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I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a joint undertaking of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 2017 to mid-2021. It does not aim to be exhaustive but only highlights the main issues which are addressed by the UNCT through Agencies' specific mandates and complements individual Agencies' submissions/reports, and the information compiled from reports of special procedures mandate holders and human rights treaty bodies. Since the national report will include description of the constitutional/legislative framework or policy measures, the UNCT report focuses on specific issues, based on the agencies' experience/practice/observation in relation to the implementation of Syria's human rights obligations.

Agencies: ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNMAS, UN OCHA, UNOPS, WFP and WHO have contributed to this report.

II. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

1. Equality and non-discrimination

Gender Equality

Main issues/gaps

Gender equality remains limited in Syria. The rights and participation of women are restricted across the socio-economic and legal spheres. The conflict has exacerbated this situation by further marginalizing women. Currently, Syria ranks 152nd (of 156 countries) on the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index.

Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable as a result of the prolonged crisis, with increasing reported exposure to child marriage.

Women's rights continue to be stunted by some existing inequitable legislative frameworks, compounded by cultural practices, expectations, and norms. Progress toward gender equality has been further hampered by the conflict.

No update has been made to the Penal Code regarding the issue of rape as the law still grants rapists mitigated sentences if they marry their victims. One challenge in advocating for amending this law is cultural misconceptions about women's honor: it is believed that this text protects the honor of women who have been raped.

GBV has increased as a result of the current conflict. The situation has become worse due to further isolation and restriction of movement of women and girls as a response to COVID-19.

Women cannot grant nationality to their children yet, as per the current Syrian legal framework. Furthermore, outside of the modern parts of big cities, women do not inherit property, even though Syrian law entitles them to.

In cases where women are the head of the household, additional pressures contribute to their further marginalization. In addition, gender concerns are critical to refugees and IDPs Return and Reintegration.

Major barriers persist for women to participate in economic activities due to the traditional view towards women involvement and integration.

There are major concerns that trafficking in persons and sexual slavery continued to be practiced on a large scale,ⁱ.

Achievements and best practices:

The Government of Syria (GoS) has enacted a number of reforms, increasing women's rights. In 2019, over 60 articles of the Syrian Personal Status Law (Legislative Decree No. 59/1953) were amended and approved the People's Assembly. Law 2/2020 abolishing the recognition of Honor Killings before the law (repeal of Art. 548 of the 1949 Criminal Code and therefore abolishes legal recognition of honor killings).

Recommendations:

Although the above are positive achievements, further reform actions are still required. It is recommended that GoS further amends the Legislative Frameworks to achieve gender equality for Syrian women. More specifically, it is recommended that the GoS passes legislations in order to:

- Legalize civil marriage.
- Ensure equitable rights of men and women to inheritance.
- Adopting measures to control and minimize the polygamy similar to other Arab/Muslim countries.
- Criminalize domestic violence through the adoption of the Draft Domestic violence law.
- Amend the Penal Code and the Criminal Code to eliminate mitigated sentences for rapists who marry their victims for so-called "honour crimes".
- Amending the Syrian Nationality Law / Allowing Syrian women to grant Syrian citizenship to their children.
- Lift the reservations on the CEDAW articles.
- Invest in capacity for implementing partners to realize the USCR 1325 on women peace and security and reporting on CEDAW.
- Provide awareness raising and advocacy on gender equality.
- Take the necessary measures to put an immediate stop to practices of trafficking and sexual slavery and Increase protection activities and support to providing specialized services for girls and women in need.

2. Right to life, liberty and security of person

Main issues/gaps

The ILO Committee of Experts raised concerns about allegations of use of police and paramilitary forces in dealing with protests, deaths and arrests and imprisonment of political and human rights activists. The Committee emphasized that a truly free and independent trade union movement can only develop in a climate free from violence, pressure and threats of any kind against the leaders and members of such organizations.ⁱⁱ

It is estimated that 10.3 million children and adults live in areas contaminated with explosive ordnance. Nearly one out of four victims of explosive ordnance incidents are children

Children continue to be killed and maimed in Syria as reported by the SG report on Children and Armed Conflict, including 897 children reported killed and 557 maimed during 2019ⁱⁱ and 1,557 children killed 1,160 maimed during the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ

Children were also detained or deprived of liberty for their alleged association with opposing parties and Syrian government forces, including 218 children (216 boys, 2 girls) reported by the UN during 2019, the deprivation of liberty of boys, some as young as 9, of Syrian nationality and of other nationalities, by SDF for alleged association with ISIL^{iv}.

