement only partially complies with the ILO standard of 14 weeks. Regarding work restrictions for women, article 120 of the Labour Law states that the minister shall determine circumstances where women shall be allowed to perform night work or harmful, arduous, immoral, or other work prohibited to women. Regarding domestic workers, article 5 of the Labour Law excludes domestic workers from protections. There are some protections for domestic workers provided by decisions of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs on work contracts and by-laws relating to work visas and the working conditions of migrants. The law against Trafficking in Persons No. 3 (2010) provides comprehensive measures against human trafficking. In terms of the right to work, married women cannot work unless they have their husband’s permission (art.73 PSL), and they may lose the right to receive alimony if they decide to work without getting the approval of their ex-husband. Marriage contracts include a section which provides space for the spouses to add their own conditions relating to the pursuit of education or employment after marriage. Many women are, however, unaware of this option.

In terms of **international commitments**, Syria acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2003 with reservations against several articles; most notably 2 (policy measures); 9 (2) (mother’s right to pass on her nationality to her children), 15 (4) (freedom of movement and of residence and domicile), 16 1 (c), (d), (f) and (g) (equality in marriage

and family life), and 16 (2) (legal effect of the betrothal and marriage of a child) as well as 29 (1) (an article related to the administration of the convention; i.e. arbitration in the event of a dispute). Several of these articles are considered to be at the core of the purpose of the convention. The CEDAW Committee indicated in 1998 that “...*reservations to article 16, whether lodged for national, traditional, religious or cultural reasons, are incompatible with the Convention and therefore impermissible...*” Syria has not yet ratified the CEDAW Optional Protocol.

Syria is also state party to a number of human rights treaties although it has not signed or ratified the additional protocols relating to the right to individual complaint. Most notably, Syria did not ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. It did not ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture nor the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Lastly, Syria did not ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Syria has not seriously engaged in multilateral cooperation on human rights issues, particularly in those related to monitoring and investigation. Syria refuses to cooperate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council and it has so far banned the Commission from entering the country, thus preventing effort to undertake investigations inside Syria.

With regards to Syria’s conventional obligations in the area of Housing, Land and Property (HLP), Syria ratified a number of international human rights instruments recognising the right to adequate housing for all. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights calls on States Parties to take steps toward the ‘progressive realisation’ of this right. General Comment 4 identifies seven characteristics of ‘adequacy’: legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. General Comment 7 (1977) notes that the right to adequate housing includes the protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one’s home. Other key instruments ratified by Syria that recognise the right to adequate housing include the CEDAW; the ICCPR; and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Resilience, Food Security and Livelihood (RFSL)

Prior to 2011, agriculture played an important role in the Syrian economy, contributing around 18 percent to its GDP, and involving 17 percent of its labour force in production. Around 46 percent of Syrians were rural dwellers and, of those, about 80 percent got their income from agricultural work. Since 2011, rural incomes and private consumption have suffered from poorer-than-expected harvests resulting from one or more of several adverse conditions including, among others, unfavourable rainfall over a number of years, withdrawal or reduction of subsidized agricultural inputs, unfavourable terms of trade for major commodities due to centrally fixed prices, restricted access to productive land because of conflict, high production and transport costs, damage to irrigation systems and farm machinery, restricted movement of goods, reduced specialized technical support, poor market conditions, low consumer spending and international trade sanctions. The livestock sector, once very important in the domestic economy and external trade, suffered since 2011 in terms of herd and flock numbers, productivity levels, and in terms of veterinary services and animal health. In turn this has had a very significant impact on rural livelihoods, especially in arid and semi-arid areas, representing over 60% of the country, and where extensive livestock rearing system was one of the most important source of livelihoods among pastoral communities. In between 2019 and 2021, agricultural production remained well below pre-conflict levels for all crops. Despite the increased area for cereal cultivation and ample rains, flooding damaged agricultural land and fires destroyed over 85,000 hectares just before the harvest. Further, throughout 2020, Syrians’ purchasing power continued to decrease. Food prices reached record levels, 14 times the average before the nine-year-old conflict, whilst the Syrian pound continues to plummet reaching ever new lows against the US dollar. As a result, in September 2020, the Syrian regime introduced rules limiting the amount of subsidised bread available per person at bakeries, putting larger families at risk of starvation as the country’s crippling economic crisis deepens further. The situation is more difficult among IDPs, returnees and households headed by women. An estimated

14.2 million people are in need of some form of food and agriculture assistance, representing 68.6% of the total population. Based on a countrywide assessment of 36,484 households and technical reviews and consultations, at least 12.4 million people are estimated to be food insecure, of which 1.3 million people are considered severely food insecure. Around 40% of households reduced the number of meals consumed and more than 35% have restricted the consumption by adults to prioritise children. Furthermore, all 1.7 million people living in camps are deemed to be 100% food insecure, and 1.8 million people are estimated to be at risk of food insecurity.⁴

A Joint WFP/FAO Special Report⁵ highlighted a number of issues related to women's status in the rural area and those working in agriculture. The report states that 'in terms of demographic breakdown, there appears to be a bias towards women, particularly in conflict-affected areas with implications on the labour market and gender relations. In some areas, female salaries, for those working as agricultural labour, are lower than male earnings'. Female-headed households face more challenges than male-headed households. For instance, 'female-headed households show higher levels of vulnerability to food insecurity compared to those with male heads. 15% of female-headed households are highly vulnerable to food security compared to 7% of males'; accordingly, female-headed households are much more likely to have poor and borderline consumption (32%) compared to those headed by men (22%).

Prior to the conflict, most women in the south and northeast of Syria were employed in the public sector or in agricultural work. In the main urban centres, such as Aleppo and Damascus, women tended to work in the public sector. Throughout the conflict, many women in Syria and in refugee communities have had to take on different roles. With men being recruited for fighting, many of them killed, arrested or unable to leave the country, women have assumed responsibility for generating income, in addition to their roles within households. Women are taking up new roles that were previously considered male-dominated, such as marketing products in rural areas. However, women have very few chances to actually market their products. Despite the fact that market studies are being performed, they may not be always used to inform or improve operations. For many women, entering the labour market means an additional burden on their already existing household and care responsibilities. Working women manage significant amounts of extra labour, both in their household (unpaid care work) and their employment (paid work, either informal or formal). The shift in gender roles comes with a number of challenges like vulnerability in becoming a second or third wife for protection and livelihoods and/or reverting to the previous gender normative roles where men fulfil the public role and control finances.

Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

Civil documentation and Housing Land and Property issues remain major and countrywide concerns in Syria. Lack or loss of civil documentation was reported as an issue by 61% of assessed communities but spread across all governorates to varying degrees, while 50% of assessed communities reported HLP concerns (OCHA, 2021). HLP-related grievances are becoming increasingly prominent in the recovery and resilience response in Syria, particularly on aspects related to protection, shelter, food security/agriculture, early recovery, mine action and water and sanitation.

Civil documentation and registration matters have been identified as a source of major protection concerns for Syrians that prevent them from accessing basic services and asserting their rights, such as the right to education and health. Lack of civil documentation denies individuals their legal standing and ability to give evidence before the statutory justice system and it is often a prerequisite for asserting HLP rights. The two issues constitute major barriers to return to places of origin and recovery of housing assets.

The Personal Status Law articulates women's specific rights to inheritance, dower and maintenance/alimony during and after marriage. Syria's Constitution, as well as the numerous international treaties it signed formally provide overall protection for the property rights women possess by ensuring women's rights to own property, to equality before the law, to life and dignity and to be free

⁵ FAO and WFP, [Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic](#), 2019

from discrimination. Women can inherit either through kinship (natal inheritance) or marriage. However, under the PSL, Muslim women inherit lesser shares of natal inheritance than men, with the general rule that females receive half of what males do within the same inheritance group. This applies to all types of land and property, with the exception of *amiri* (state-owned) land, which is inherited in equal shares. When it comes to marital inheritance, if the deceased has any children, the wife will receive an eighth share of the inheritance from her husband. If the deceased does not have children, the wife will receive a quarter share of the inheritance. While Shari'a prescribes differential treatment for men and women, in principle it also stipulates that women have the ability to inherit, own and control property of any kind.

According to several reports women and children are particularly vulnerable when it comes to possessing civil documentation. Only one in 50 women in the south of Syria possess a passport compared to one in five men. Women are also less likely to have their marriage certificate in their possession. While Syrian women's property rights are recognized in a range of legal sources, including the Constitution and the Civil Code, women's ability to effectively use these rights is strongly linked to family laws and social practices, in particular those related to marriage, divorce and inheritance. These dictate who has control over assets, who has the ability to make economic decisions in their own name and who can own, administer, transfer and inherit property. Lack of civil documentation particularly limits the ability of widowed or divorced women to inherit property, get custody of children, legally remarry, or register children born through subsequent relationships. In these circumstances, unequal property rights significantly affect women's welfare, as they tend to reinforce their dependence on men and detract from their autonomy. It needs to be highlighted that death, divorce or abandonment have all increased during the conflict. Unregistered children may face difficulties in accessing basic services and rights, including health and education. It compounds a series of existing protection risks and vulnerabilities in terms of freedom of movement and HLP issues, including security of tenure and increased risk of statelessness. Internal reports specifically highlighted practices inhibiting women from obtaining their rightful share of natal inheritance that can help enable stability and it examined how married women are often prevented (in practice) from exercising property rights, and the negative impact this has on their future, especially in case of divorce and widowhood. While such obstacles have long existed, the conflict has introduced a new dynamic where women are taking on greater responsibilities at the household level, making their ability to enjoy effective property rights all the more critical. Out of 1,168 women surveyed, only 18% perceived that they owned their home themselves, while 56% reported having no ownership at all.

Health

At least 370,000 Syrians have been killed with many more injured, among them women and children; many health staff have also been killed and injured, while many others have fled the country. Access to health care remains problematic, with the ongoing deliberate assault on health care facilities and personnel since the start of the conflict being a defining factor. Vital civilian infrastructure, such as water and sanitation and health services have been severely damaged or destroyed. In 2017, the World Bank estimated total damage to health facilities across the cities of Aleppo, Hama and Idlib to range between 255 million USD and 312 million USD. With an estimated 58% of public hospitals and 49% of primary health centres either closed or only partially functioning, millions of Syrians, especially those in conflict and/or remote areas, have limited access to health care.

While need has increased, instability has meant that many healthcare professionals have fled the country as a result of the conflict and situation was further precipitated by economic downturn following the COVID pandemic. Attrition, and particularly voluntary attrition, is under-recorded and understudied in Syria despite ample anecdotal evidence that health workers unsatisfied with low pay and lack of career progression opportunities are leaving Syria at alarming rates, even as violence decreases and instances of normalisation slowly gain more traction. Lack of attention to this important phenomenon makes it very difficult to identify causes, patterns, routes, trends and short-, medium- and long-term consequences along with programmatic risks for donor investments in workforce development. Yet, health workers' shortages are a critical public health issue. The situation in post-COVID Syria has seen

an incremental role also being played by pull factors due to gaps of essential health staff in high income countries. The gender dynamics around this phenomenon are not well understood but socio economic and gender dimensions of brain drain are going to be the object of a dedicated study.. In addition, functioning medical equipment and medicines are in short supply and if available, then at exorbitant prices. Vaccination coverage has shrunk and outbreaks of communicable diseases such as polio, cholera, leishmaniosis and rabies periodically resurface. The regional response to the health workforce crisis has been under-resourced and poorly coordinated, contributing to a generational gap in health workforce supply. Trends relating to health workforce feminization are apparent in Syria, opening an opportunity to examine health workforce investment as a driver of gender empowerment. These objectives are explicitly pursued particularly in the framework of support to pre-service training, postgraduate residency training and in as far as institution building of parameter compliant state and non-state actors in North West Syria where there is greater operational space and where comparatively there are lower rates of participation and gender inclusivity in decision making. North East Syria already presents a fertile ground in as far as women empowerment, due to the particular attention given to the role of women in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) organigramme given that each AANES Council and Commission, at both central and local level, are formally led by co-chairs, one woman and one man. Gender considerations and actual power dynamics will be duly taken into account in relevant research endeavours, especially with regards to the analysis of health care demand which should present as outcomes the recommendations guiding a way forward in as far as future programmatic interventions taking into account the specific challenges and the needs expressed by women, which represent one of the most vulnerable target groups in health care planning and delivery, especially in emergency and early recovery/development contexts. The issue of effective female representation and participation in multi-stakeholder forums will be analysed in depth, with tailored recommendations aimed at increasing the meaningful participation of women in these entities.

