RESILIENCE DEVELOPMENT FORUM *SYRIA CRISIS*

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INTEGRATING RESPONSES, EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

The Dead Sea Resilience Agenda

November 2015

A Moment of Opportunity, A Moment for Strengthened Commitment

Reiterating the need for a political solution to the conflict in Syria and recognizing the ongoing imperative for principled humanitarian assistance and protection for those affected by ongoing conflict and violence in Syria and particularly insecure parts of Iraq;

Recognizing that after more than four years of conflict in Syria and a humanitarian crisis across the region a fundamentally new approach is needed – as a result of the protracted nature of the crisis and resource constraints – to address vulnerability among those directly affected by the crisis inside Syria, internally-displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and other affected households and to support host nations and communities;

Understanding that this approach will require longer-term commitments and investments – and overcoming financial and operational silos – to design and deliver responses in a way that, wherever feasible, benefit affected households and local economies and which strengthen national and local institutions to foster development and lay the groundwork for future recovery, including the return and resettlement of refugees and IDPs;

Acknowledging the progress achieved in setting out more integrated responses through the 2015 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the 2016-2017 Strategic Framework for Syria, and national frameworks such as the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP);

We commit ourselves to this Resilience Agenda, which sets out key principles and high-level actions, for enhancing resilience among individuals, families, communities, and institutions affected by the crisis in Syria and its impact on the wider region.

The Rationale for Resilience[1]

The war in Syria has now killed more than a quarter million people, many of them civilians. More than half of all Syrians are either internally displaced or have fled as refugees to neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. All 560,000 Palestine refugees residing in Syria when the civil war broke out have been affected by the crisis. Approximately two-third of Syria's GDP has been lost, and nearly 80% of Syrians are living in poverty. Children comprise 43% of the affected population and are among the most vulnerable groups. Meanwhile groups such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State have emerged in parts of Iraq and Syria and are presently exacerbating the region's inter-linked security, humanitarian, and human rights crises.

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[1] This document is the product of multi-stakeholder country consultations across the region about the response to the Syria crisis. It builds on the existing frameworks and achievements and draws upon well-established research into resilience and protracted displacement conducted by the United Nation and by independent academics.

The crisis appears likely to continue despite ongoing efforts to secure a political settlement, and the effects will continue to be felt among neighboring countries. More than four million Syrian refugees, plus more than 110,000 Palestine refugees from Syria, are putting pressure on basic services and inadvertently exacerbating social tensions across the region. Host governments and international donors have generously borne many of the costs of this crisis, but needs continue to significantly outpace assistance. Stakeholders across the region increasingly recognize that a new approach is needed, one that builds upon and complements the large-scale and often-innovative humanitarian and development work undertaken in recent years.

Here resilience refers to "the ability of households, communities, and societies to withstand shocks and stresses, recover from such stresses, and work with national and local government institutions to achieve transformational change for sustainability".[2] This Agenda, while focused on resilience, is likewise rooted in values such as equity, participation, human rights, and environmental sustainability and recognizes relevant norms and standards, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Five Core Principles of The Resilience Agenda

The international community today recognizes the need for a renewed focus on a resilience approach to the crisis in Syria and the region which is based on the following core set of principles.

1. Increase synergies between humanitarian and development investments and approaches. Humanitarian action and developmental cooperation exist along a single *contiguum* and share a common objective: mitigating vulnerability and ensuring that affected individuals and communities can adapt to changing circumstances and meet their material and protection needs in a durable manner. Hence, in order to build resilience among individuals, communities, and institutions, stakeholders in the region should aim to capitalize on links between humanitarian and development institutions, financing arrangements, processes, and programmatic approaches wherever feasible.

2. Prioritize the dignity and self-sufficiency of affected populations. Dignity is at the core of resilience and must be seen as an operational imperative rather than an abstract concept. Doing so will require involving affected communities in all elements of program design and implementation and, most importantly, helping to create the conditions in which they can strive towards self-sufficiency. Doing so is crucial not only for building a more effective and cost-effective response but also for countering aid dependency amidst protracted crises.

3. Reinforce, don't replace, local capacities. Resilience preserves and reinforces the capacities of capable and accountable local institutions to ensure that they can cope with and recover from shocks now and into the future, often in a relevant and cost-effective manner. These local institutions may be public or private, formal or informal, or operated by affected communities themselves. A resilience-based approach is focused on supporting and enabling those institutions have the capacity to deliver consistently, transparently, efficiently, and in line with human rights and the needs of affected women, men, and children.

4. Generate new and inclusive partnerships to build resilience, foster innovation, and promote relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. Resilience is an inclusive undertaking that requires a wide range of stakeholders and the establishment of innovative partnerships. Such partnerships may involve diaspora groups, the private sector, civil society, national governments, humanitarian and development agencies (including nongovernmental organizations), donors, international financial institutions (IFIs), and affected communities themselves. New partnerships entail risk, though they also can pave the way for more relevance, effective, and cost-effective responses.

5. Safeguard social cohesion to jointly foster resilience and peaceful cooperation. Resilience requires a strong social fabric that can adapt to change and grow stronger amidst challenging circumstances. Yet social cohesion is undermined by discrimination, by social exclusion, and by the presence of unresolved tensions. Hence, this Agenda reaffirms that needs and vulnerability should continue to guide all external responses to

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[2] UNDG, *Position Paper: A Resilience-Based Development Response to the Syria Crisis*, 2013.

this crisis and that capacities for peace should be strengthened wherever feasible. Doing so will require a renewed commitment to conflict-sensitive approaches and the principle of "Do No Harm".