Achievements and best practices:

The humanitarian mine action actors, under the framework of the humanitarian response plan for Syria, have reached 3,959,285 men, women, boys and girls. 2,578,323 men, women, boys and girls received risk education by public service providers; while 14,971 men and women were trained to conduct risk

Recommendations:

- Ensure respect for the principle of freedom of association and assembly.
- Scale up capacity and resources to expand all humanitarian mine action activities, including risk education.
- Strengthen the justice system for children that establishes specific mechanisms and considerations for children, including non-custodial and community-based alternatives, diversion from judicial proceedings, restorative justice approaches and alternatives to deprivation of liberty.

3. Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

Access to Justice

Main issues/gaps:

The conflict has had an extensive impact on the justice system. People still face extensive challenges in achieving justice due to barriers including lack of legal awareness, associated costs, distance to service providers and mistrust.

There are a number of factors that continue to obstruct access to justice which includes poor application of laws; contradiction between laws; impunity for perpetrators of violence against women especially within family sphere; social norms that governs attitudes among judges towards women issues. While acknowledging that Syria has a stand-alone juvenile justice system, and specialized judges are appointed to juvenile courts, many children suspected of conflict-related criminal acts are not referred to juvenile courts but rather to security detention facilities instead.

Furthermore, alternative measures for children in contact with law are not used, a referral system for alternative measures before trial does not exist, and there is no separation between protection centres and corrective institutions, for juveniles.

Following GoS directives, only two organisations are currently authorised to provide legal aid services and the demand for legal assistance far exceeds the available supply.

Achievements and best practices:

The government has been proactive in reforming and amending a few chosen legal frameworks. Notable reforms have included Civil Status laws, real estate law and civil documentation.

Recommendations:

- Undertake a full-scale assessment (as per international standards) in order to understand the impact of the conflict across the Justice Institutions (organisational, administrative, technical, infrastructure and equipment). Infrastructure and related investments should ideally be linked to measures to enhance service delivery and access to justice.
- Engage in further legislative review and reform to simplify complex laws and promote efficiency.
- Streamline outreach and Legal Awareness raising in order for the most vulnerable groups to understand their rights and means to access them.
- Promote the standardisation of a community mediation mechanism.
- Develop a legal aid policy (focusing on the most vulnerable groups) with the objective of broadening the pool of legal aid service providers (ideally combining the Bar Association, Judicial aid, university legal clinics, private lawyers and NGO providers in a coordinated way). Allow Legal Aid provision of local and international organisations who possess respective expertise. Prioritise critical issues (e.g. civil registration, housing land and property, alternatives to detention, etc).
- Work towards increasing the independence of the Judiciary as a means of building confidence and trust.

4. Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment**Main issues/gaps**

Compulsory prison labour, pursuant to sections 46 and 51 of the Penal Code may be imposed in situations covered by ILO Convention on Abolition of Forced Labour, namely:

Penal Code: section 282; 287; 288; and sections 335 and 336; and the Press Act No. 156 of 1960: sections 15, 16 and 55

Achievements and best practices:

Issuance of the new amnesty law (Legislative Decree No. 13) could be a step forward in improving conditions of detention, particularly during the times of COVID, as decongested prisons can lead to a decreased spread of the COVID-19 Virus. The amnesty covers a wide range of crimes and punishments. However, it is not clear how amnesty was applied and what subsets of criminals and exceptional cases were excluded.

Recommendations:

- Release the names of those detained and disclose places of detention and clarify the fate of those disappeared.
- Use amnesties and other means (e.g. reparations) to initiate a healing process.
- Implement the ILO Committee of Experts' recommendations to ensure that those who express political views or peacefully opposed the established political, social or economic system are not sentenced to imprisonment with the imposition of compulsory labour.^v

5. Rights of the Child

Main issues/gaps:

The recruitment and use of children in pro-Government and opposition armed forces continues to be reported.