Prior to the crisis, Syria was classified as a middle-income country, with a robust national health system led by the public sector, with a growing private sector and little reliance on civil society organisations. Since 2011, the protracted crisis, political destabilization, targeting and destruction of healthcare facilities, attacks on health workers, and an exodus of well-trained health professionals have led to the partial collapse and fragmentation of the healthcare system. The fracturing of the Syrian health system has had detrimental effects on healthcare provision, and considerable consequences on population health, including an increased risk of infectious disease outbreaks and challenges in accessing maternal and child health interventions.

The collapse of public services, health systems and social networks placed a disproportionate burden on the health of women and children⁶, which can be further exacerbated when they are forcibly displaced from their homes and communities. In 2018, an estimated 11.3 million people in Syria were in need of humanitarian assistance in health, of whom 1.3 million were children under 5 years of age. The number of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) living in Syria in 2017 was estimated to reach 3.3 million. According to the [UNDP data](#), from 2009 until 2017, maternal mortality ratio has been constantly increasing; adolescent birth rate stands at 38.6 while child marriage is estimated at 13% of women aged 20–24 who are married or in union. However, in the Syria context, data collection, reporting and data availability remain complicated processes. Political constraints limit the scope and detail of available information. Significant data like the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, violence against women by intimate or non-intimate partner or the prevalence of female genital mutilation are not available. Dramatic increases in food insecurity contribute to worsen already-elevated levels of anaemia in women of reproductive age, posing a risk to adverse health outcomes for both mother and child, and, when coupled with diarrhoeal disease, can exacerbate the risk of poor malnutrition outcomes in children under five years.

In the absence of other relief options, health facilities remain the main entry point for GBV survivors. Amid growing reliance on negative coping mechanisms, like child marriage, GBV survivors often rely

⁶ Akik, C., Semaan, A., Shaker-Berbari, L. et al. [Responding to health needs of women, children and adolescents within Syria during conflict: intervention coverage, challenges and adaptations](#). *Confl Health* 14, 37 (2020).

on health facilities as a way to gain access to specialized services (OCHA, 2021). However, in most cases, health facilities lack appropriate structure and staff to deal with GBV survivors; and appropriate referral mechanisms are not available. There are also important unattended needs in as far as mental health and psychosocial support, child health and family planning that have an evident gender dimension. Gender dimensions of health care demand and cultural understandings of mental health are important elements but poorly understood and they are currently the subject of studies to strengthen relevance and project design. Due to financial incentives and lack of regulatory oversight caesarean section rates have risen tremendously and are projected to continue increasing, putting mothers at risk and reversing progress made on maternal health pre-conflict. For instance, according to one report by UNFPA (2022) caesarean section rates in Tartous are estimated at 50% compared to the 10-15% WHO recommendation.

Justice and accountability

While it is currently difficult to define precisely the number of missing persons caused by the war in Syria, estimates cited by the UN in 2020 indicate that over 130,000 persons are detained or missing as a result of the current conflict. In Syria itself, persons are missing as a consequence of summary executions, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, and kidnapping and abduction committed by all sides in the conflict, but primarily by the Syrian regime. Combatants and civilians are also missing as a direct result of fighting and the day-to-day ravages of war, and war crimes, while others have gone missing along migratory routes, in Mediterranean crossings or because of human trafficking. There are also children living in detention centres, and whose parents – Da’esh fighters and others – are missing or at risk of further radicalisation. Women constitute a minority of the missing but are the majority of the family members and relatives who endure severe long-term social, economic, legal, and psychological stress as a result of these events. Facing multiple challenges, Syrian families of the missing, especially those headed by women, often do not know the whereabouts of the missing person and struggle to receive comprehensive support. When combined with earlier forms of gender social injustice, a patriarchal legal system, and the financial and care responsibilities they bear, these have had a major impact on the livelihood and physical and mental health of men and women. They are unable to re-marry, inherit and in some cases even move out from their homes (the latter without permission of another male relative). Once the male head of household is detained or has disappeared, the entire family household faces a range of severe challenges. Enforced disappearance has added an additional financial burden on impacted women; including costs attributed to their search efforts (travel expenses, ransom and/or bribes). Commonly, women are exposed to extortion, harassment and pressure and often need an intermediary to help gather information on their missing relatives.

Within this context, there is evidence that women are targeted differently than men during conflict. Women in Syria were and are subject to multiple gender-based discriminations and violence, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), in forms such as rape, forced and early marriages, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and abuse, and honour killings. Men and boys in Syria are also subject to sexual violence by multiple parties to the conflict, particularly in detention. The violations they faced should not obscure the role women played in the popular uprising, nor their activism in resisting violence and enhancing their participation in negotiation and peace-building processes.⁷

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

At the time of the drafting of the CLIP, the Special Measure 2021 (SM2021) for Syria outlined four result areas (RA) that represented the priorities identified by the EU: 1) Improved Health System Resilience and Health Workforce Development; 2) Improved Resilience, Food Security and Livelihoods; 3) Improved enforcement of Housing Land and Property Rights and 4) Strengthened capacity of the Syrian civil society to lead justice and accountability processes around the issues of missing persons, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

⁷ A more detailed account of the context will be provided in Section 3

(CRSV). While these thematic areas remain a priority, education and civil society support were added as areas of intervention in SM 2022.

