



# ENABLING A LOCALIZED AID RESPONSE IN SYRIA

An Assessment of Syrian-led Organizations



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## list of acronyms

<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Orgaziation
<b>GAC</b>	Global Affairs Canada
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person(s)
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>LNGO</b>	Local Non-Governmental Association
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>MoNE</b>	Turkish Ministry of National Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı)
<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
<b>UN</b>	United Nations



## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written and produced by Building Markets. Field research and data collection was led by Watan, Building Markets' local partner in Turkey. Building Markets wishes to thank Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for making this report possible through its generous support.

In an effort to help localize the aid response to the Syria crisis, thereby increasing humanitarian assistance to the country, Building Markets mapped and assessed the capacity of Syrian-led civil society organizations (CSOs) based in Turkey and Syria. For the purposes of this report, the term CSO refers to Syrian-led civil society organizations and local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) operating in Turkey and/or Syria.

The principle objectives of this work were to bring visibility to these critical humanitarian partners through an online platform and to inform a training and mentorship program to strengthen their capacity. By shining a light on Syrian CSOs and how they operate, we hope that it will also contribute to the efforts of donors and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)<sup>1</sup> working to localize the aid response in Syria.

The results presented are based on information provided to Building Markets through discovery work, surveys, and in-person organizational capacity assessments of 402 Syrian CSOs. Interviews were also conducted with 25 stakeholders representing bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors, training providers, and INGOs operating in Turkey.

It is important to note that the quality of the analysis in this report is directly linked to the quality of the data that was provided to Building Markets by Syrian CSOs, INGOs, and other stakeholders that participated in this assessment. Building Markets has not undertaken any

independent verification of data. Further, the analysis reflects the representation of the data collected, and does not represent the policies or views of the Government of Canada or Global Affairs Canada.

Additional support provided by the Building Markets team included writing, research, and data analysis by Kavya Raman, Glynnis McIntyre, Chelsea McKeivitt, Guler Kaya, Jennifer P. Holt, and Isik Oguzertem.

Building Markets gratefully acknowledges the organizations and stakeholders who contributed their time, experience, and insights to this assessment.

Building Markets, headquartered in New York City, United States, is a nonprofit organization that creates jobs and encourages economic growth in crisis-affected countries by connecting local micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) to new opportunities. Through its approach, the organization has profiled and built a network of more than 23,688 local SMEs and CSOs, assisted those businesses and organizations in winning \$1.3 billion in contracts, and helped create over 69,791 jobs.

**Building Markets welcomes any case studies or best practices that would strengthen this report. These can be submitted, along with any questions and comments, to [reports@buildingmarkets.org](mailto:reports@buildingmarkets.org).**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The international humanitarian and development communities are increasingly supportive of utilizing local organizations to provide more effective aid delivery. By funding and partnering with local civil society, donors can spend development dollars twice by providing direct relief while building the capacity of local actors where needed, jumpstarting economic recovery and investing in a sustainable response.

However, seven years into the Syrian crisis, despite the existence of many active Syrian-led civil society organizations (CSOs), the international community is falling short in its efforts to localize aid. Syrian CSOs possess unique skills, expertise, and are on the frontlines delivering an estimated 75% of aid, yet they only receive roughly 0.2 to 0.9% of direct funding. This is largely because INGOs continue to receive the lion's share of grants due to their ability to meet strict donor requirements and humanitarian principles, even when they are largely unable to cross the border and operate inside Syria.

While INGOs have made efforts to build Syrian CSO capacity to allow for more partnership funding, formally registered Syrian organizations in Turkey continue to be largely bypassed by donors due to bureaucracy, perceptions of risk, low capacity, and a lack of coordinated investment in programs and approaches that recognize them as leaders in the crisis response. The resulting subcontracts and partnership agreements with Syrian CSOs often do not sufficiently cover costs, placing these organizations at risk by preventing them from planning beyond the short-term.

While the nature of the Syrian crisis response is extraordinarily complex and donor policies are rarely supportive of contracting local organizations, challenges with localization in this context also stem from basic barriers, including a lack of reliable data on active CSOs, their capabilities, and what is required for improved delivery. This research is intended to help address those challenges, and its results are informing a program supporting the growth of Syrian-led organizations.

## Highlights & Key Findings from Building Markets' Organizational Capacity Assessment:

- ◆ On a scale of 1 to 5, the average capacity assessment score for CSOs based in **Turkey is 4.01**, and for **Syria, 3.68**.
- ◆ Sixty-five per cent of Syrian-led CSOs report that they receive **donations from individuals**.
- ◆ Forty-nine of the CSOs in this assessment are led by **women** or have women in senior management.
- ◆ Overall, CSOs in this study employ a median of 19 (CSOs based in Turkey) and 10 (CSOs based in Syria) **full-time staff**.
- ◆ CSO capacity **scores were highest** in Communications, Program Management, and Safety and Security. **Scores were lowest** in Financial, Procurement, and Human Resources Management.

## Overview of Recommendations for the International Community, in Particular, Donors

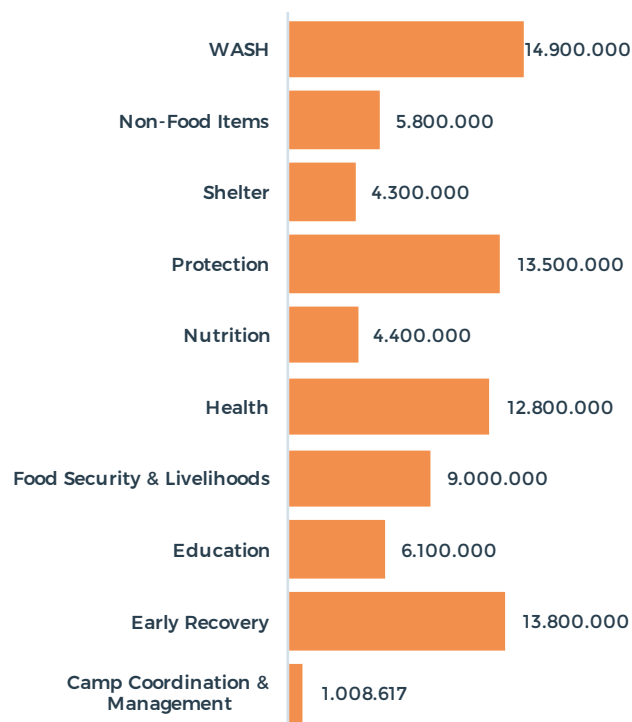
1. **Remember the Goal:** Donors should worry less about how their money is spent and more about what their money does.
2. **Look to the long-term.** At the beginning of an aid effort, invest in meaningful capacity assessments of local civil society that can inform short and long-term strategies for direct contracting and increased local partnerships.
3. **Adapt and Align.** Donors and INGOs should work together to align processes for procurement, donor reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity assessments. This will reduce duplication, waste, and fatigue among CSOs.
4. **Design solutions that are informed by evidence.** A one-size-fits-all approach to training, does not work when the capacity of organizations varies by sector, location, size, and experience.
5. **Share Information.** This has remained a persistent gap. Information on donor priorities and opportunities should be readily accessible to Syrian CSOs. Likewise, Syrian CSOs should be able to regularly share their priorities with donors and INGOs.
6. **Help organizations grow, not just deliver.** Partnership and subcontract agreements should allow for indirect costs. Without this, local CSOs are prevented from covering operational expenses, attracting and retaining qualified staff, and investing in process and systemic improvements.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The Syrian civil war has created the most pressing humanitarian crisis in recent history with comparisons to the mass displacements of World War II. Now in its seventh year, six million Syrians have been displaced internally, and another five million have spilled into surrounding countries. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that there are 13.1 million people in need of assistance, 5.6 million of which are in acute need.<sup>4</sup> For those displaced, experts estimate a minimum of ten years before Syrians will be able to return home, and even at that time, it will only be to start rebuilding a country that has suffered large-scale destruction at every level.

Humanitarian workers face the challenge of not only delivering aid to those displaced throughout Syria, but to the nearly three million people that live in hard-to-reach or besieged areas.<sup>5</sup> Although reports of violence in southern Syria have decreased, the conflict continues throughout the country. With an estimated 400,000 lives already lost, and many living in dire conditions,<sup>6</sup> expanding the delivery and reach of humanitarian assistance is critical.

**Figure 1: Total number of Syrian people in need, by sector (Human Response Plan, 2017)**





## 1.1 ACCESS

Humanitarian interventions are inherently difficult, but the circumstances of the conflict in Syria have made it extremely difficult for INGOs to safely operate inside the country. The constantly shifting front lines, lack of communications infrastructure, and incessant threat of violence have forced international organizations to pull back their operations into Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Even there, staff face increasing security concerns in certain regions, such as southern Turkey. This non-permissive environment surpasses the complexities faced in Afghanistan over the last decade and rivals the situation in Iraq. Put simply, there has never been a humanitarian crisis of this scale in a region where the international community has found it almost impossible to operate.

