

Strategy for Development Cooperation and
Humanitarian aid in response to the conflicts
SYRIA AND IRAQ
2017-2020

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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1) Regional context

The conflict in Syria began in 2011 when peaceful demonstrations were violently repressed by the Syrian regime, igniting a nationwide civil war. The warring parties have received support from external powers, which has further exacerbated the conflict. Throughout the conflict the belligerents, most notably the regime, have resorted to terror as a tactic of war. Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including medical staff and facilities, the use of weapons of mass destruction, and war tactics such as siege have been widely used, causing untold human suffering. All parties to the conflict have violated human rights and international humanitarian law, and the Government of Syria has in a fundamental way failed to protect civilian populations during the conflict.

The rise of ISIL in Syria in 2013 was assisted by the ongoing conflict. As the conflict evolved, many new rebel groups joined the fighting in Syria. For instance, al-Qaeda affiliated Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly known as the al-Nusra Front) became increasingly empowered. ISIL has recently lost significant territory and leverage in Syria, and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into Syria has slowed considerably. However, despite territorial losses, the elements that are causing instability and creating the reasons for ISIL and other terrorist groups to exist still remain in place in Syria.

The conflict has led to an **unprecedented humanitarian and development crisis**: more than half of the population of Syria, 13.5 million people¹, are in constant need of humanitarian aid, more than 6.3 million have been internally displaced, and more than five million have been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and in Europe. The substantial number of refugees in the neighbouring countries has stretched the capacities of public sectors and communities to their limits. In Lebanon, for example, Syrian refugees constitute one-quarter of the population, and the majority reside in the most impoverished areas of the country. According to the UNDP Human Development Report of Syria in 2016, the once middle-income country has suffered a massive decline since 2010. More than 80% of the people live below the poverty line and 90% are dependent on external aid.

¹ All data refer to the time of writing in May 2017.



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The conflict in Syria will most likely continue for several years, with fluctuating levels of violence. It should be possible to launch UN-led stabilisation efforts in certain regions of the country in the near future if the full-scale nationwide confrontation evolves into more provincial and asymmetric warfare. The humanitarian and development aid needs in Syria and its neighbouring countries will remain massive for years to come.

The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in **Iraq** in 2003 led to instability, sectarian violence and political turbulence. The negative trends accelerated after US troops left the country in 2011. In particular, the Sunni community felt alienated by the new Shia-dominated government. This gave rise to ISIL, a militant Sunni movement, which in June 2014 took over large parts of Iraqi territory. The security situation deteriorated dramatically. Iraqi forces stepped up their fight against ISIL with the support of the US-led Global Coalition, which was established in 2015. To date, ISIL has lost about 63% of the territory it controlled in 2014. With a military victory over ISIL in sight over the next few years, it will continue to present an ideological threat until the underlying causes are removed.

As a result of the ongoing conflict, there are more than three million internally displaced persons across Iraq and **more than 11 million in need of humanitarian assistance**. Iraq faces a huge task to rebuild a unified post-ISIL Iraq. Inclusive political dialogue, national reconciliation and rebuilding trust between ethnic and religious communities are essential for these efforts to succeed. International support will be needed for many years to come. The Iraqi economy is centred on the oil and gas sector, and the level of economic activity in the country was severely affected by falling oil prices and the ISIL upsurge. According to the World Bank, Iraq's medium-term outlook is now more optimistic thanks to an expected increase in oil prices in 2017 and important gains against ISIL.

This strategy is grounded in a different set of premises than all other Finnish country strategies for development cooperation. First of all, in the case of Syria, Finland has **no bilateral political-level contacts with the Syrian regime**, and therefore its interventions are not based on a mutual agreement or any national plan. Secondly, there are several ongoing, multi-layered, **highly active armed conflicts** in Syria and Iraq, which are separate on the one hand (history) and intertwined, on the other (ISIL, regional backers). Thirdly, the conflicts are **regional**, both politically and in terms of the large forced migration and refugee flows to the neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon, Jordan

and Turkey. This has caused major instability and scarcity of resources in these upper-middle-income countries, greatly increasing their **fragility**. Fourthly, the conflicts and their spillover effects are unfolding in the **EU neighbourhood**, with their rapidly changing dynamics influencing the EU – including Finland. Finally, the **scale of displacement and response needs are massive**. Taken together, Syria, Iraq and their neighbouring countries are hosting 10 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and 5 million Syrian refugees, with the number of people depending on humanitarian aid reaching over 24 million in Syria and Iraq alone. The appeals for Syria (Humanitarian Response Plan, HRP), its neighbouring countries (Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, 3RP) and Iraq amount to almost USD 10 billion in 2017.