Syrian children's lives are now affected by a triple crisis: conflict, economic crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria until the end of 2020, 11,975 (almost 12,000) children have been killed or injured as a result of the conflict. With around half of Syria's children having known nothing but a lifetime of crisis - 2.45 million of whom were estimated to be out of school in 2020 alone - an entire generation is at risk of being lost. About 5.9 million children are in need of protection services including 3.24 million children with disabilities. Many children do not have birth certificates or civil documentation and thus access to basic rights are further jeopardized, including for children with disabilities.

The ILO Committee of Experts has repeatedly expressed deep concern at the situation of children in the Syrian Arab Republic who are affected by the armed conflict and driven into child labour, including its worst forms.^{vi}

There have also been reports of an upward trend in child marriage for girls from communities although the scope remains unknown. Child marriage was seen as ensuring more security, protection and economic stability.

Although GoS has developed a childhood draft bill, it is still pending before the parliament.

Achievements and best practices:

- GoS is in the process of developing a strategy and plan to address child rights.
- The Strategic Plan, "Syria 2030", includes some important vision that, if adopted and implemented, can make a good step towards achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendations:

- Support the speedy adoption and enactment of the Childhood law and the review of relevant laws in line with the best interest of the child and child rights.
- Guarantee effective protection of children's rights, including access to education and protection from child labor and early marriage – Adopted from (Belgium); Source of position: A/HRC/34/5/Add.1
- Align with ongoing measures through collaboration with the UN to protect all children from the impact of the conflict, prohibit the recruitment, abuse and sexual violence of children by parties to the conflict and punish perpetrators of these violations (Chile); Source of position: A/HRC/34/5/Add.1
- Ensure the commitments made in its five periodic reports to the committee of the rights of the child are implemented.

6. Right to food

Main issues/gaps:

According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the right and access to food in Syria have witnessed a sustained worsening trend, with a 71 per cent of Syrians prioritizing food/nutrition as their top need, compared to a 42 per cent in 2019. The same study estimates that more than 14 million people are in need and increasingly apply food coping mechanisms that are higher in severity, such as reducing adults' consumption, borrowing money and buying food on credit.

Women and youth especially adolescent girls can have limited access to food sources due to economic and social factors including gender inequality and discrimination.

Achievements and best practices:

The Constitution does not explicitly guarantee the right to adequate food. The Legislative Decree 08/2021 controls prices and legal documentation of essential goods, also aiming at preventing manipulations of food.

Awareness and capacity building initiatives on gender equality, and support activities to the livelihood of women and adolescent girls and/or their families have increased, mostly through implementing partners of international organisations.

Recommendations:

- Continue to gather data and information on access and right to food, with special attention to the most affected categories (ii) advocate for a holistic food system approach to understand challenges that prevent the realization of the right to food and for new social protection mechanisms that can guarantee sustainable access to food (iii) coordinate and manage the implementation and impact of food security policies.
- Continue to build the capacity and awareness raising on gender aspects. Continue to support the livelihood of women and youth especially adolescent girls.

7. Right to water and sanitation**Main Issues /Gaps:**

There remains an insufficient water supply available to Syrians to cover the needs for adequate living conditions due to declining water resources, inadequate water quality for potable and irrigation purposes and lack of energy sources needed for water provision.

The deterioration of the Solid Waste Management system and leakages in sewage networks have caused pollution of natural resources and an increase in health concerns.

The potable water system has suffered considerable destruction and damage. Close to 42 per cent of surveyed households are relying on alternative, often unsafe, water sources. Moreover, droughts have led to a reduction in water reserves and renewable groundwater resources.

In view of this challenging situation, access to water has become very critical specifically in areas with the highest number of vulnerable population, such as in Al-Hassakeh, Tal-Tamer and IDP camps including Al-Hol camp in north eastern Syria due to the frequent disruptions to the supply of water from Alouk station.

Women and youth especially adolescent girls can have limited access to water and sanitations due to economic and social factors including gender inequality and discrimination.

Achievements and best practices:

The GoS has provided support to the rehabilitation of wells and water grids that led to improved conditions in some geographical areas. In addition, many job opportunities were provided to individuals in need of work in order to cover the shortage of solid waste collection workers. The GoS also provided needed tools and

containers.

Recommendations:

- Guarantee safe humanitarian passage to maintain water and electricity supply among different areas of control and consider these services as neutral zones.
- Continue to build the capacity and awareness raising on gender aspects.
- Continue to support the livelihood of women and youth especially adolescent girls as well as the delivery and procurement of dignity kits and e-voucher.
- Prioritize integrated, holistic and sustainable solutions to the water crises.