At the moment, the Delegation is implementing two [G2](#) Actions focusing on GBV prevention and women's participation to decision-making processes, while efforts are made to mainstream gender and contribute to achieving the target, i.e. 85% of all new actions will have gender equality as a significant ([G1](#)) or principal objective ([G2](#)).

The key thematic areas of engagement will be the following: 1) ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; 2) promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); 3) strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women; 4) advancing equal participation and leadership; 5) integrating the women, peace and security agenda. The degree of engagement in each thematic area will vary in the period covered by the GAP III as actions to be implemented in Syria are designed and approved on an annual basis.

The specific thematic objectives that will be pursued are the following:

Thematic Area 1 Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence

- SO 2) Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are agents of change regarding discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, and gender-drivers of conflict;
- SO 3) Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services;
- SO 6) Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and humanitarian crisis situations
- SO 7) Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence;

Thematic Area 2 Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

- SO2) Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information and education on sexual and reproductive rights

Thematic Area 3 Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

- SO 3) Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources;
- SO 4) Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy;
- SO 5) Improved access for women in all their diversity to managerial and leadership roles in social and economic sectors and fora;
- SO 6) Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys;
- SO 8) Improved access to safe water and sanitation facilities, disaggregated at least by sex;
- SO 9) Public health systems have sufficient and sustained financing to address the health needs of women and girls in all their diversity;
- SO 10) Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, have improved nutrition levels.

Thematic Area 4 Advancing equal participation and leadership

- SO 1) Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making;
- SO 3) Women's organisations, other CSOs and women human rights defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights work more freely and are better protected by law;
- SO 4) Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours promoting equal participation and leadership fostered at community and individual levels – through civic education, media, education and culture at all levels.

Civil society has been consulted throughout the design stage of SM2021 through the EU CSO virtual space, an interactive platform that allows the EU to connect with a wide range of CSOs inside and outside Syria (now counting close to 700 members from all the geographies)⁸. CSOs and activists have been consulted in relation to the four results areas and the inputs provided were used to inform the final proposal. Moreover, further consultations have been organised on how gender could be mainstreamed in each result area. The feedback that was received informed the design of the specific Actions. In terms of implementation, CSOs are currently the main implementing partners of EU-funded actions and will remain key actors for future implementation. The EUD has multiplied its efforts to reach grassroots organisations through sub-granting and calls for proposals. Lastly, in terms of monitoring, CSOs and activists are among the main stakeholders consulted by monitoring institutions on the ground.

In relation to **RFSL**, CSOs highlighted limited access to assets and civil documentation as one of the biggest challenge experienced by Syrian women. In most cases, women do not own land, livestock and/or assets; and if they do, these are usually not registered in women's names. This coupled with the fact that women do not inherit, increase the vulnerability of women working in the agricultural sector. CSOs also cited traditional norms and social pressure that prevent women from working. Working women have to endure an insecure working environment with lower wages than their male counterparts and have to face additional challenges such as childcare and all household-related responsibilities. There is a lack of safe transportation to the working site and the lack of safe spaces for children. Working women are also stigmatised in some communities due to the amount of time they have to stay outside their homes. CSOs suggested, *inter alia*, addressing issues related to HLP and civil documentation, but also to support women with continued assistance. Ad hoc financial assistance without strengthening access to information and capacity building is not enough. Cash for work was highlighted as a positive practice.

In relation to **Health**, CSOs cited a general lack of awareness around health and the right to health. The lack of services result in women having to travel long distance to get the required assistance; however, women are often pressured into avoid travelling due to traditional norms, financial considerations and insecurity. Economic dependence means that women's possibility to get medical help is completely left in the hands of their male relatives that often apply their own misconceptions and beliefs around health. GBV, in all its forms, deeply affects women's psychological health; however this is rarely addressed. CSOs mentioned that the existing services are designed from a humanitarian perspective and therefore only focus on basic services while crucial health needs like cancer screening are not met. Women lack freedom of choice over their bodies and are often pressured into bearing children, even when this poses a risk for their health. Lack of infrastructure (and resources) remains one of the main obstacle; lack of transportation and difficulty in moving (including roadblocks) was mentioned as another challenge. Within health facilities, medical staff is not trained to deal with GBV and SRHR in an appropriate manner. CSOs suggested to tackle issues such as SRHR in a holistic manner, integrating different aspects such as nutrition and psychological health. Furthermore, they suggested having SRHR and proper management of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in place, including a unified protocol and a referral system. Appropriate training for medical staff, awareness campaigns on health, use of information/technology and mobile teams to reach women who cannot move and the provision of services beyond the basic ones already provided.

In terms of **HLP**, CSOs mentioned all the above-mentioned challenges related to registration, inheritance, access to documentation. It was also highlighted that, under the current circumstances, marriages are increasingly happening without legal proof, for example in the displaced communities, and this adds to the vulnerability of women when it comes to HLP. CSOs suggested increasing awareness raising activities for women to learn about their rights and possible ways to exercise it. Awareness should also target the environment surrounding women so they are not pressured into taking negative decisions. It is crucial, for awareness raising activities, to provide information in a simple manner that is accessible to everyone. Continuous legal support remains crucial and it is important to

⁸ Please refer to Section 4 for a more detailed explanation of this consultative mechanism.

avoid ad hoc support but rather engage with women over a longer period of time. As the majority of women do not own land, livestock and/or assets, projects should also include a women's economic empowerment component to encourage economic independence in the long term.

In relation to **Justice and Accountability**, with reference to the missing file, the CSOs mentioned that it is crucial to start providing MHPSS support to the families of the missing which are for the most part female headed households. More in relation to GBV, Syrian CSOs highlighted that VAWG, and women's rights more broadly, need to be tackled with a holistic approach addressing the different dimensions, and interventions need to be tailored to the different geographic and social contexts. Communities should be involved in the design of tailored activities to ensure maximum participation and avoid rejection by the communities.

Across all the focus group discussions, CSOs mentioned involving communities ahead of the design is key as much as using qualitative and quantitative surveys to understand the specific context and inform planning. Crucial is also the involvement of men and boys with the design of tailored communication and awareness raising activities. Projects need to be longer to effectively build the capacities of the individuals and the communities.