Available data underscores how this lack of access is affecting civilians on the ground. One report estimates that in besieged areas of Syria, food costs are 800% higher than nearby areas not under siege.<sup>5</sup> In December 2017, the average price for a food basket in Eastern Ghouta was 220,200 SYP (\$392 USD), with reports of residents resorting to consuming non-edible plants. In Eastern Ghouta, and in many other governorates throughout Syria, aid convoys from international humanitarian organizations have been unable to deliver any life-saving assistance.

Alongside the increasing access challenges facing INGOs, Syrian CSOs quickly grew in number. Existing organizations, ordinary Syrian citizens, and diaspora from around the world self-organized to address the mounting humanitarian needs of their country. In 2014, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) estimated that between 600-700 organizations had emerged inside the country.<sup>8</sup> They brought a deep understanding of the culture, funding, language, and context. This has resulted in the establishment of communication channels along with procurement and logistics routes that have allowed for the continued delivery of medicines, supplies, food, and equipment across Syria.

**Given access, security, and government restriction challenges, INGOs have been forced to remotely manage their programs through cross-border partnerships with Syrian-led CSOs, a number of which were established in and operate from Turkey.**

## 1.2 LOCALIZING AID

Efforts to localize aid have gained momentum in recent years. This can be attributed to several factors. First, the humanitarian sector faces a \$15 billion financing gap, which has created a necessity to identify more cost-effective ways to deliver aid.<sup>8</sup> Second, as noted above, in the case of Syria, INGOs have been forced to move their operations across the border – disrupting traditional approaches to delivering aid. Lastly, there is a growing consensus that humanitarian and development assistance favors INGOs, and therefore is not generating intended returns in terms of sustainability and impact. As a result, many platforms and initiatives have emerged that are supporting localization efforts. While not an exhaustive list, this includes, for example, the Grand Bargain, the Charter 4 Change, and the Shifting the Power Project.

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**Using national partners offers donors the opportunity to “spend the development dollar twice” by funding the provision of vital services and relief to people affected by crisis, while at the same time creating local capacity, jobs, and sustainability of organizations and marketplaces.<sup>9</sup>**

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The Grand Bargain is an agreement and framework established between more than 30 of the largest donors and aid providers that was introduced at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016. It is an ambitious set of reforms comprised of 51 commitments aimed at improving the effectiveness and equality of the humanitarian system. This includes a significant pledge to channel at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding through local and national actors by 2020.<sup>10-11</sup>

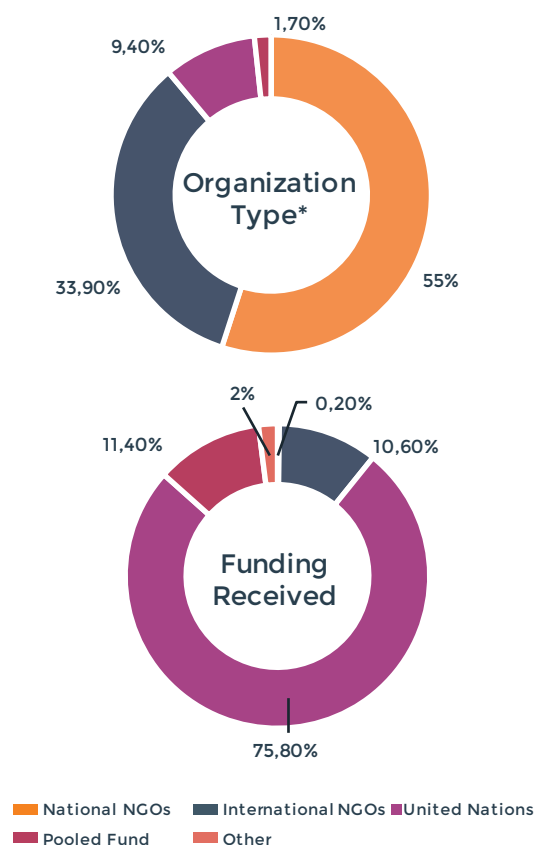
Started in 2015, the Charter 4 Change (C4C) is an initiative led by both national and INGOs that encourages a more locally-led humanitarian response. The C4C is helping to carry forward the localization objectives of the Grand Bargain. It has been signed by 32 INGOs that have pledged to meet eight broad commitments focusing on strengthening local organizations and increasing their share of direct funding.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Shifting the Power Project (StP) was commissioned by six INGOs and operated between 2015 and 2017. StP supported 55 local and national partners across five countries with an objective to balance and improve the humanitarian response by empowering and recognizing the value of local organizations and building their capacity.<sup>13</sup>

However, despite these important achievements, a the perception remains that many INGOs who work with local actors still tend to see them more as beneficiaries and service providers than partners - funding projects that are aligned with donor targets and restricting support for the professional development and expansion of local organizations.<sup>14</sup> This could be in part due to the fact that donors often do not include adequate financing for the overhead costs for implementing partners (e.g. as part of sub-contracting agreements). While accountability is essential, donor preoccupation with how cash is spent is often not balanced with consideration for how humanitarian and development objectives can be achieved. As a result, some local organizations critique that international actors pledging to work with local civil society have provided “more words than action.”<sup>15</sup>

Further highlighting the challenges of localizing aid, one report found that while the global total of humanitarian financing increased for the fourth consecutive year in 2016,<sup>17</sup> reaching \$27.3 billion, the amount of humanitarian assistance channeled directly to local and national NGOs decreased from 0.4 percent in 2015 to just 0.3 percent in 2016. In addition, while the C4C INGO signatories committed to increase direct financial flows through local organizations by 20%, tracking that spending has not only been difficult, many have noted that instead of direct funding to local actors to execute their mandates, money has been expended on capacity building efforts.<sup>18</sup>

In the Syria response, where INGOs have been dependent on local CSOs for the continued delivery of aid, OCHA reports that 86.4% of funding goes through international organizations (INGOs and UN agencies). However, 55% of partners are national and they receive a mere 0.2% of funding.

**Figure 2: Syrian Humanitarian Response Funding by Organization (Humanitarian Response Plan, 2018)**



\*of 171 Humanitarian Response Plan Partners

### 1.3 BUILDING MARKETS' APPROACH

Since its outset in 2004, localizing aid has been at the heart of Building Markets' mission. In 2005, the organization conducted the first economic impact assessment of the United Nations (UN) Department of Peacekeeping Operations' spending across 10 countries. The research found that 80% of spending was not going to the local economies that the peacekeeping operations were meant to support. At best, UN spending was missing a substantial opportunity to jumpstart economic growth, job creation, and increase stability - and at worst, it was undermining peace and development efforts. This research also identified practical ways in which the UN and other international actors could leverage their purchasing power and further their goals by utilizing local economies through the purchase of domestic goods and services.<sup>19</sup> This included verifying and bringing visibility to local small businesses, developing their capacity to compete for international contracts, and connecting them with opportunities through business matchmaking.

In light of the critical need to expand the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Syria, Building Markets designed a program that would contribute to localizing the aid effort by addressing some of the key challenges preventing Syrian organizations from accessing partnerships and contracts. This includes a mapping and assessment of their capabilities and growth constraints, a platform to bring them greater access, and a training and mentorship program to target their unique needs.

As part of its commitment to transparency and information sharing, Building Markets is releasing its findings from its organizational capacity assessment research, which was designed to inform its approach to supporting Syrian CSOs.

## 2.METHODOLOGY

Building Markets conducted this organizational capacity assessment together with its local partner and research collaborator, Watan. Through research, in-person interviews, and a focus group discussion, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from January to July 2017 in Turkey and Syria.

The survey data used in this analysis was drawn directly from interviews with representatives of CSOs. Given the nature of the assessment, Building Markets and Watan utilized a self-reporting method that allowed for organizations to reflect on and present their strengths, challenges, and areas for growth. Many INGOs operating in Turkey and Syria use similar capacity assessments as a factor for determining funding eligibility. In conducting this research, Building Markets made it clear that the primary purpose of collecting information was for informing a program strategy supporting Syrian CSOs, and that Building Markets would not provide funding based on the assessment.

The objectives of conducting this organizational capacity assessment were two-fold: 1) to inform Building Markets' approach to supporting Syrian CSOs in Turkey and Syria, including profiling on the organization's database and online platform, tailored training support, and targeted mentorship activities; and, 2) to bring visibility to Syrian CSOs and their capacities and constraints to better inform policy, strategy and programming decisions by the international community.

This assessment included four key components:

- 1 Desk research
- 2 Primary data collection through an in-person survey with 402 Syrian-led CSOs operating in Turkey and Syria
- 3 25 Stakeholder interviews
- 4 Focus group discussion with Syrian CSOs

Building Markets went to great lengths to understand and evaluate existing organizational capacity assessment tools in order to develop a survey that mirrored those used by donors and INGOs. The methodology of aligning the survey with those used by key stakeholders served two purposes. First, it ensured Building Markets covered the most common topics that donors and stakeholders typically require. Second, in using a survey structure similar to that of other capacity assessments, CSOs were able to complete the survey relatively quickly, without needing to pull additional materials or information.

Of the 402 Syrian CSOs surveyed, 67% were based in Turkey and 33% in Syria. The CSOs interviewed in Syria were mainly based in Aleppo, Idlib and Daraa provinces. For the purposes of this report, the term CSO refers to Syrian-led civil society organizations and local non-governmental organizations operating in Turkey and/or Syria.