8. Right to Adequate Housing

Main issues/gaps:

HLP rights are crucial for rebuilding the lives of displacement- and conflict-affected people. HLP rights are a composite of multiple rights in international human rights law.

Unresolved HLP issues continue to pose significant challenges to the safe, dignified and voluntary return of displaced populations in the context of Syria. Over the last ten years, HLP challenges have become compounded by the dynamics of protracted conflict and now present a fundamental obstacle to the resilience of the most vulnerable communities in Syria. Much HLP documentation was lost or destroyed, leaving many without any means of realizing their rights or rebuilding their lives. A lack of civil documentation has exacerbated the situation. Cadastral records and registries have also been damaged or destroyed. Furthermore, the prevalence of ERWs/UXOs, as well as new laws and initiatives on urban development pose further HLP risks.

Without a comprehensive strategy and support in addressing such issues in an equitable manner, the HLP situation will likely worsen. The institutional capacities will continue to weaken, opening up space for more HLP fraud, corruption and grievances leading to further entrenched HLP issues and marginalization of vulnerable groups.

Achievements and best practices:

- GoS's commitment to decentralization (under Law 107) promotes recovery and development at the local level. HLP issues may be addressed in a more efficient manner if respective local capacities are developed and accountability mechanisms strengthened.
- Positive measures placed to (1) open up the cadastral and civil registry services to provide support; (2) waive fines and fees for registration of vital events and issuance of civil documentation; and (3) amend the respective timelines to be more lenient. Such measures remove critical obstacles and will increase the rate that individuals will be able to move forward with their HLP claims.

Recommendations:

- Repeal any legislation and cease practices that restrict individuals from their HLP rights due to strict timelines for claiming rights, military status and/ political affiliation.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to systematically address HLP issues in their various forms leading to the ultimate goal of achieving Security of Tenure / Restitution. Within this strategy, it is recommended to include the following measures.
 - o Protect and preserve the HLP rights of the displaced, particularly of those disadvantaged with additional vulnerabilities.

- o Build capacities of the relevant Government institutions to address HLP needs (cadastral offices, real estate courts, legal aid providers, etc.).
- o Provide affordable/ free means to access/ recover HLP documentation.
- o Consider the adoption of alternative land tenure options for those with weak or no tenure security.
- o Adopt community-based dispute resolution mechanisms and community-based land adjudication exercises.
- o Develop system to process claims through efficient, fair/ equitable and effective process.

9. Right to health

Main issues/gaps:

The overall deterioration of the health system negatively impacts on the health of the Syrian population and families returning to their main living areas before the crises. Furthermore, COVID19 and its socio-economic impact further aggravate the situation, making even more challenging to address effectively current and emerging public health risks and diseases. Internally displaced persons who continue to live at camps or camps-like setting with inadequate to health care and nutrition, as well as poor water and sanitation facilities, are among the most vulnerable.

Women and youth, especially adolescent girls, have limited access to health services including reproductive health and gender-based violence services due to the crisis and the most recent economic deterioration. Mental health and psychosocial support also require critical attention as many would be affected due to a decade of crisis coupled by COVID-19 pandemic.

By end of the 1st Quarter 2021 and out of 1,789 assessed public health centres, 48% (866) were reported fully functioning, 21% (377) partially functioning (i.e., shortage of staff, equipment, medicines, or damage of the building in some cases), while 31% (546) were reported non-functioning (completely out of service).

Achievements:

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher Education, in cooperation with numerous partners, continued to deliver basic services and programmes to the population, despite many constraints.

Recommendations:

- Rehabilitate all non-functional or semi-functional health facilities and adequately furnish with medicines and supplies to provide basic health services.
 - Enhance electronic disease surveillance for early detection and timely response to emerging and re-emerging public health threats.
 - Strengthen laboratories at all levels to ensure capacity for testing and reporting of infectious disease samples in a timely manner, including TB and HIV laboratories and innovative approaches to increase treatment adherence by patients.
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 - Ensure adequate stock of essential medicines and supplies
 - Strengthen health information systems and platforms for decision making.
 - Strengthen effective support mechanisms for mental health and psychosocial support services; provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in health system and community-based settings; and
- Strengthen health education and health promotion and community awareness as part of primary healthcare approach.