Overview of current interventions by the EU Member States⁹

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is currently shaping its Feminist Foreign Policy, which puts gender equality central in all areas of foreign policy. Women's participation in the formal political process is key to the legitimacy and sustainability of any political agreement on the future of Syria. The Netherlands therefore supports the Women Advisory Board (WAB) via UN Women, that contributes to alliance building on women's rights and the inclusion of women's voices in the UN led Syrian peace process. The current partnership is nearly at its end, further contribution to the WAB is currently being considered.

In addition, the Netherlands ensures the mainstreaming of gender themes in the various projects it supports related to Syria. For example, the Netherlands supports women-led organisations like The Syria Campaign, selection procedures for grants at Gaziantep University ensure that 50% of successful applicants are women, and trainings, such as given by LAW, strive for a gender balance in its participation.

Finland

Finnish development cooperation supports the participation of women and minority groups in the Syrian peace process and political development.

Expected outcome: Syria has capacity for inclusive, peaceful and democratic development

- Cooperation between the parties to the peace process is strengthened;
- Women are able to participate in the peace process and Syria's reconstruction;
- Syrian people's own solutions are at the heart of the peace process.

Ongoing programmes and projects

- Support to mediation and peace work by UN Women and the Berghof Foundation In 2021, Finland will channel approximately EUR 1.3 million to mediation work related to the Syrian crisis.

Finland directs its support to the effects of the Syrian crisis mainly to multilateral organisations, such as the joint funding mechanisms administered by UN organisations. Several Finnish CSOs are carrying out projects in Syria and its neighbouring countries in collaboration with local organisations.

⁹ Based on the information provided by the EU Member States. Not all Member States made their respective data available.

Italy

Overall objectives of the Italian action in Syria for gender equality and women's empowerment: Italy will support the resilience of affected local communities and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, through the provision of support for integrated GBV and RH services and livelihood activities.

Areas of engagement:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights
3. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

Objectives:

Overall thematic objective (Impact): Women, men, girls and boys are free from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online

Specific thematic objectives (outcomes):

1. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online through legislation and effective enforcement;
2. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are agents of change regarding discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, and gender-drivers of conflict;
3. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services;
5. Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity trafficked for all forms of exploitation and abuse have improved access to adequate and quality services for socio-economic integration and psycho-social support;
6. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and humanitarian crisis situations

Overall thematic objective (Impact): Women and girls in all their diversity access universal health and fully enjoy their health and sexual and reproductive rights

Specific thematic objectives (outcomes):

1. Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information and education on sexual and reproductive rights

Overall thematic objective (Impact): Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, fully enjoy and exercise their equal economic, labour and social rights

Specific thematic objectives (outcomes):

3. Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources;
4. Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, and alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy;
6. Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys;
10. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, have improved nutrition levels

Civil Society Organisations are involved as:

- Project partners of multilateral organisations (ex. Al-Yamamah Charity Association and Monastery of Saint James the Mutilated are UNFPA local partners)

- As contractor and implementing organizations, generally in consortium with Italian/International CSOs , receiving direct funding of the Italian cooperation.
- As stakeholder/beneficiaries of project activities particularly in terms of capacity-building

Sweden

In the [Swedish Government's Regional Strategy for the Syria Crisis](#), gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights are goals in themselves, as well as prerequisites for, and means of, achieving sustainable development and Sweden is one of the donors in the Syria context that focuses on gender equality and takes a long-term approach to strengthening the capacity of Syrian actors. Under both objectives of the actions in the Swedish Regional strategy for the Syria Crisis specific objectives are targeted for gender equality:

- 1) Under the first objective of the strategy: "Strengthened resilience, human security and freedom from violence, with a focus on livelihood opportunities, increased access to public services and reduced gender-based violence", the objectives are: 1) Gender-based violence is combated and prevented to a greater extent in Syria and to a greater extent among people, including refugees from Syria, who are in a vulnerable situation in neighbouring countries as a result of the Syria crisis surrounding countries including prevention and work on social norms and 2) promoting women's economic empowerment specifically;
- 2) Under the second objective of the strategy: "Strengthened democracy and gender equality, increased respect for human rights and increased accountability, with a focus on a stronger civil society", the objectives are: 1) improving the conditions for gender equality by facilitating Syrian women's participation in peace negotiations, local administration and local and national processes and 2) strengthening the capacity of Syrian actors in gender equality.

The selected Thematic Areas of engagement and related objectives are the following:

Thematic Area 1 Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence

SO2) Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are agents of change regarding discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, and gender-drivers of conflict;
 SO3) Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, who experience sexual and gender-based violence have increased access to essential services and protection;
 SO7) Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence

Thematic Area 2 Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

SO2) Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information and education on sexual and reproductive rights;

Thematic Area 3 Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

SO3) Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources.

Thematic Area 5 Integrating the women, peace and security agenda

SO1) Participation;
 SO2) Gender mainstreaming;
 SO5) Protection;
 SO6) Relief and recovery.

A substantive part of Sweden's projects aims at gender equality is implemented by Syrian civil society organizations, either through direct grant agreements, or as implementing partners receiving forwarded grants. As such, they are in charge of designing their own projects as well as their implementation and monitoring.

Spain

Actions funded by Spain have gender equality as a principal objective (gender marker 2) so they are directly mentioned in Section 3 of this CLIP.

In terms of synergies, cooperation and partnership, Spain has been supporting the mandate of UNFPA, as ECHO and other MS have done. Sweden highlights a potential for synergies in relation to the CLIP. In 2021 Spain has financed the Office on Gender of OCHA; in 2022 Spain has financed a new appeal of the ICRC against gender violence. Spain is also implementing vertical projects on gender and has renewed its commitments to C2A. After submission of the CLIP, the EU Delegation will organise a more in-depth presentation of the GAP III and its implications for the EU and MS actions in Syria. The EU Delegation will also consult the MS on the gender sectoral analyses and will use this material to start a conversation on how to increase coordination and partnership around gender equality.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

The EU Delegation is currently implementing two G2 Actions across the Thematic Areas 1 (Freedom from Violence) and 4 (Equal Participation and Leadership). The related GAP III thematic objectives are all those selected under the two thematic areas in Section 2 of this CLIP.