For additional information on the methodology used for this assessment, see Annex 1.



### 3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

One of the main challenges facing donors and stakeholders responding to the Syrian crisis is limited information on the operational capacity of Syrian organizations. While many donors have conducted organizational capacity assessments of Syrian CSOs, whether for determining funding eligibility or to inform their capacity building and training priorities, the outcome is typically not shared publicly, often leading to a duplication of efforts, straining already limited resources, and creating a sense of survey fatigue and frustration among Syrian organizations. A number of Syrian CSOs repeatedly expressed concerns over this process.

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**International NGOs repeatedly conduct similar capacity assessment exercises. It takes a lot of staff time and what is valid for one is often not valid for another. After 6 years there is a lot of internal capacity amongst Syrian NGOs, but with many new projects it is as if everyone wants to reinvent the wheel.**

*-CSO Representative*

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The findings from this assessment revealed significant differences between Syrian CSOs based in Turkey and in Syria, particularly with regard to operational capacity, challenges and needs, and size and scope of organizations. Turkey-based organizations scored higher than those in Syria, which is to be expected given their greater access to resources and a stable working environment. The following sections provide an overview of key findings.

#### 3.1 OUTLOOK

CSOs in both Turkey and Syria reported difficulty accessing funding (77%) as the biggest challenge facing their organization in the next 12 months, followed by security concerns (7%) and issues related to government regulations (5%). CSOs that are unable to access funding opportunities are unable to consider the long-term sustainability of their organizations.

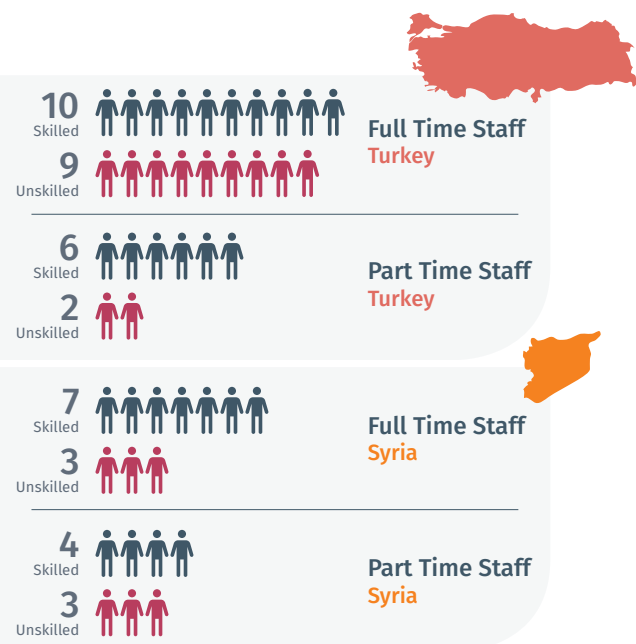
Despite funding constraints, 71% of CSOs described their organization as growing. Over the next 12 months, CSOs plan to expand their operations by starting new projects (92%) and hiring additional staff (88%). Turkey-based CSOs expressed their intention to expand and grow within Turkey, both in the immediate as well as distant future. Nearly half of the organizations based in Turkey plan on opening new office locations within the next 12 months, and close to 90% of Turkey-based CSOs expect to continue to grow their organization in Turkey, while also expanding operations into Syria, after the war ends.

Based on their experience working with donors, CSOs expect future funding for Syrian organizations to focus on education (54%), food security and livelihoods (16%), and protection (14%). This was a consistent finding across CSOs in both Turkey and Syria. Perceptions regarding funding for food security and livelihoods are aligned with what stakeholders reported as their priority areas in the coming year. However, stakeholders did not indicate increasing funding for education and protection programs. The disconnect between CSO and donor perceptions is an area that requires improvement. Increasing transparency and coordination between CSOs and donors can help organizations prioritize which donors to seek funding from, which programs they can focus on strengthening, and will help them better align their expertise with donor interest.

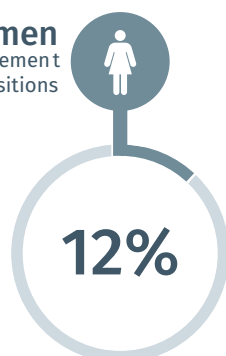
# At a Glance: Syrian Civil Society Organizations in Turkey and Syria

## Employment

CSOs in Turkey employ a median of 19 full-time staff. In Syria, it is 10 full-time staff.



Women  
in Senior Management  
Positions



## Gender and Leadership

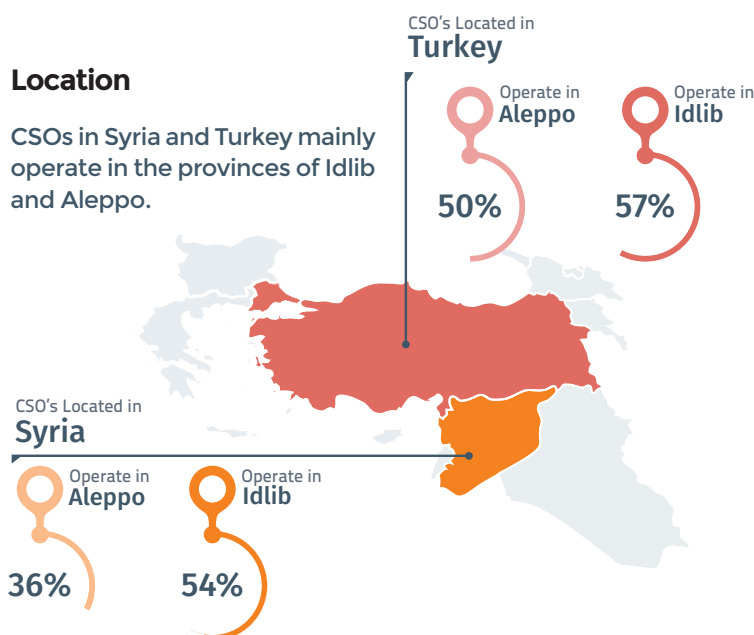
Syrian CSOs employ a median of 2 full-time female employees (1 in Syria and 2 in Turkey), 1 of which has a role in management.

Out of 402 organizations surveyed, 49 CSOs (31 Turkey-based, and 18 Syria-based) are led by women or have women in senior management positions at the CEO, Director, or head of organization level.

Thirty (30) CSOs reported missions or mandates that have a focus on women, including women's rights (21 Turkey-based, and 9 Syria-based). Five CSOs reported focusing exclusively on women's rights.

## Location

CSOs in Syria and Turkey mainly operate in the provinces of Idlib and Aleppo.



## Sector of Operations

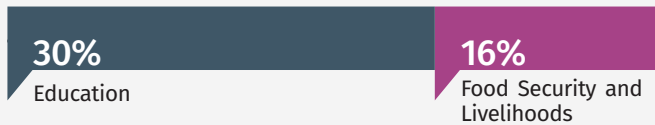
The scope and programmatic focus of CSOs in Turkey versus those in Syria is consistent with the difference in needs in both countries. With a devastated local economy and access to basic goods continually cut off by regime forces, CSOs in Syria are largely focused on addressing the immediate needs of their communities, including basic resources such as food and water.

Syrians in Turkey, while still facing economic struggles and lacking access to many basic goods, are also struggling to access services such as education. Given the protracted nature of the conflict and the reality that returning to Syria is not likely in the near future, it is essential that Syrians access opportunities and resources that allow them to better integrate into and contribute to Turkish society.

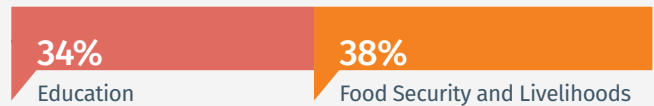
By registering as "associations", Syrian teachers have made considerable effort to bring their community-based education initiatives in line with Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (Turkish Ministry of National Education, MoNE) requirements. While these learning centers are for the time being, in accordance with national regulations, MoNE regularly reiterates the legal requirement that all education initiatives within the country fall under the remit of the Ministry. Accordingly, these centers will likely continue to operate as civil society actors until ultimately consolidated under MoNE.

## Top Sectors of Operations\*

CSO's based in Turkey



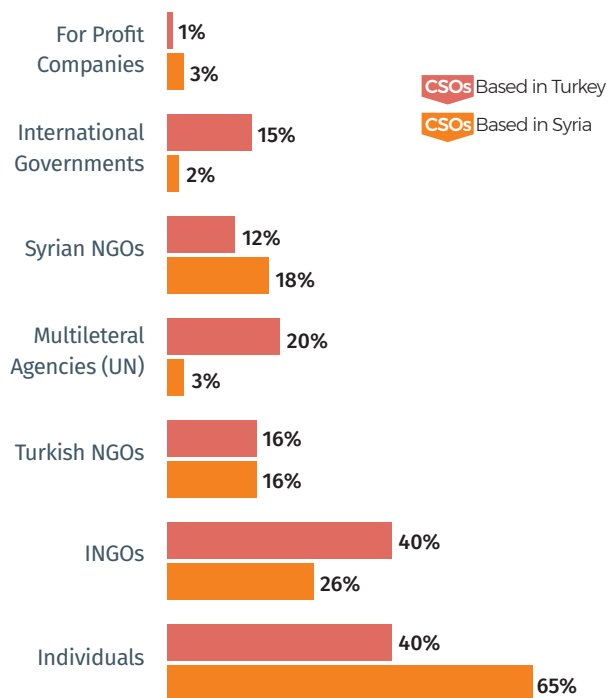
CSO's based in Syria



## Funding

CSOs in both Turkey and Syria commented that they primarily receive funding from individual private donors, including donations from the diaspora communities.