10. Sexual and Reproductive health

Main Issues /Gaps:

Women and youth, especially adolescent girls have limited access to health services including RH and GBV services due to the crisis due to a wide range of factors such as the damages of the health facilities, b) departure of the qualified health staff , c) depleted local market of medical equipment and supplies along with the ongoing unilateral coercive measure, d) limited financial resources by the vulnerable people especially women which hinder their ability to afford the cost of the services in private sector

Achievements and best practices:

In cooperation with partners, lifesaving RH services are provided, including safe delivery to the targeted vulnerable women along with awareness raising and capacity development of local actors.

Recommendations:

- continue to build the capacity and awareness raising on RH services and best practices.
- support in coordination with other stakeholders the rehabilitation of damaged health facilities through the procurement of RH equipment and supplies

11. Right to education

Main issues/gaps:

In 2020, an estimated 2.45 million children were out of school and 1.6 million children were at risk of dropping out. Furthermore, there were a total of 262 attacks on schools during 2019. Some 32 schools were used for military purposes.^{vii} Children are facing challenges to access accredited and recognized educational suitable to allow them to continue their education at secondary and territory levels. Community, families and children are struggling to access schools in north eastern Syria that provide curriculum aligned with the national education system.

Achievements and best practices:

- The facilitation of the examination and coordination with GoS, other actors and the Education Sector with the UN and partners to allow children to cross borders and cross lines to undertake and sit for national exams.
- The UN is working with all concerned including the MOE to target out of school children through a wide range of non-formal education modalities to attract children to come back to the formal system.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the military, security and defense systems, laws, bi-laws, regulations prevent grave violations against children and bring those who commit such violations into justice, prevent the attacks on schools and their use for military purposes.
- Remove practical obstacles to education regardless of the areas of control.

- Ensure equitable access to quality and safe education for all children.

12. Right to development

Main issues/gaps:

Ten years of conflict have had an immense impact on the entire country. There are some estimates that development in Syria has regressed by more than four decades. The impact of multiple, concomitant crises (conflict, financial/ currency crisis, and Covid-19) is to blame for the current catastrophic economic situation which increases and deepens vulnerability and poverty of Syrians. GoS is increasingly unable to subsidize essential commodities, such as fuel and bread. The Syrian pound has lost 78% of its value since October 2019, while price increases for staple goods are at an all-time high. COVID-19 has also impacted an already debilitated health system in which half of health facilities are partially or non-functional. COVID-19 and its containment measures had a significant impact on Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

While the current situation would call for the structural interventions to support public policies, budgets and development projects that will improve rights-holders' lives meaningfully, international support is limited to humanitarian assistance and early recovery.

Achievements and best practices:

There are more recognitions and efforts to promote local participation and empower communities which contributes to cohesive and equity-based early recovery, strengthen social cohesion and prevent local conflict.

The GoS 2019 Strategic Plan, titled "Syria 2030", if accompanied by political will and fully implemented, might lead to positive steps towards recovery and building trust and stability required for development.

Recommendations:

- Increase early recovery and resilience building focusing on practical interventions, context sensitive and risk informed programming for reducing inequalities and eliminating multiple forms of discrimination.
- Further adopt the SDG indicators related to the realization of human rights,
- Integrate the right to development into governmental strategies, policies and programming.
- Increase protections from the effects of the multilayered crisis and establish a national mechanism to monitor and assess the progress of these measures on the enjoyment of human rights.

13. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

Main issues/gaps:

There is a need to strengthen and expand the relevant legal provisions for the promotion of the rights of women, particularly by strengthening their autonomy and advancing their political, economic and social participation. Early and force marriage remains a key concern that hinder the enjoyment of women, boys and girls of their

rights.

Achievements and best practices:

The amendment to the Personal Status Law (PSL) (no.4, February 2019) introduced a number of changes that promote the rights of women in personal and social life. In addition to raising the age of marriage for both men and women.

Recommendations

- Continue to monitor the application and adherence of the PSL in coordination with relevant stakeholders.

B. Rights of specific persons or groups

1. Children

Main issues/gaps:

The humanitarian consequences of a decade of fighting and displacement, compounded by the significant deterioration in the socio-economic situation and the impact of COVID-19 have had a profound impact on children as conflict reaches its ten-year mark.