2) Finland's relations with Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt

This strategy covers the Finnish response to the humanitarian and development needs in Syria, Iraq, and neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt, which are suffering directly from the spillover effects of the conflicts. These Syria's neighbouring countries (and Iraq) are covered by the joint UN Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), which takes under its umbrella the activities of more than 240 partner organisations. Finnish assistance to the rest of the MENA region is covered in the **Strategy for Finnish development cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa 2017-2020**, which is focused on longer term development assistance to the region. It is worth noting that Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt, among others, lie at the intersection of these two strategies.

Finland has no embassies with diplomatic or expatriate staff in **Syria** or **Iraq**. For Damascus, Finland has accredited a Chargé d'Affaires from Beirut and for Baghdad a non-resident Ambassador, who is based in Helsinki.

Lebanon is a major recipient of Finnish support, most notably for purposes of resilience building and crisis management. Finland has also provided humanitarian assistance to Lebanon. Finland has participated in the UNIFIL peacekeeping operation almost continuously since the beginning of the 1980s. With some 300 soldiers, the current Finnish contribution to the UNIFIL constitutes Finland's single biggest crisis management intervention. Another way in which Finland is working to foster Lebanese stability is to help tackle the burden and consequences of the Syrian conflict. Lebanon is hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees in addition to almost half a million Palestine refugees, who are supported through the Finnish contribution to UNRWA globally (4.5 million euros a year). Finland reopened its embassy in Beirut in 2015.

Jordan is considered an important partner for the international community, both in the context of the Syrian conflict and the Middle East Peace Process. The emphasis in Finland's bilateral relations with Jordan is on political cooperation and Finnish assistance to addressing the consequences of the Syrian conflict. Jordan hosts some 650,000 Syrian refugees, in addition to some two million Palestine refugees that also benefit from Finnish support to UNRWA. Finland is represented in Jordan through its embassy in Beirut. Finland's trade with both Jordan and Lebanon remains rather low.

Turkey is a strategic economic and political partner for Finland and for the EU, although its domestic situation gives cause for concern. At the same time, Turkey is one of the key supporters of parties to the conflict in Syria. Turkey is an important trade partner and Team Finland priority country, and there is a Finpro office in Istanbul. The embassy in Ankara also covers the consular and migration affairs related to the neighbouring countries of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. Cooperation between Finland and Turkey is wide-ranging and extends from border control to nuclear safety. A good example of bilateral political cooperation is provided by Finland and Turkey jointly hosting the UN Group of Friends on Mediation. EUR three billion worth of EU assistance to the Syria conflict is channelled through the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT), comprising both humanitarian and development funding. The Finnish share for 2016–2019 totals 28.4 million euros.

Egypt is a key political regional actor and it hosts the headquarters for the League of Arab States. Egypt currently has around 114,000 registered Syrian refugees in addition to refugees and migrants from Palestine and neighbouring countries. Egypt is officially one of the 3RP countries and therefore also benefits from Finnish ODA support. However, the impact of Syrian refugees on Egypt is very limited, and Finland has no separate ODA interventions focused on Egypt under this strategy. Finland does, however, provide ODA support to Egypt through the before-mentioned MENA strategy. Channelled via multilateral organisations, the emphasis of this support is on Inclusive and gender equal societies and Sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Egypt is the most important destination of Finnish exports to Africa.

The Syrian crisis has had a huge impact on the development and refugee policies, including those of the EU, UN and regional organisations.



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EU policies towards the region have been overhauled in response to this crisis. Finland supports and implements the policies adopted by the **European Union** regarding the conflict in Syria as expressed in various Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) conclusions as well as in the ‘EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da’esh threat’ and the EU Strategy on Syria as adopted by the FAC on 3 April 2017. Other key strategies include the European Consensus for Development and Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus.