## Who are your Donors?



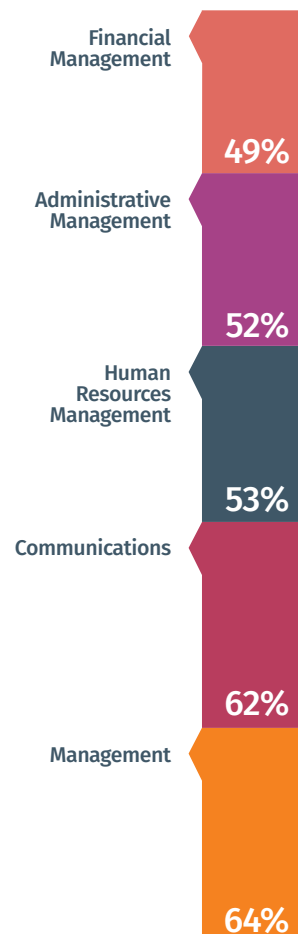
## Capacity Building Support

The majority (86%) of CSOs in Turkey and Syria indicated that they or someone from their organization had received training, mentoring, or other capacity building support in the past.

The majority of training sessions were between 1 and 5 days and overall, CSOs felt the training they received was useful. Roughly half of the respondents felt that the duration of the training was sufficient to cover the material, while the other half felt that there was not enough time.

Despite high rates of previous training and mentorship, nearly all CSOs indicated an interest in participating in future training or capacity building programs. In total, 37% of CSOs said that they would be willing to pay for training for themselves or for their staff. However, in Turkey, 48% of surveyed CSOs would be willing to pay for training.

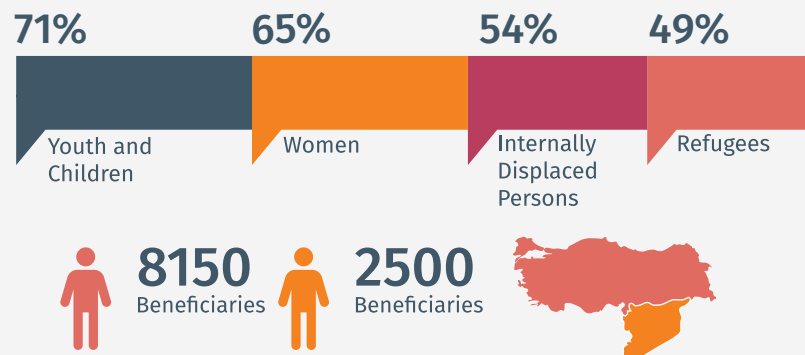
## Previous Training Received\*



## Beneficiaries\*

CSOs based in Turkey, but also operating inside Syria, reported reaching a median of 8,150 beneficiaries per year. CSOs based only in Syria reported reaching a median of 2,500 beneficiaries per year.

Ninety-three per cent (93%) of all CSOs reported having a mechanism to receive complaints and feedback from beneficiaries. Eighty-six per cent (86%) of all CSOs reported sharing project information with beneficiaries through face-to-face meetings.



\* denotes instances where percentages add up to more than 100 as respondents could select more than one response option.

### 3.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: STRENGTHS AND GAPS

The organizational capacity assessment conducted by Building Markets was designed to evaluate Syrian CSOs across eight functional areas:

- 1 governance,
- 2 program management,
- 3 human resource management,
- 4 financial management,
- 5 procurement management,
- 6 monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL),
- 7 communications, and
- 8 safety and security.

Based on responses to the assessment, CSOs were scored on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) (see Annex 1 for scoring guidelines). They received scores for each category, as well as an overall organizational capacity score, which is based on a weighted aggregate of the eight categories.

	SYRIA	TURKEY	TOTAL
Communications	4.47	4.38	4.41
Program Management	4.25	4.33	4.31
Safety and Security	4.16	4.16	4.16
Governance	3.83	4.11	4.02
MEAL	3.33	3.82	3.66
Human Resources Management	3.2	3.80	3.60
Procurement Management	3.28	3.69	3.55
Financial Management	2.91	3.82	3.52
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>3.9</b>

The overall average capacity assessment score for CSOs based in Turkey is 4.01 and for CSOs based in Syria is 3.68. The slightly higher score for CSOs based in Turkey could be due to access to resources, networks, and ability to operate in a more stable, predictable environment.

SECTOR	SYRIA	TURKEY	TOTAL
Shelter	4.48	4.30	4.31
WASH	3.63	4.41	4.21
Nutrition	3.77	4.12	4.08
Other	n/a	4.01	4.01
Health	3.63	4.03	3.96
Protection	3.68	4.04	3.93
Non-Food Items	3.52	4.02	3.92
Education	3.77	3.98	3.90
Rights and Freedoms	3.73	3.95	3.89
Food Security and Livelihoods	3.62	4.07	3.82
Women's Rights	3.49	3.93	3.82
Human Development Capacity Building	3.32	4.15	3.82
Media	n/a	3.71	3.71
Arts & Culture	n/a	2.96	2.96
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>3.90</b>

Overall, CSOs based in both Turkey and Syria scored higher on Communications, Program Management, and Safety and Security.

Financial Management, Procurement Management, and Human Resources Management are areas where organizations appear to have weaker capacity and could benefit from additional training and mentorship.

While Education is the most frequently occurring sector in the CSO sample, the overall capacity assessment score for CSOs (from both countries) in Education ranked lower compared against other sectors. Similarly, while CSOs operating in Food Security and Livelihoods in Syria reported the highest annual operating budgets, these organizations scored lower than others.



### 3.4 CAPACITY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

#### 3.4.1 Communications



The Communications section of the assessment addresses topics across three categories:

- 1 Policy and procedures;
- 2 Adherence to humanitarian principles; and
- 3 Communications and advocacy work.

CSOs based in both Turkey and Syria scored higher on Communications in comparison to other areas evaluated. Over half of all CSOs reported having received previous training, mentorship, or other capacity building support focused on communications (63% for Turkey-based CSOs and 59% for Syria-based CSOs).

Organizations' confidence in their communications abilities was further demonstrated by the fact that very few organizations (5% in Turkey and 6% in Syria) identified communications as a first priority for additional training and mentorship support, even though they considered it an important skill for their organization to have. Nearly three-fourths (70%) of CSOs indicated they have a written communications policy. Furthermore, almost all of the CSOs (96%) with a written communications policy reported sharing it with staff members.

Figure 3: Do you have a written Communications Policy?

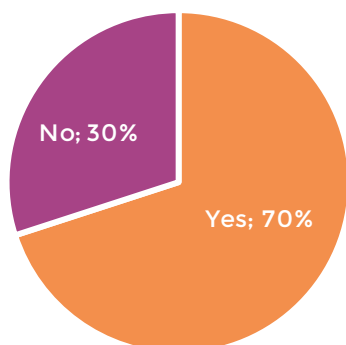
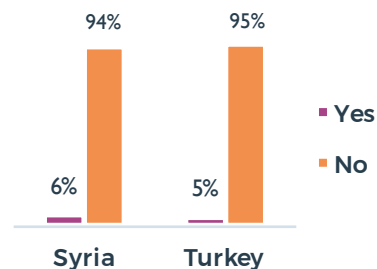
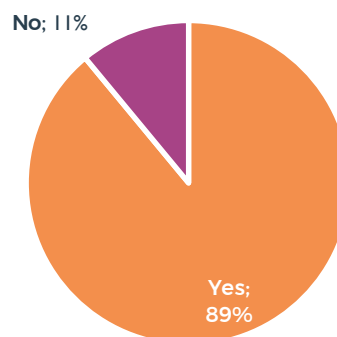


Figure 4: Is Communications your first preference for training?



When asked about their primary channel of communication, CSOs noted social media, the organization's official website, and newsletters. Organizations reported strong adherence to humanitarian principles, with almost all (96%) of CSOs confirming that their staff and communications materials comply with core humanitarian principles. However, stakeholders were critical, reporting this to be an area where capacity varies substantially between CSOs, most likely due to differences in the interpretation of core humanitarian principals, indicating a possible area for additional support.

Figure 5: Do you have dedicated staff to develop and disseminate communications materials?



Furthermore, 86% of CSOs stated that they seek to leverage their communications activities to help advocate and influence stakeholders to change policies or conditions that affect their work. The majority (89%) of CSOs also reported they have dedicated staff to develop and disseminate communications materials. Given the resource constraints that many CSOs face, this high percentage could indicate that external communications are perceived as a core function for these organizations.