Children's access to essential services and fulfillment of their rights, including long term protection and quality, certified education as well as other social services such as health, nutrition, water and sanitation and social protection have significantly deteriorated and affected by the situation. Nearly 80 per cent of people in Syria now live in poverty.

- In the light of the concluding observations of the Committee of the rights of the Child and its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, it is critical to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the budget needs of children and allocate adequate budgetary resources for the implementation of children's rights in all governorates, and make sure that those budgetary lines are protected even in situations such as the ongoing armed conflict.
- Utilize a child-rights-based approach in the elaboration of the State budget, by implementing a tracking system for the allocation and use of resources for children.

2. Persons with disabilities

Main issues/gaps:

The prolonged armed conflict and crisis in Syria resulted in an increased number and severity of injuries, affected the health services in terms of infrastructure and human resources, which contributed to the unprecedented increase in disability rate.

With the deterioration of health services the transition from injuries to impairments and disabilities is happening at an increased pace and higher severity.^{viii} Persons with disabilities are some of the most vulnerable during times of crisis due to being frequently excluded. The disproportionate unemployment rate and increased dependence on assistance suggests that households with a person with disabilities are more vulnerable to continuous shocks associated with the crisis.^{ix}

Before the crisis, GoS had set priority to develop a comprehensive national plan consisting of needs assessment in addition to strengthening rehabilitation services and mainstreaming of inclusion policies. The process to implement the national plan for disability was progressing steadily.

Despite the above development and adding the effect of the ongoing crisis on increased vulnerability and prevalence of impairment, Syria faced and keeps struggling with number of challenges for the advances for inclusion of PWDs. This leaves established national services for the rehabilitation and support of PWDs in Syria in the less favoured position to cope with the consequences of the conflict

One of the major challenges is to shift outdated perceptions of disability issues in Syria among the public, decision makers, service providers, targeted communities and PWDs themselves.

Achievements and best practices:

There has been a growing attention to support PWDs being one of the most vulnerable groups in response to the crisis in Syria. This has been reflected in the consecutive Humanitarian Response Plans as a cross-cutting issue, in addition to specifying projects to targeted PWDs.

As part of humanitarian and early recovery programmes, a specific attention has been made to support the access of PWDs to rehabilitation services including prosthetic services and high-quality wheelchairs. There are mainstreamed and dedicated socioeconomic inclusion of PWDs through entrepreneurship programme and other employment services.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, some innovative approaches have been tested to enhance the access to internet for students with disabilities as a mean to access to information and alternative learning opportunities.

Recommendations:

- Raise awareness, understanding and recognition of disability as a human rights issue as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as part of humanitarian and early recovery interventions.
- Support initiative to ensure PWDs enjoyment of their various human rights through integrated manners, looking into the three dimensions:
 - o Physical and mental well-being
 - o Socio-economic integration
 - o Legislative framework and social norms
- Facilitate and aligning dialogues on the rights of persons with disabilities with the governmental policy makers, and with across humanitarian and development agenda, including SDGs.
- To develop the capacities and enhance the coordination of NGOs and community-led initiatives working on disability inclusion especially in the areas of policies.
- Advocate and support to create an organization of people with disability (OPD) in Syria.

3. Internally displaced persons

Main issues/gaps:

Since 2011, the conflict has uprooted more than 12 million persons. As of early 2021, there were an estimated 6.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria – representing a third of the overall population.^x

IDPs, including women and adolescent girls continue to face multi-layer challenges of limited protection and access to life saving services including RH and GBV. The situation of women and adolescent girls is further deteriorated.

While returning IDPs continue to face difficult conditions, almost one million IDP returns have occurred since 2018. Notwithstanding, between 2020 and 2021, the estimated number of IDPs grew from 6.2 to 6.7 million.^{xi}

IDPs are to enjoy same level of human rights protection as other populations. Still, displacement regularly heightens vulnerabilities of families and communities, severs or weakens family and communal ties and separates families from property and livelihoods. Moreover, displaced persons may be viewed by a degree of suspicion by segments of the host community or by the community in areas of return.

Achievements and best practices:

While relatively large numbers of IDPs continue to return,^{xii} it is necessary to sustain efforts aimed at further improving the environment in Syria that may enable larger scale returns and sustainable reintegration.