Overall, the EU Special Measures for Syria 2021 and 2022 are labelled with gender marker G1. This implies that gender will be mainstreamed across all the actions that will be funded in the four result areas.

The envisaged actions were planned starting from an analysis of the Syrian context where there is evidence that women are targeted differently than men during conflict.

In regime-controlled areas, women face harassment, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and abduction, sexual violence against detained women related to men from the opposition as a means to attack husbands and families. Women suspected of being connected with terrorist groups were detained or confined in camps by the regime facing inhuman conditions and SGBV. While some of the issues identified in regime-held areas are common to all regions of Syria, areas under the control of other armed groups face additional challenges: increasing rate of early marriage and sex exploitation used as negative coping strategies by IDPs communities; shrinking or no access to public space in areas controlled by militia or Da'esh; women captured and detained by terrorist group were married, exchanged between fighters and raped, if they were not executed; systematically perpetrated sectarian violence by Da'esh to women belonging to religious minorities.

Despite the repeal of the Emergency Law in 2011, there are reports of imprisonment, torture and everyday intimidation abounding. Women and men associated with, or accused of, supporting the opposition report on-going threats and harassment. Sexual and gender-based violence has been used in the Syrian conflict as a double-edged weapon. The threat of SGBV has been utilised by the regime's security forces to intimidate women and girls in an attempt to deter them from involvement in anti-regime political activism. Human rights groups have documented cases of SGBV in Syria and particularly the systematic rape of female detainees in regime prisons.¹⁰ The security risks imposed on female activists during the conflict made their activities even more restricted with the escalation of the conflict. This risk includes being subjected to SGBV, which not only impedes women's mobility, voice and agency but also exposes young women and girls to other types of exploitations by the armed groups. For example, the fear of rape has forced women and girls to get married to combatants for protection. Having access to 'wives', in turn, has played out as a recruitment tool, attracting young men to join the armed groups in order to have access to 'wives'.

The OCHA report of 2021¹¹ highlights how the protracted crisis resulted in the "normalisation" of violence and the activation of coping mechanisms of the affected population with a disproportionate impact of negative coping mechanisms on women in children; e.g., the fact that early marriage prevalent

¹⁰ Human Rights Council, '[I lost my dignity': Sexual and gender-based violence in the Syrian Arab Republic](#)', 2018.

¹¹ OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), 2021

remains prevalent in all governorates and that 62% of assessed communities mentioning that it is an issue for adolescent girls provides evidence in this sense. Girls as young as 11 years are married off, including for serial and/or temporary marriages, believing it will protect them and ease the family's financial burden. In some locations, forcing girls to take hormones to hasten puberty, with a consequent earlier age of marriage and pregnancy, have continued to emerge. Older women, divorced and widowed women and girls are increasingly exposed to the denial of resources (especially inheritance and alimony) and economic violence, sometimes linked to the lack of civil documentation. Sexual harassment, including on the way to school, in the market, and at distribution sites, as well as sexual violence contribute to psychosocial distress and movement restrictions of women and girls. Silence remains the most common coping mechanism among GBV survivors, but emerging negative coping strategies include drug abuse and suicide attempts.

An online survey of protection actors conducted in regime-controlled areas aimed at better understanding the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups found that 76% of respondents cited psychological trauma, stress and anxiety as the main protection issue faced by the population due to COVID, with 56% stating increased gender-based violence against women and girls as the next biggest concern followed by access to health care and other services (43%) which often serve as a critical entry point for GBV survivors. For women and girls specifically, 52% highlighted violence or abuse within the family as a primary protection issue and 48% referred to a lack of safe space and privacy – signalling that increased economic strains, fears over health, and cramped lockdown conditions arising from the pandemic may have exposed them to additional dangers. While men and boys in Syria, as in other contexts of displacement, have been subjected to different forms of sexual violence, women and girls face different layers of vulnerabilities, ranging from the heightened risk of physical and sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and early and forced marriage, to a shift in gender roles that can increase the caretaking role and add income-generating responsibilities. The situation for sexual and gender minorities is in part extremely precarious as they risk physical, sexual and psychological violence from most social actors around them.

The expected result of the envisaged action is a strengthened capacity of the Syrian civil society to lead justice and accountability processes. This result will be achieved through 1) the design and implementation of prevention and protection initiatives against VAWG and CRSV and promote women's participation in decision-making and peacebuilding; and 2) strengthened advocacy efforts on survivor-led accountability for gendered crimes committed in Syria. Among the foreseen overall indicators, *inter alia*, number of NSAs and NSA networks demonstrating enhanced capacities in support of victims of conflict-related violence dialogue or training activities; Percentage of families and survivors satisfied with the tailored support provided through the Actions; Number of CSO's/CSOs networks demonstrating / successfully leading justice and accountability initiatives within their communities; Number cases closed positively (subject located or fate established). Beyond the Indicators reported in the SM2021, all the indicators under thematic areas 2 and 4 remain applicable. In addition to the action foreseen under the SM2021, gender equality was included as one of the specific objectives under the Call for proposals *Support to civil society and human rights* in Syria launched in 2023.

The EU Delegation allocated 4 million to the entire result area. The EU continues not to have bilateral cooperation with the Syrian regime and, therefore, no support is foreseen for national gender machineries/networks or other institutional actors linked to the State. On the contrary, the EU will continue supporting women's organisation from the civil society.

Finland

In its development cooperation to strengthen equality, Finland focuses on improving the position and rights of women and girls in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, who are affected by the Syrian crisis.

Expected outcome: Rights of women and girls are realised

- Women have access to sexual and reproductive health services
- There is less gender-based violence

- Women have improved opportunities to earn a living or become self-employed
-

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- UN Women's Eid bi Eid project in Jordan to empower women in refugee and host communities
- UN Women 1325 regional programme

In 2021, Finland's development cooperation allocated to supporting the realisation of women's and girls' rights in Syria's neighbouring countries will be approximately EUR 1.8 million. In addition, Finland channels humanitarian funding, for example, to supporting the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Syria, which focuses on providing sexual and reproductive health services.