### 3.4.2 Governance

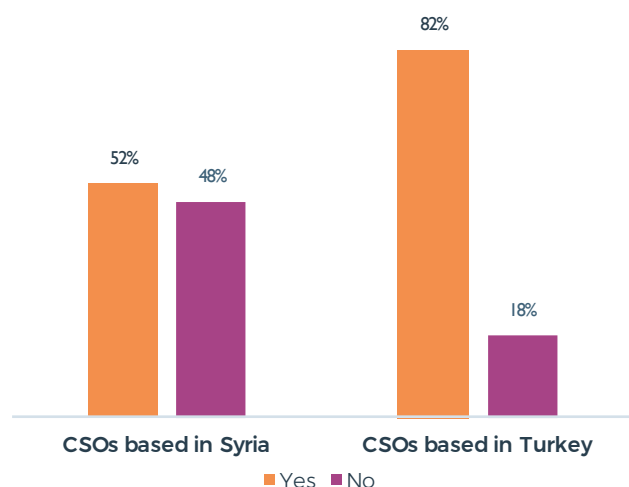


The Governance section of the survey addresses topics across six categories:

- 1 Mission and Vision;
- 2 Strategic Planning;
- 3 Resource Mobilization;
4. Organizational Chart;
5. Board of Directors; and
6. Bylaws.

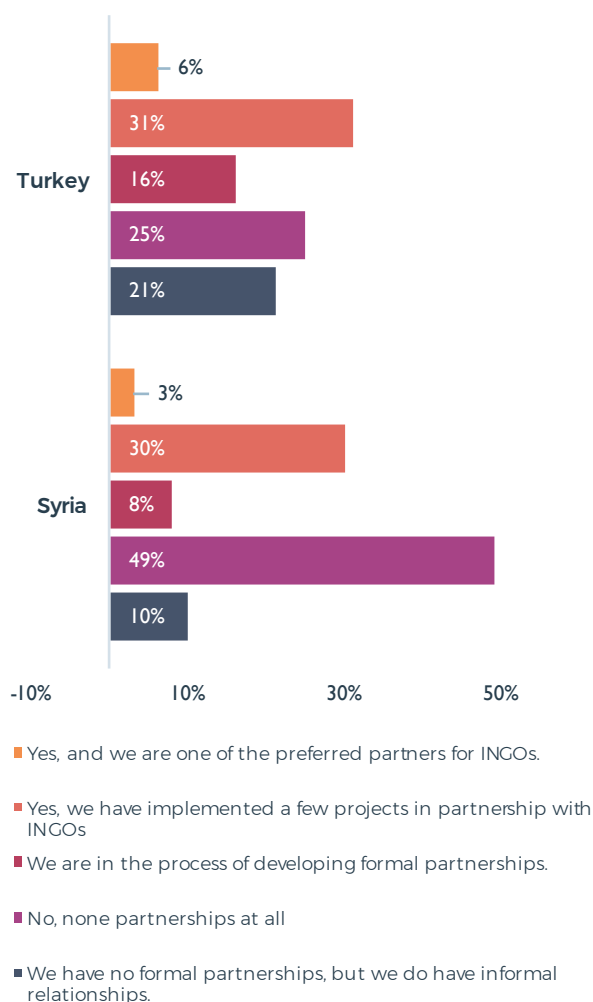
More than 94% of all CSOs confirmed having a written Mission and Vision that is shared with the organization's employees, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Eighty-nine per cent (89%) of all CSOs also reported having at least a twelve-month strategic plan. However, feedback Syrian CSOs suggests that these plans may not always be communicated to all staff within the organization.

**Figure 6: Do you have a board of directors/external governing body?**



Eighty-two per cent (82%) of CSOs in Turkey and 52% of CSOs in Syria indicated having a board of directors or external governing body to oversee the organization's strategic planning function. Having a Board is a standard requirement of CSOs registered in Turkey. However, in Syria, it is a relatively new requirement, and while a board may exist on paper, they are most likely to be perfunctory in practice.

**Figure 7: Does the organization have formal partnerships with INGOs, including Turkish NGOs?**



Almost an equivalent percentage of CSOs in Turkey and Syria (37% and 33% respectively) reported implementing projects in partnership with INGOs. Fifty-nine per cent (59%) based in Syria and 46% based in Turkey claimed no formal partnerships with INGOs. Twenty-four per cent (24%) of all CSOs affirmed organizing fundraising events where they invite stakeholders and request donations.

### 3.4.3 Program Management

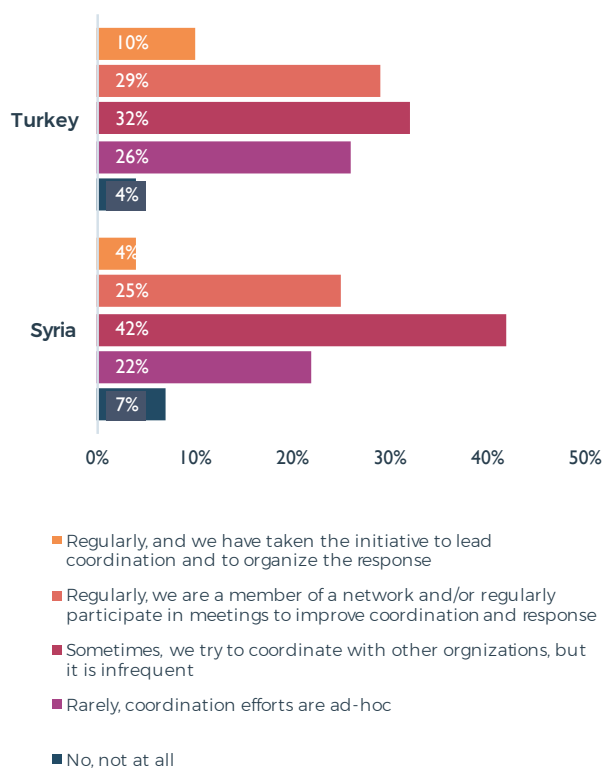


The Program Management section addresses topics across three categories:

- 1 Planning and Implementation;
- 2 Coordination; and
- 3 Reporting.

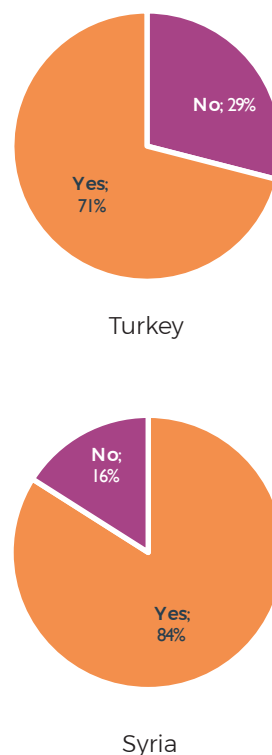
The most common previous training received by CSOs in both countries was focused on management. Overall, CSOs based in both Turkey and Syria identified strong program planning and implementation capability. The majority of CSOs shared that it is common practice to follow program management cycles and use tools to track implementation against work plans and budgets. However, a quarter (25%) of CSOs indicated they do not have staff with experience writing proposals. Surprisingly, this finding was slightly higher among Turkey-based organizations (29%).

**Figure 8: Does the organization coordinate with other CSOs and INGOs?**



Within organizations, coordination levels among program staff scored high. The majority of CSOs report having program teams that meet regularly, often on a weekly basis, with notes and outcomes of these meetings shared with relevant staff. While internal coordination appears strong, coordination with other stakeholders is comparatively weak, as only 27% of CSOs noted regularly meeting with other CSOs or INGOs. This finding was slightly lower for Syria-based organizations, of which 25% indicated they frequently work with other CSOs or INGOs.

**Figure 9: Do you have staff with experience in writing proposals?**



Despite an apparent lack of coordination mechanisms between organizations, organizations did identify regular communications with each other specifically with regard to ensuring the safety and security of staff, which may not have been perceived by organizations as an element of stakeholder coordination.

Compliance with donor reporting requirements among CSOs also scored high. Over three-quarters (87%) reported that they submit narrative reports to donors on a timely basis, and nearly all (92%) state they maintain a filing system.

### 3.4.4 Safety and Security

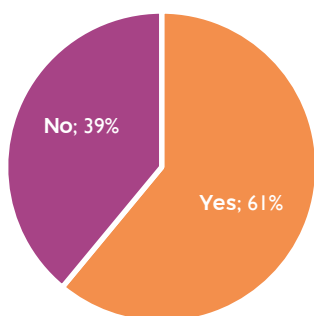


The Safety and Security section of the organizational capacity assessment addresses topics across three categories:

- 1 Policy and Procedures;
- 2 Threat Reporting; and
- 3 Preemptive Security Management.

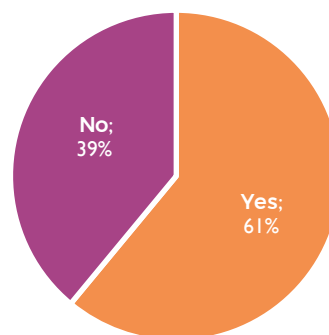
In the critical area of safety and security, overall, CSOs showed relatively strong protocols and management systems. Sixty-one per cent (61%) of all organizations reported having written security policies and procedures. Turkey-based CSOs indicated a slightly higher percentage (65%) than those based in Syria (54%). Furthermore, 61% of organizations shared that they actively train their staff on security protocols.