In a welcome development, a series of legislative measures were undertaken by GoS in 2021, through which GoS showed commitment to facilitating access to civil registration/documentation.

The waiver of the fees and fines will have a particularly positive impact on the most vulnerable segments of the affected populations and will further contribute to improving the enabling environment for refugee and IDP returns.

Recommendations:

- Instruct authorities, at all levels, to respect the right of IDPs to be protected against discriminatory practices, including for reasons related to their displacement, and establish a mechanism to monitor adherence;
- Ensure that humanitarian organizations receive unhindered access to all affected populations, including IDPs and IDP returnees.

14. Humanitarian Assistance

Main issues/gaps:

The period since 2017 to date saw a significant shift in humanitarian access dynamics. Since the second half of 2018, parties to the conflict- including GoS- gradually decreased their dependence on extended siege tactics. As a result, the number of hard-to-reach and besieged communities also significantly decreased.

In November 2018, humanitarian teams succeeded in deploying the first inter-agency life-saving assistance convoy to Rukban. Since 29 September 2019, no teams have accessed Rukban, however. Currently, around 12,000 individuals, of which an estimated 50 percent are children, remain in Rukban and villages in the 55KM zone, with very limited access to services.

Despite ongoing humanitarian programming, humanitarian organizations in the north-east report limited functionality and capacity of healthcare facilities, lack of adequately trained medical staff, and imminent stockouts of medical supplies.

Additional access challenges have also been reported in some parts of the country due to administrative regulations which require several layers of approvals from multiple stakeholders.

Temporary but persistent access disruptions to certain areas and vital civilian infrastructure required to safeguard public health continues to be reported particularly in the north-east, where the Alouk water station directly provides water to approximately 460,000 people in Al-Hasakeh Governorate. Likewise, access to water in Al Bab sub-district in Aleppo Governorate has been compromised by the limited functionality- imposed by GoS- of the Ein El-Bayda station on which 185,000 people rely for potable and agricultural water.

Targeted and indirect attacks against humanitarian facilities, including many notified through the OCHA-operated humanitarian notification system continue to take place. With the last two taking place in the north-west in the first half of 2021.

Finally, violence against humanitarian organizations and staff continues to be witnessed throughout the country. Incidents included physical assault, detention, intimidation, confiscation of humanitarian assets, and occupation of humanitarian premises.

Recommendations:

- Adhere to principles of IHL and IHRL, including the prohibition on launching of indiscriminate attacks and the respect for principles of proportionality and precaution, and the full respect at all times of the special protected status of hospitals, medical transport, medical personnel, schools and other infrastructure essential for the survival of the civilian population, including all water supply related infrastructure.
- Support all efforts by humanitarian partners to flexibly use all available response modalities to ensure sustained access to people in need throughout the country.

ⁱ ILO Committee of Experts of the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, observations concerning ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930, (No.29), Syrian Arab Republic, adopted in 2020, published 109th ILC session (2021).

ⁱⁱ Report of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed conflict (Ref: A/74/845-S/2020/525) issued on 9 June 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ Report of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed conflict (Ref: S/2021/398) issued on 23 April 2021

^{iv} Report of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed conflict (Ref: A/74/845-S/2020/525) issued on 9 June 2020

^v ILO Committee of Experts of the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, observations concerning ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No.105), Syrian Arab Republic, adopted in 2020, published 109th ILC session (2021).

^{vi} ILO Committee of Experts of the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, observations concerning ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, (No.182), Syrian Arab Republic, adopted in 2020, published 109th ILC session (2021).

^{vii} Report of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed conflict (Ref: A/74/845-S/2020/525) issued on 9 June 2020

^{viii} It is reported that some 30,000 people suffer conflict-related trauma injuries every month, roughly 30 % of whom develop permanent disability with an estimation of 2.8 million people suffering from different sort and level of disability (15% undergo amputation, 5% spinal cord injuries and 10% peripheral nerve injuries). It is reported that 3.7 million or 27 % of the total population (aged 12+) in Syria are disabled.

^{ix} United Nations Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme, Disability: Prevalence and Impact, A Nationwide Household Survey Using the Washington Group Methodology (2019)

^x UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2021

^{xi} UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2021

^{xii} Particularly when compared to rate of refugee returns.