Italy

1. Project title: Strengthening the Resilience of Crisis-Affected Households through PwDs, Women and Youth Empowerment and Livelihood support in Al Mayadin, Deir Ezzor Governorate

Implementing partner: UNDP/UNFPA/FAO

Thematic areas:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights
3. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

Thematic objectives (see above):

Amount: 3.000.000 euro

2. Project title: UNDP/UNFPA - Provision of Support for Integrated GBV, RH and Youth Services and Livelihood Activities to Households Affected by the Crisis in Raqqa Governorate PHASE III

Implementing partner: UNDP/UNFPA

Thematic areas:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights
3. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

Thematic objectives (see above):

Amount: 1.000.000 euro

3. Project title: Darna Al-Aman (Our safe Home – La nostra casa protetta)

Implementing partner: UPP

Thematic areas:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

Overall thematic objective (Impact): Women, men, girls and boys are Thematic objectives: free from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online

Specific thematic objectives (outcomes):

- 1.1. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online through legislation and effective enforcement
- 1.3. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services
- 1.5. Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity trafficked for all forms of exploitation and abuse have improved access to adequate and quality services for socio-economic integration and psycho-social support
- 1.6. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and humanitarian crisis situations

2.1. Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information and education on sexual and reproductive rights

Amount: € 519.451,10 euro

4. Project title: Nahda – Percorsi sostenibili di sviluppo economico per le donne vulnerabili del Nordovest Siriano/ Sustainable pathways to economic development for vulnerable women in northwest Syria

Implementing partner: NGO

Thematic areas:

3. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

Thematic objectives:

3.4. Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, and alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy

3.10. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, have improved nutrition levels

Amount: 519.965,00 euro

4. Project title: Donne, Cibo, Salute – Percorsi di protezione per la popolazione Siriana/ Women, Food, Health - Pathways to Protection for the Syrian Population

Implementing partner: Armadilla

Thematic areas:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence

2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

3. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

Thematic objectives (see above):

Amount: 1.000.000 euro

Sweden

UNFPA: Addressing the needs of women and girls in the regional Syria Crisis.

This Action contributes to Thematic Area 1 *Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence* (SO2, SO3 and SO4) and to Thematic area 2 *Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights* (SO2). This contribution covers Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Turkey cross border and aims at preventing and responding to GBV and providing SRH services, challenge social norms and increase advocacy efforts for the rights of women and girls.

The main indicators to measure results are the following:

- % of women and girls who express belief that men and boys do not have the right to demand sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts or any other form of intimate partner violence (SO2);
- % of men and boys who acknowledge that gender-based violence is not acceptable (SO2);
- % of women, including those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, who report experiencing physical or sexual violence who seek help, by sector i.e. (a) regime services and civil society services; or (b) social welfare, legal aid, housing/shelter, police protection (SO3);
- Number of women, men and adolescents of reproductive age using modern contraception methods with EU support (SO4 and SO2);
- Number of women, men, adolescents, in all their diversity, with increased access to sexual and reproductive health care and services (SO2).

The estimated amount for this action is 180,000,000 SEK from 2021 till 2023.

Euromed Feminist Initiative (EFI): support political transition in Syria with Gender sensitive social reconstruction.

This Action contributes to Thematic Area 1 *Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence* (SO3); *Thematic Area 4 Advancing equal participation and leadership* (SO1) and *Thematic Area 5 Integrating the women, peace and security agenda* (SO1 and SO5).

The expected results are the following:

- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) are better addressed and women's participation in decision making, peace and national reconciliation processes is promoted;
- Institutional capacities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are strengthened and provision of thematic knowledge is structured;
- Inclusive democratic change is promoted through fostering gender sensitive legal and policy changes and WR advancement.

The main indicators to measure results are the following:

- % of women, including those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, who report experiencing physical or sexual violence who seek help, by sector i.e. (a) regime services and civil society services; or (b) social welfare, legal aid, housing/shelter, police protection (SO3);
- Extent to which female leaders influence policy and decision-making, including in conflict-affected contexts (SO1, TA4);
- N# and details of institutionalised as well as ad hoc EU-led and/or supported consultations with CSOs, including women's organisations, women activists, regarding implementation of (i) the Strategic Approach, as well as (ii) WPS policies in partner count. (SO1, TA5);
- N# of EU-supported activities aiming at strengthening the institutional social support and safety systems available for survivors of SGBV and addressing protection of rights and justice responses to SGBV in conflict and post-conflict situations affecting women, girls, men and boys. (SO5, TA5).

The estimated amount for the action is 75 million SEK fully funded by Sida/Sweden.

Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK)

This Action contributes to *Thematic Area 5 Integrating the women, peace and security agenda* (SO1 and SO5). The rationale for the chosen action and expected results are the following:

- Partner Organizations (POs) have improved organizational sustainability, and are strengthened to implement projects aiming to increase women's empowerment in targeted areas in Syria;
- The capacity of POs is strengthened in advocacy and lobbying to address discriminatory norms, laws and policies in local governance and ensure a space for women's participation in the process of rebuilding Syria;
- POs have contributed to women's active and qualitative participation in decision-making on local and national level, including peacebuilding.

The main indicators to measure results are the following:

- N# and details of institutionalised as well as ad hoc EU-led and/or supported consultations with CSOs, including women's organisations, women activists, regarding implementation of (i) the Strategic Approach, as well as (ii) WPS policies in partner count. (SO1, TA5);
- N# of EU-supported activities aiming at strengthening the institutional social support and safety systems available for survivors of SGBV and addressing protection of rights and justice responses to SGBV in conflict and post-conflict situations affecting women, girls, men and boys. (SO5, TA5).

The estimated amount for the action is 65,600,000 SEK for Syria.