**Figure 10: Do you have written security policies and procedures?**

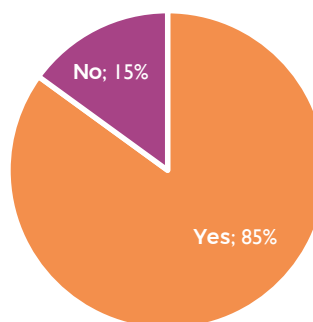


Seventy-nine per cent (79%) of all CSOs claimed to internally document all safety and security concerns. Additionally, the majority (85%) of CSOs indicate they report all safety and security incidents to project partners and donors. Nearly all CSOs shared that they consult with different local authorities for advice and insight into the security environment in a given area. Additionally, the majority (85%) of CSOs reported that they conduct risk assessments to inform program design and to allow for appropriate budgeting.

**Figure 11: Do you train your staff on security protocols?**



**Figure 12: Do you report all safety and security incidents to project partners and donors?**





### 3.4.5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning



Donors place great emphasis on CSOs and INGOs conducting Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEAL), but less on approaches and applications, which often seem to be inconsistent. The MEAL section of Building Markets' assessment addresses topics across three categories.:

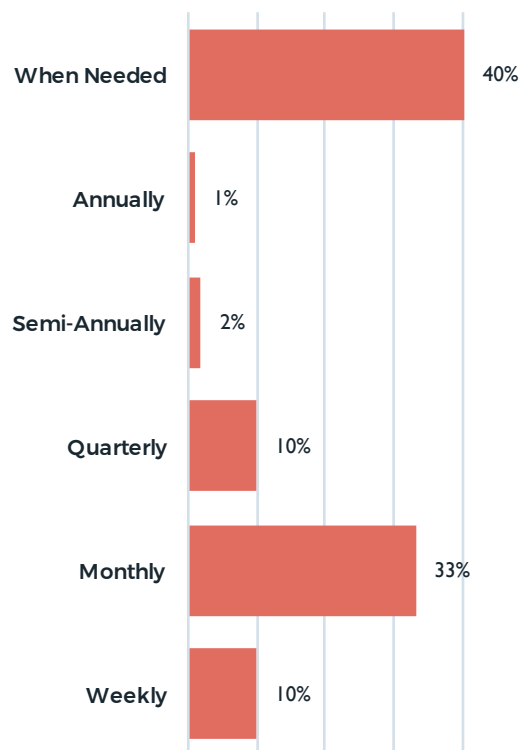
- 1 Assessments;
- 2 Participation and Accountability; and
- 3 Evaluation and Learning.

Seventy-seven per cent (77%) of all CSOs stated they have a written monitoring and evaluation plan that clearly outlines indicators, outputs, and outcomes. Ninety-three per cent (93%) of all CSOs indicated conducting needs assessments before designing program interventions, with 44% of all CSOs reporting that needs assessments are conducted at the beginning of the project and at frequent intervals throughout the life of the program.

The value of local knowledge in conducting formal and informal assessments is worth noting as fifty-four per cent (54%) of CSOs in Syria and 70% of CSO in Turkey said they 'always' consult target beneficiaries when conducting assessments and involve them in program design and implementation through face-to-face meetings. Syrian CSOs also reported sharing project information with beneficiaries through in-person meetings (86%) and social media pages (63%).

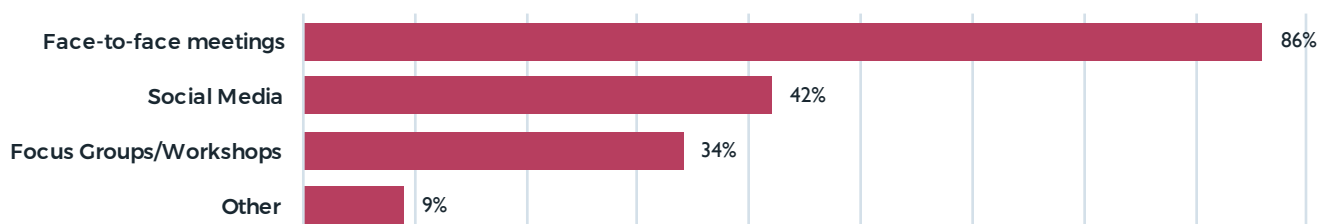
Seventy-three per cent (73%) of all CSOs responded that they collect MEAL data from staff on a regular basis through paper surveys. Thirty-one per cent (31%) of CSOs in Syria and 72% of CSOs in Turkey reported using this data to inform existing and/or future program design.

Figure 13: How often do you collect MEAL data?



Despite apparently strong MEAL practices, 79% of all CSOs noted that their staff members are not trained on these policies and procedures, thus indicating a possible area for improvement.

Figure 14: How do you share project information with beneficiaries?



### 3.4.6 Procurement Management

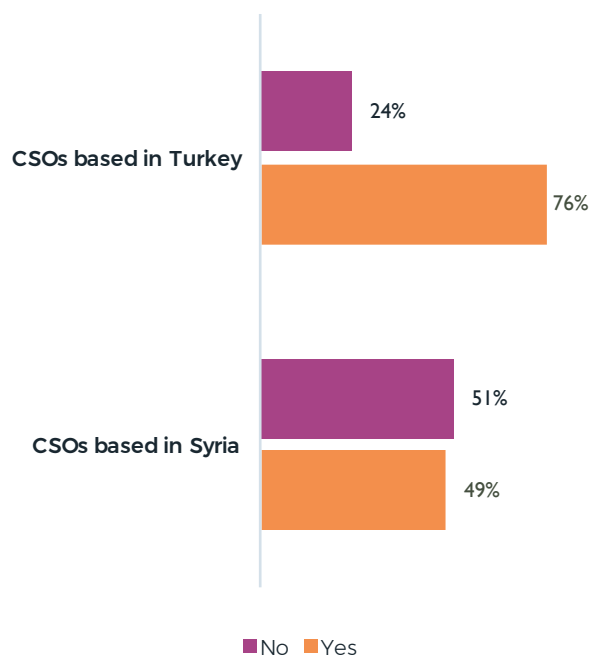


The Procurement Management section of the organizational capacity assessment addresses topics in three categories:

- 1 Policies and Procedures;
- 2 Systems; and
- 3 Procurement.

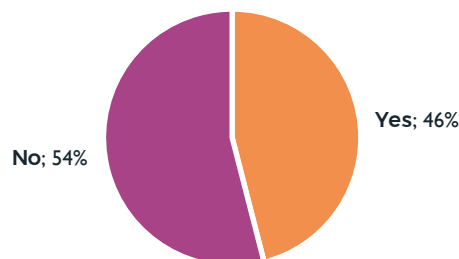
Overall, CSOs in Turkey and Syria have some procurement processes and procedures in place, however, findings demonstrate that procurement systems and management need to be strengthened, particularly for CSOs based in Syria.

**Figure 15: Do you systems for tracking stock, inventory, and assets?**



CSOs in the sample have relatively weak procurement systems, particularly those based in Syria. Organizations lack the tracking and monitoring systems, evidenced by the fact that one-third of all CSOs (34%) indicated that they do not have systems for tracking stock, inventory, and assets (51% of CSOs based in Syria).

**Figure 16: Do you perform spot checks of procurement files?**



CSOs reported that they do have written procurement policies and procedures with set purchasing thresholds, and that procurement policies and procedures are updated either annually or semi-annually. However, while over half (56%) of CSOs stated that no staff receive training on the organization's procurement policies and procedures, procurement in Syria naturally faces considerable barriers unique to the conflict. As one respondent explained, "Procurement in Syria can't be transparent, because the moment you advertise for a notice in a local paper, others know you have money. You become a target. Similarly, for suppliers: if others find out they are bidding, it suggests they have capital or inventory that can also become an easy target".

The majority (92%) of CSOs reported that their procurement processes are transparent and competitive. However, this self-reported finding may also be a relative assessment given the operating environment. Therefore, this figure should not be compared with assessments from other contexts. This includes ensuring that the process is properly documented and that the specifications and supplier selection criteria are clearly defined so that each vendor has a fair chance at selection.

One of the key mechanisms for ensuring that procurement is compliant and competitive is by performing regular spot checks of the procurement process. Although the majority of CSOs indicated that their procurement processes are robust, over half (54%) of the CSOs stated that they do not perform spot checks of procurement files. This perception and disconnect signifies an area where organizations would benefit from training and mentorship.

### 3.4.7 Financial Management



The Financial Management section addresses topics across five categories:

- 1 Policies and Procedures;
- 2 Accounting;
- 3 Reports;
- 4 Segregation of Duties; and
- 5 Reconciliation.