Only a **credible political solution**, as defined in UN Security Council Resolution **2254** and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, will ensure stability in Syria and enable a decisive defeat of ISIL and other UN-designated terrorist groups in Syria. Finland continues to support the role of the UN Special Envoy for Syria towards this end. Syria **cross-border and cross-line humanitarian aid** is mandated under UNSC resolutions **2139, 2165** and **2332**.

Furthermore, in order to work against impunity, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on Syria was established as early as August 2011 by the Human Rights Council resolution **S-17/1** to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011. In December 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution **71/248** establishing the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM).

Finland continues to advocate for 1) **women’s empowerment** and their full and effective participation in all efforts for the promotion of peace and security in line with UN Security Council resolution **1325**; and 2) the **accountability** of those responsible for crimes against humanity and human rights violations and abuses.

No Security Council resolutions directly concerning Iraq have been passed since 2007. As regards the **threat of ISIL/Da’esh**, **Security Council resolution 2249** calls for member states to take all necessary measures on the territory under ISIL control to prevent terrorist acts committed by ISIL and al-Qaeda affiliates, and **resolution 2253** calls for sanctions against the same entities. Finland is a committed member of the **United States led Global Coalition against ISIL** and participates in

several of its activities. Finland has deployed 100 soldiers in Northern Iraq under **Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR)**. The plan is to continue this support until the end of 2018. Finland also participates in working groups on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, as well as in Counter-ISIL Communications. In the field of civilian crisis management, Finland is planning to participate in the training of Iraqi police. However, this strategy is limited to ODA-funded development efforts in Iraq.

In addition to UNIFIL, Finland has military personnel in two other UN peacekeeping missions: **UNTSO** (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) and **UNDOF** (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) in the Golan Heights. During the **OPCW**-led mission to abolish Syria's chemical weapons, Finland has played a strong role through **VERIFIN** and also supported the OPCW dedicated trust fund.

3) Finland's Development Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Policy Dialogue on the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts

The Middle East in general, and Syria and Iraq in particular, remain areas of global concern from a political, economic and humanitarian point of view. What **started as a humanitarian crisis has progressed into a regional development and protection crisis** – with the humanitarian crisis ongoing in parallel. Thus the wider conflict response requires the use of complementary aid modalities and financing instruments, and includes – or will include – lifesaving humanitarian assistance, building the resilience of affected communities and nations, stabilisation, early recovery, peace-building and finally reconstruction and state-building.

Finnish assistance to the region is focused on **responding to the affected population's immediate relief needs and supporting the region in its various efforts to respond to the immense shock caused by the Syrian crisis**. The underlying reasons for the conflict are both political and socio-economic by nature, and this should also be reflected in the response. In terms of reaching development results it would make sense to concentrate on a chosen, narrow sector in one or two countries in the region. However, the challenge cannot be viewed through a traditional development lens. Due to the **highly political nature of both the conflicts and the response** to them, it is imperative for Finland to engage politically according to its values and support this advocacy by means of financial resources as well.

Similarly, Finland takes the view that the traditional 'relief first and development later' approach is not tenable in the kind of protracted humanitarian and refugee crises that the world is facing today. Finland maintains that it is necessary for development actors to get involved at an earlier stage in protracted crises, and it welcomes the increased involvement and investment of development actors,

such as the World Bank, in protracted regional crises such as the one in Syria. In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance, Finland welcomes cash-based transfers and a stronger role by local communities and the private sector. Thus, Finland has chosen a more **holistic approach in its aid response**, with strategic prioritisation in each impact area.

According to the **Government Report on Development Policy (2016)**, more Finnish support will be channelled to refugees' and asylum-seekers' countries of origin in order to strengthen the conditions for peace, human rights and income opportunities so that people do not have to leave their native countries, or so that they can return there. Another key policy document is **Finland's Humanitarian Policy (2012)**, which underscores the importance of principled, needs-based humanitarian action. Priority areas include the promotion of humanitarian space, the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law. According to **Finland's Development Policy in Fragile States (2014)**, Finland's thematic priorities in peace-building and state-building are: 1) conflict prevention; 2) democratic and accountable society and rule of law; and 3) the participation of women. Furthermore, support for **mediation and peace-building** is a high foreign policy priority for Finland (Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy 2016). This strategy builds upon the **human rights based approach** through which Finland supports the capacity of duty bearers and rights holders.