From Principles to Action: 10 Elements of The Resilience Agenda

The following 10 elements are among the most important steps which must be taken in order to operationalize the five principles of The Resilience Agenda.

1. Strengthen the resilience of people, communities, and response capabilities inside Syria. Enhancing resilience inside of Syria must remain a priority despite the challenges involved. In the Syrian context, building resilience will require improving crisis response capacities, supporting livelihoods and economic recovery, and rehabilitating basic services and infrastructure. Doing so has the potential to partly prevent further displacement and reduce tensions. The resilience-based approach inside Syria will benefit from ongoing initiatives and will require more predictable, longer-term funding commitments and greater complementarity between humanitarian and development plans, processes, and activities.

2. Increase responsiveness and effectiveness by planning and delivering together. Minimizing the divide between humanitarian and development systems will create new opportunities for resilience-based approaches and related program designs. Aid agencies and national governments across the region, in partnership with affected communities, civil society, IFIs, and the private sector, must adopt a motto of 'delivering together'. This effort will include several elements, including the establishment of mechanisms for joint proposal development and fundraising. IFIs, in particular, should be fully integrated within this discussion in order to identify those areas where they can help overcome financing gaps among, most notably, national governments in refugee-hosting countries.

3. Develop innovative, multi-year financing mechanisms and instruments to enhance financial predictability. There is a crucial need for predictable, multi-year financing that unifies humanitarian and development investments. Donors and host governments should increasingly strive to overcome barriers to multi-year financing, and pooled funding mechanisms should continue to be utilized – bringing together humanitarian and development resources, where possible – in order to strengthen coherence and effectiveness. Integration of humanitarian and development financial tracking systems will enhance better programming and monitoring of domestic and external resources in line with international best practices for aid transparency and reporting.

4. Strengthen local capacities by responding with and through local systems, institutions, and structures. To the extent possible, donors should strengthen the local response systems and structures which are already in place and which will remain into the future. In many instances, host governments, municipalities, local civil society, and formal and informal community organisations – including those established by affected populations – provide the most cost-effective and sustainable responses. Hence, it will be critical not only to identify the most effective local partners but also to bolster their absorptive capacity and ensure that they are better able to access external resources.

5. Expand the use of program-based approaches for basic service delivery. Basic services in Syria and across the region are overstretched as a result of the crisis. Both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, services will need to be scaled up in a sustainable manner; stop-gap measures will no longer suffice. IDPs, refugees, and host communities, including women and youth within these populations, must be consulted about how services can be designed in a way that maintains or expands access to all – so as not to exacerbate tensions or create a two-tier system. Service providers must be selected first and foremost on the basis of capacity to deliver at the scale required at the local level.

6. Engage the private sector in the resilience response and developing new approaches. Multinational companies and, in particular, regional and national enterprises have phenomenal capacities and comprise an indispensable part of this Agenda. Businesses can help create opportunities for livelihoods among affected populations, and social public-private partnerships can provide a structure for governments and companies to

collaborate on expanding basic services and improving key infrastructure. Unlocking this tremendous potential will require building trust with businesses, formulating appropriate guidelines to ensure principled collaboration, and forming national and regional platforms for dialogue and cooperation.

*7. **Expand opportunities by strengthening the enabling environment for established businesses and entrepreneurs.*** The economies of many of the main refugee-hosting countries have, despite dynamic business communities, often been hindered by regulations and policies that make it more difficult to, for instance, access credit, start a business, resolve insolvency, or enforce contracts. Likewise, public spending in several countries, according to consultation participants, tends to overlook the catalytic potential of government expenditure. By renewing attention to these issues – and establishing targeted initiatives to support the region's most promising entrepreneurs – economic growth can create jobs and generate revenues which will help the region adapt to the pressures created by the crisis in Syria.

*8. **Strengthen the legal and programmatic basis for – and dramatically scale up – economic opportunities for affected communities.*** The private sector and national governments, in Syria and in refugee-hosting countries, must work together with international actors to determine how best to create livelihood opportunities for women and men that fill gaps within labor markets – and contribute to the establishment of new enterprises – rather than fostering competition for jobs and driving down wages. By expanding livelihood opportunities, affected households will be better able to contribute to local economies and will be able to move towards self-sufficiency.

*9. **Cultivate capacities for dispute resolution among affected populations, public institutions, host communities, faith-based organizations, and other relevant entities.*** Large-scale population movements and aid interventions commonly exacerbate tensions and lead to disputes among IDPs, refugees, host communities, local government offices, aid agencies, security services, and others. These localized tensions and disputes have the potential to give rise to larger conflicts – and to create protection challenges – if they are not resolved. National and international actors should strive to promote effective conflict management and dispute resolution across sectors and through standalone programs focused on peace building.

*10. **Begin planning and building capacities to enable future reconstruction and recovery efforts.*** To ensure long-term resilience, stakeholders involved in this Agenda should begin planning and building capacities among men, women, and youth to ensure that reconstruction in Syria can proceed with little delay once the circumstances allow, either widely or in particular pockets of stability. These efforts can include, at a minimum, the mobilization of youth groups, civil society organizations, professional associations, and experts from among the affected populations and diasporas to develop relevant strategies and contingency plans.

The principles and elements included in this Agenda should form the basis of any resilience-based response and will, through a multi-stakeholder process, be elaborated and adapted to the unique contexts which exist across the affected area.