International Rescue committee (IRC)

This Action contributes to *Thematic Area 3 Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women* (SO3) and to *Thematic Area 1 Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence* (SO2 and SO3). This programme promotes gender equality by supporting displaced and local communities, with a focus on vulnerable women and girls, in Jordan and Lebanon in 2017-2020, to increase social and economic resilience.

The main indicators to measure results are the following:

- Number of practices aimed at removing barriers preventing women from market access, investment and business development (SO3, TA3);
- Number of beneficiaries disaggregated at least by sex, with access to financial services: a) firms, b) individuals (SO3, TA3,);
- % of women and girls who express belief that men and boys do not have the right to demand sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts or any other form of intimate partner violence. (SO2);
- % of men and boys who acknowledge that gender-based violence is not acceptable. (SO2);
- % of women, including those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, who report experiencing physical or sexual violence who seek help, by sector i.e. (a) regime services and civil society services; or (b) social welfare, legal aid, housing/shelter, police protection (SO3).

The estimated amount for the action is 132 500 000 SEK for Jordan and Lebanon.

Spain

The overall objectives of Spain action for gender equality and women's empowerment are those under the Humanitarian Response Plan.

The selected areas of engagement and related objectives are the following:

Thematic Area 1 Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence

SO3) Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, who experience sexual and gender-based violence have increased access to essential services and protection.

Thematic Area 2 Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

SO2) Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information and education on sexual and reproductive rights.

Civil society will be included in the design, implementation and monitoring as implementing partners of the services in clinics. The estimated amount and/or other resources for the action(s) is 500,000 EUR.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

The EU responded decisively to the violent repression of anti-regime protests, which began in Syria in March 2011, by suspending its co-operation with the Syrian authorities and gradually extending targeted sanctions. As the EU policy remains not to engage with the Syrian regime as long as a Political Process is not achieved, there is no cooperation with the Syrian state on any reforms or national planning including gender equality. However, the EU Delegation implements a portfolio of projects that contribute to the achievement of gender equality in Syria.

The EU will continue to engage with all the other relevant stakeholders, including activists, CSOs, at international, national and local levels, Member State agencies, UN agencies and think tanks. The engagement aims at regularly monitoring the developments around key gender issues; and to inform and to mainstream gender across the EU interventions in Syria. The CSO virtual space set up by the EU Delegation has three objectives i) to foster intra-Syrian dialogue; ii) to exchange with civil society on EU priorities for assistance, and iii) to share the views and recommendations of the platform with the international community through such fora as the Brussels conferences. Dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment in the framework of the CSO Roadmap has already started through the platform and will continue, as inclusion has been identified as one of the pillar of the roadmap. The dialogue sessions held so far focused on the Special Measures Result Areas but included also sessions on women's participation. During the design of this CLIP, the EU Delegation held five focus group discussions with Syrian CSOs activists and stakeholders representing the different geographies. The feedback from those sessions informed this document and served as a starting point to mainstream gender across future Actions. The discussion will continue on the identified priority areas but will

expand to other priorities that might emerge in the coming years. Besides these structured discussions, the EUD held several bilateral meetings with Syrian and international organisations working on gender equality. The EU also supported the creation of grassroots initiatives for example The Women Platform Peace Initiative supported through the Local Administrative Council Unit (LACU) which aimed to engage with female representatives from women initiatives inside Syria and the diaspora in an effort to increase the participation of women in the peace process.

The EU supported Syrian women's participation and voice in the peace process by supporting the Women Advisory Board (WAB) role in the UN led peace process to serve as a hook and bridge within the political process for alliance building on women's rights. With funding channelled via UN WOMEN, the support to WAB led them to increase their legitimacy as an interlocutor in the political process and their ability to develop consensus on challenging issues was evidenced by the development and delivery of agreed messages which were amplified by their increased inclusion in statements of the Special Envoy (SE) and increased outreach to their constituencies. In addition, grassroots women leaders also strengthened their knowledge on topics related to the political process and women, peace and security as a result of the civil society projects funded also via UN WOMEN. This led to women leaders from Track III fostering linkages with those involved at the Track I level, with the hope to decrease the existing gap between women involved in the political process and grassroots women leaders, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable peace. At grassroots level EU is also supporting a community-based approach to facilitate the reintegration of women-headed families returning from Al Hol. This project established a Women's Committee to coordinate community reconciliation and reintegration support efforts in NES.

At the international level, **Finland** aims at being elected to the UN Human Rights Council in October 2021, and the HRC will be Finland's priority forum for discussions on the human rights situation in Syria.

In line with the EU policy, **Sweden** will not engage directly with the Syrian regime. Departing from Sweden's overarching feminist foreign policy – which remains a key priority also in the Syria context – issues related to the situation of women and girls in Syria will continue to be raised with relevant stakeholders at relevant levels, across the board. Women's participation in the UN-facilitated political process remains a priority.

Spain has no direct engagement with the partner country government. Engagement with Humanitarian actors through the Strategic Steering Committee for the Whole of Syria response

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

While the EU has no bilateral cooperation with the regime, the EU will continue to support and participate in different events on gender equality. Examples of events that were supported so far were those organised in the framework of the yearly Brussels Conferences on 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region', which latest edition took place on 14 and 15 June 2023. The EU will continue to sponsor relevant events organised in the framework of EU-funded projects and it will also attend events organised by other parties.

In addition to the above, the EU will continue to promote gender equality through its various communication campaigns, shedding light -where possible - on programs and initiatives that support that goal. Relevant examples of past communications include the selection of female beneficiaries who have benefited from EU-funded vocational training, women healthcare professionals who have benefited from EU-funded projects aimed at supporting that sector, and women in rural areas of Syria who have benefited from cash-for-assistance programs. These initiatives all contribute to the overall outreach efforts aimed at the public endorsement of gender equality and promotion of the EU's efforts in that regard.

6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

A Gender Country profile was produced in 2014 and updated in 2019, along with a Gender Audit. An amount of ca. 124,000 Euro was devoted to the design of gender sector analyses related to the result areas identified in the Special Measures. The analyses are ongoing.

Date: 6 November 2023

Signature by Head of Delegation: Dan Stoenescu, [E-signed]