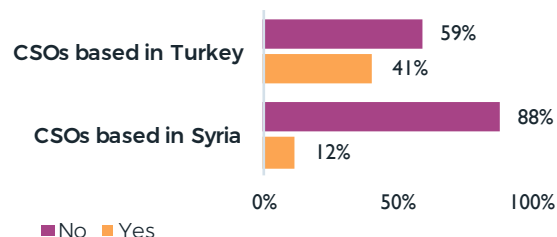
Over half (52%) of Turkey-based CSOs that received previous capacity building support indicated that it was focused on strengthening financial management capabilities, compared to 49% of Syria-based CSOs. However, the fact that Turkey and Syria-based CSOs still have relatively low financial management capacities, even with previous training, suggests that the structure of training received may not have aligned with organizational needs.

While the majority (81%) of CSOs confirmed having written financial policies and procedures, 44% of those organizations noted that staff do not receive training on financial policies and procedures. Of the CSOs that do train staff, the majority only train senior management and leadership. Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of CSOs stated that their organization had been either internally or externally audited, the majority of which were completed within the last two years. However, it is important to note that CSOs were not required to share the entity that audited their organization. Therefore, organizations could be counting NGO, INGO, or donor pre-assessment awards or reviews as financial audits.

Over a quarter (28%) of CSOs affirmed they do not have a cash, accrual or modified systems of accounting, nor do they use any type of accounting software. This was particularly true for CSOs based in Syria (54%). Nearly half of the CSOs (50%) stated that their financial procedures do not include a requirement for multiple signatories to authorize payments. This was even higher for CSOs based in Syria (84%). Furthermore, 41% of CSOs reported not having a system for determining

exchange rates. This statistic was again higher for CSOs based in Syria (64%). This is a critical finding as accounting systems and financial management practices are often a key benchmark for donors, as they must comply with their host country regulations.

**Figure 17: Do you have an organization-wide operating budget?**



The majority of CSOs claimed to submit donor reports on a regular basis. While nearly all (91%) CSOs in the sample use separate budgets for each individual donor-funded project or grant, two-thirds (68%) said they do not have an organization-wide operating budget. This is even higher for Syria-based CSOs (88%), limiting their ability to forecast future programming needs, and to assess whether resources are being allocated efficiently.

The majority (86%) of CSOs shared that they have a written policy of segregation of duties. Furthermore, 77% identified that the person responsible for signing payment requests is different from the person preparing the request. However, because the majority of organizations do not require multiple signatories to approve payments, there is still a potential audit risk. Thirty-eight per cent (38%) of CSOs stated they do not have an operational chart of accounts that assigns a unique code to each expenditure. This is particularly true of CSOs based in Syria (57%). As organizations grow, and take on larger grants, this weakness could lead to incorrect allocation of expenses to budget line items, potentially causing disallowed costs during financial audits.

The majority (93%) of CSOs indicated they reconcile expenses against the project or grant budget. Over half (59%) do so at the beginning and end of the project, as well as on a monthly or quarterly basis. While a large majority of organizations seem to be reconciling their expenses routinely, over one-third (36%) of CSOs reported that they only reconcile expenses at the beginning and/or end of the project, which could lead to mismanagement of funds and overspending on project implementation, underspending, or disallowed costs.

### 3.4.8 Human Resource Management



The Human Resource (HR) Management section addresses topics across three categories:

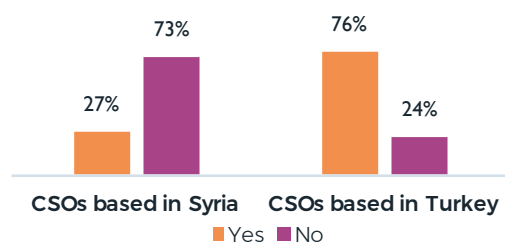
- 1 Organizational Development;
- 2 Recruitment; and
- 3 Personnel and (Employee) Welfare.

Overall, CSOs in both Turkey and Syria appear to have some cursory human resources functions in place. However, they report struggling with recruitment and personnel retention.

The majority (72%) of CSOs reported that they have written and established human resource policies and procedures. However, training on these policies and procedures appears to be uncommon (40% indicated that no staff receive training or training is only offered to those in leadership or management roles). With regard to staffing and clarity of job function, less than half (46%) of CSOs confirmed having written job descriptions for all functions within their organization. CSOs appear to make performance appraisals and reviews important, which was suggested by the fact that 85% of CSOs stated they are conducting performance appraisals for all employees. However, implementation of performance appraisals appears to be inconsistent and unpredictable (51% report conducting appraisals on an ad-hoc basis).

More than a quarter of CSOs shared that they do not publicly announce new job vacancies. This is particularly true for CSOs based in Syria (41%), although this is likely due to security concerns. However, recruitment is unsurprisingly an area in which CSOs continue to experience challenges. Finding alternative mechanisms

**Figure 18: Are salary payments always transferred consistently, correctly, and on time?**

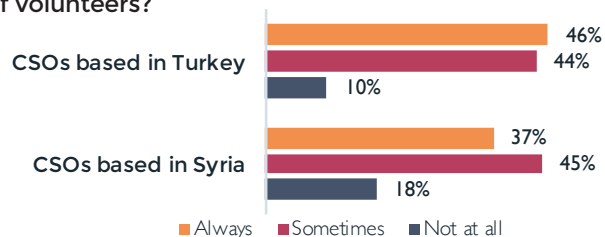


for publicly advertising jobs could prove extremely valuable to recruit and retain high quality employees. However, given the inevitable turnover of staff, this underscores the need for CSOs to have strong systems and procedures in place that can assist with continuity.

While a majority of organizations indicated they have a written gender equality policy, 36% of organizations have no such policy. This could suggest a possible gap in considering and targeting qualified female candidates during the recruitment process. Given that 71% of Syrian CSOs described their organizations as expanding, it is critical they have robust recruitment processes that allow for the sourcing and selection of high quality candidates, including women.

Over 40% of CSOs reported they do not have set salary scales, benefits, or allowances. In addition, 40% of organizations stated that their salary payments are not always transferred consistently, correctly, and on time (73% in Syria and 24% in Turkey). Furthermore, forty-six per cent (46%) of Turkey CSOs and 37% of Syria-based CSOs shared that their organizations are always dependent on volunteers. These factors could be a reason that most CSOs cited the primary reason for staff turnover as complaints about salary and benefits. While 91% claimed to offer professional advancement opportunities to their staff, less than a quarter (21%) included salary raises in these opportunities. Performance-based bonuses were cited by 58% of CSOs as a form of professional advancement, however, it is unclear how often these bonuses are administered or what compensation format they come in (i.e. cash, gift card, etc.).

**Figure 19: Does your organization rely on the support of volunteers?**



Given these challenges, over half (60%) of CSOs indicated they were distressed about losing employees in the future. During interviews, CSOs acknowledged that relying so heavily on volunteers could impact their sustainability. The primary worries regarding future turnover are poaching by competitors (34%), complaints about salary and benefits (30%), and employees relocating (29%).

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though progress has been slow, the international humanitarian and development communities are becoming increasingly supportive of localizing aid. That is both out of necessity and because the long-term gains are clear – particularly when considering the amount of international assistance spent over the last three decades against the continued levels of unemployment and dependence on aid in many countries that have received long-term support.

The current conventional approach of relying on large INGOs in a humanitarian response is an old and entrenched model that is a product of donor experience operating in under-developed countries where local resources are scarce or unavailable. However, even in the poorest countries, markets and access are changing. What makes the Syria response more striking is that it is taking place in middle-income countries where hundreds of local CSOs have emerged and are operating in more sophisticated economies.

Unlike INGOs, Syrian CSOs also have access, knowledge, and relationships that give them a strategic advantage. But perhaps more importantly, they are driven by a personal commitment and connection to their country. Yet, seven years into the crisis, we know that despite this capacity, Syrian CSOs continue to receive just a fraction of donor funding. Findings from this research show that Syrian-led organizations, although young and relatively inexperienced, are ambitious, possess unique expertise, plan to expand and grow, hire new employees, launch new projects, and are keen to receive additional support.

While INGOs remain critical players and partners in any emergency or development response, engaging local organizations earlier in a crisis rather than operating independently or employing strategies that set-up structures of aid dependence could help reach humanitarian and development goals faster. It is important to acknowledge that efforts have been made to build Syrian CSO capacity and create partnerships. However, those strategies have varied in implementation, and success has been uneven. Nonetheless, recent evidence suggests that the tide is turning – and local organizations in Syria are becoming increasingly visible given their critical contributions. Ramping up efforts to support them would enhance the impact of international assistance, better prepare Syrian CSOs for the work that lies ahead, and decrease costs by building the capacity of a locally-led aid effort.



## 4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND PARTNERS

**1. Remember the Goal.** *Donors should worry less about how their money is spent and more about what their money does.* Too often, the big picture objective of reducing the need for assistance has been overshadowed by a desire to account for, and report on, every penny spent. If not better balanced, this approach will inevitably prevent local NGOs from accessing contracts.

**2. Take the long view:** *At the beginning of an aid effort, invest in meaningful capacity assessments of local civil society that can inform short and long-term strategies for direct contracting and increased local partnerships.* Findings from this research show that Syrian organizations, although young and relatively inexperienced, are ambitious, plan to expand and grow, hire new employees and launch new projects, and are keen to receive additional support. Donors and INGOs should refrain from tying capacity building support to possible funding and similarly refrain from paying CSOs to attend training sessions as this creates a negative incentive for CSOs when training is perceived as a means to access funding, rather than a means to improve the organizations systems and processes. This could explain why CSOs report having policies and procedures in place across all eight assessment areas, without always having processes, checks and balances and dedicated human resources to support the implementation of these policies.

**3. Adapt and Align:** *Harmonize procurement, donor reporting, MEAL and capacity assessment requirements with other donors and INGOs.* One of the most commonly cited complaints from local organizations is asynchronous and duplicative donor requirements. There is evidence of a consortia of INGOs that have agreed to harmonize and simplify its capacity assessment process for considering CSOs for funding and partnerships, however such initiatives can only be successful if endorsed by all donors and INGOs operating in the space. Given the uniquely complex nature of the response that has required donors and INGOs to adapt their own strategies and operations under the crisis response, the expectations and requirements of Syrian CSOs should similarly

reflect this nuance. Donors and INGOs should step-up efforts to coordinate funding to training providers and capacity building initiatives to avoid duplication of resources and efforts.

**4. Design solutions that are informed by evidence:** *Understand capacity constraints (real vs. perceived) and design capacity building solutions that are targeted and relevant to the unique needs of local organizations.* A one-size-fits all approach to training does not address the unique needs of Syrian organizations, which vary by sector, location, size of organization, and experience. This research has identified several areas where Syrian organizations need support, however any capacity building undertaking should uniquely address the needs of participant organizations or it runs the risk of being a waste of time, and money.

**5. Share Information.** *Information on donor priorities and opportunities should be readily accessible to Syrian CSOs.* Likewise, Syrian CSOs should be able to regularly share their priorities with donors and INGOs. Sensitive information can be redacted before sharing information to avoid compromising aid delivery and beneficiaries. This makes processes more tenable for local organizations, increases transparency, reduces survey fatigue, and data quality problems.

**6. Help organizations grow, not just deliver:** *Donors and INGOs must also ensure indirect costs (overhead) are adequately covered as a part of partnership and subcontract agreements with local organizations.* This directly affects the long-term sustainability of local organizations, allowing them to attract and retain highly qualified staff, invest in process and systemic improvements (operations, administration and finance), and organizational growth. This prevents organizations from being treated as suppliers, but true partners.

## 5.ANNEXES

### ANNEX I: METHODOLOGY

Building Markets conducted an organizational capacity assessment together with its local partner and research collaborator, Watan. Through research, in-person interviews, and a focus group discussion, qualitative and quantitative data was collected from January to July 2017 in Turkey and Syria.

The objectives of conducting this organizational capacity assessment were two-fold: 1) to inform Building Markets approach to supporting Syrian CSOs in Turkey and Syria, including profiling on the organization's database and online platform, tailored training support, and targeted mentorship activities; and, 2) to bring visibility to Syrian CSOs and their capacities and constraints to better inform policy and programming intended to support.

This assessment included four key components:

- 1 Desk research
- 2 Primary data collection through an in-person survey
- 3 Stakeholder interviews
- 4 Focus group discussion with Syrian CSOs

**1. Desk Research:** Desk research preceded survey development and implementation to understand the current operating environment for Syrian CSOs operating in Turkey and Syria.

**2. Survey:** In consultation with Watan, Building Markets developed a tailored organizational capacity assessment (OCA) methodology to ensure that the approach was appropriately aligned with the culture, context, and expectations of Syrian CSOs operating in Turkey and Syria. This included reviewing and adjusting 200 quantitative and qualitative questions. In an effort to avoid duplication of efforts with other capacity assessments, the survey covered the most common topics that donors and stakeholders typically require. This also enabled CSOs to complete the survey relatively quickly, without needing to pull additional materials or information.

Survey questions were one of two types:

**Unscored questions,** which collected basic information about the CSO for Building Markets online platform, and their confidential feedback and insights into the operating environment for local organizations; and

**Scored questions,** which required the respondent to self-evaluate their CSO's capabilities across a range of operational areas, which were then scored to identify areas for improvement.

The organizational capacity assessment was used to evaluate each organization according to eight functional areas: (1) governance, (2) program management, (3) human resource management, (4) financial management, (5) procurement management, (6) monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL), (7) communications, and (8) safety and security.

Organizations were scored on a scale from 1 to 5, from low capacity to high capacity. Organizations received scores for each functional category as well as an overall organizational capacity score, which is based on a weighted aggregate of the eight functional categories. These scores were used to inform Building Markets program priorities and recommendations for stakeholders and implementing partners.

1	2	3	4	5
Not available/poor	Basic/initiation	Good degree of availability	Very Good degree of availability	Completely documented /implemented /defined

Question Categories	No. of Questions
Pre-survey information	8
Organizational Information	37
Perception-Based Questions	27
Training history	8
Governance	17
Program Management	11
HR Management	25
Financial Management	22
Procurement Management	12
MEAL	14
Communication:	6
Safety & Security	12
	199

Between January 27, 2017 and July 8, 2017, seven enumerators visited 402 Syrian civil society organizations in Turkey (268) and Syria (134). Each survey was administered in-person to the founder, CEO, Executive Director, or a senior manager designated to speak on behalf of the organization. Ninety-three per cent (93%) of the surveys were conducted with a founder, CEO, or Executive Director. Enumerators used tablets to record the respondent's answers. Watan used KoBo Toolbox to track and manage survey responses. Survey translation and cleaning was conducted in close consultation with the Building Markets team in New York.

The survey data used in the analysis for this report was reported directly by a representative of the CSO to the enumerators during the interview. No separate audit of documents or other evidence, corroborating the data provided, was conducted. In analyzing survey responses, Building Markets carefully reviewed and flagged any data fields that were determined to be outliers and/or subject to misreporting by survey respondents.

Given the nature of the assessment, Building Markets felt that self-reporting was appropriate and allowed for organizations to internally reflect on their strengths, challenges, and areas for growth. However, it is important to note that many INGOs operating in Turkey and Syria use similar capacity assessments as a factor for determining funding eligibility. In conducting this assessment, Building Markets made it clear that the information collected was for the purposes of informing strategy and policy towards supporting Syrian CSOs and that Building Markets would not provide funding based on the assessment. Additionally, as many CSOs have completed similar assessments for other INGOs, survey fatigue may have affected their willingness to answer freely and honestly.

**3. Stakeholder Interviews:** Concurrently with the organizational capacity assessment survey, the assessment included qualitative, semi-structured conversations with 25 key stakeholders including representatives from international donor governments and multilateral organizations, international NGOs, Turkish NGOs, Turkish Government, Syrian CSOs, and the Syrian Interim Government.

Conversations focused on the successes and challenges of stakeholders programming in response to the Syrian crisis, thoughts about Syrian organizations on dealing with the additional responsibilities of taking a more leading role in the response, coordination and partnership mechanisms between INGOs/donors and Syrian organizations, beliefs on stakeholders' responsibility to develop the capacity of Syrian organizations, changes/improvements needed to stakeholders' organizational capacity building approach, and assessments on maturity and development of Syrian organizations, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with working with Syrian CSOs in Turkey and Syria.

**3. Focus Group Discussions:** One focus group discussion was carried out in June 2017, with a total of 14 Syrian civil society leaders identified from the survey sample. The purpose of this discussion was to delve deeper into survey topics and gather additional qualitative insights into the opportunities and challenges facing Syrian CSOs.

## ANNEX II: BACKGROUND ON BUILDING MARKETS' CSO WORK IN TURKEY

In May and August of 2014, with funding from UN OCHA, Building Markets' conducted preliminary assessments<sup>21</sup> in Hatay and Gaziantep, and found a wide consensus among both international and Syrian representatives that CSOs had largely not been qualified or considered for direct funding and partnership opportunities for several key reasons. These included low visibility of Syrian organizations and their capacity, an inadequate supply of training and information resources, and unrealistic and asynchronous donor administrative requirements. Complex and exhaustive application procedures that differed across international agencies and organizations created additional hurdles despite there being significant overlap in due diligence requirements.

Syrian and INGO staff agreed that the technical ability of CSOs was quite strong, but organizational management, capacity, and practice was weak. Progress to address these challenges was slowed by a shortage of adequate training resources that could assist Syrian organizations in developing and integrating the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the frameworks of international aid organizations so that they could meet standards and expectations.

In 2016, with funding from the Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Building Markets launched a program to implement the following activities:

1. **Verification/Screening:** Create a directory of Syrian CSOs and SMEs that will bring visibility to a larger pool of entities that can implement programs and deliver goods and services;
2. **Training & Mentorship:** Provide training and mentorship to Syrian CSOs and SMEs to ensure they have the tools and resources to effectively deliver services, create jobs, and sustain operations;
3. **Information Sharing:** Develop an online platform to connect Syrian CSOs and SMEs with Turkish counterparts and the international community, including information on funding and growth opportunities; and,
4. **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Analyze, and, where possible, make recommendations for improving approaches to remote project monitoring and evaluation.

### ANNEX III: END NOTES

1. In this report, INGO refers to international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international humanitarian organizations.
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20. For more information on Building Markets' work, see Annex 2.
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