While realising the need for broad-based participation, particularly in the Syria response, Finland also acknowledges that the chosen strategic **themes of dialogue and advocacy** have to match the resources available. Finland's strategic advocacy themes are 1) inclusiveness of the peace and dialogue processes; 2) **women's** political participation and attention to their specific needs in conflict response; 3) further development of the concept of resilience and strengthening the **humanitarian-development nexus**; 4) the special needs and rights and the protection of **vulnerable groups**, especially people with disabilities in the conflict response; and 5) the **innovative** role of the private sector in bringing new solutions to the humanitarian and resilience challenges and in creating jobs. Finland uses different **channels for policy dialogue** (EU, multilateral fora, bilateral meetings) and supports specific projects aimed at promoting women's rights, but also enhances gender equality in all other forms of cooperation.



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Finnish aid is channelled through UN agencies, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, international financing institutions (notably the World Bank and EBRD), international, Finnish and local non-governmental organisations. Finland does not foresee bilateral modalities of cooperation within the context of the Syrian conflict because of the lack of rule of law and accountability, but rather makes use of harmonised pool funding.

The promotion of Finnish know-how and opportunities for Finnish companies to offer solutions to projects will be strengthened during implementation of the strategy. Within the Syrian and Iraqi conflict response, this will largely take place in the context of UN and IFIs' procurement channels. This will require cooperation between MFA, other members of the Team Finland network and Finnish companies.

This strategy directly covers Finnish humanitarian aid (administered by the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance and Policy) and development/resilience funding (by the Unit for Middle East and North Africa). It should be reiterated that **Finnish humanitarian assistance is allocated purely based on needs** and not on political, economic or other justifications. Other essential instruments (described in the Figures in Chapter 5) include the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT) and Humanitarian Mine Action. Additionally, the countries under this strategy benefit also from Finnish regional programmes, Finnish NGOs' project funding and local cooperation funds administered by the Finnish Embassy in Beirut.



4) Expected Results of the Development Cooperation Programme

The strategy's chosen impact areas should be seen as pillars for the interventions. The results will depend on progress towards sustained peace and democratic transition in Syria and the wider Middle East region. Thus, the **results-based approach** of traditional development cooperation can only be applied partially, and the strategy template has to be adapted to the context.

The first impact area for Finland's cooperation is **improved conditions for inclusive transition and sustainable peace in Syria**. The development and human rights challenges in the country are the result of the ongoing conflicts and insecurity. The only way to sustainably help the people suffering from the conflicts is to end the fighting. However, the long-term goal is sustainable peace, which can only be achieved through an inclusive political transition addressing the underlying reasons of the conflict: inequality, lack of opportunities and repression. For a political solution to emerge, conditions need to be ripe on all levels of the conflict – local, regional and global. Caution is needed against overly optimistic expectations for achieving results, given the extreme complexity of the situation. Furthermore, it must be recognised that inclusivity, while considered prerequisite for sustainable peace, is not enough to bring about any kind of political agreement.

In the absence of a track 1² agreement, opportunities must be seized on other tracks and in preparing the ground for post-conflict reconciliation and peace-building. However, a top-down negotiated agreement – if achieved – cannot alone create sustainable peace. All segments of Syrian society, including women and minority groups, must be included in the peace process through track 2 and

² The tracks of mediation are: 1) Official, governmental and decision-making level, in the Syrian case the Geneva process led by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, and the Astana process. 2) Non-official, but influential and linked to decision-makers; and 3) Grassroots and civil society. Source: Mediation Support Project Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich. Track 1.5 refers to mediation between track 1 and 2. People close to party leaderships usually talk informally and in a personal capacity.



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3 initiatives – linked to track 1 – and finally in some kind of national dialogue process. Thus, the first expected outcome under this impact area is that the **Syrian peace processes are increasingly inclusive (outcome 1.1)**. The expected outputs are: Regular inclusive intra-Syrian dialogues make progress (for example on tracks 1.5, 2 and 3) and bottom-up initiatives influence the track 1 process(es). Evidence shows that peace is more likely to be achieved if women are included in processes, particularly when they are in a position to influence decision-making. Thus, **women's inclusion** is the most important objective for Finland (in line with our UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan). The **inputs** under this outcome area are mediation and peace-building initiatives, mainly through NGO partners.

Sustainable peace also needs to address justice and accountability. Making access to justice a reality for the most vulnerable groups through accountable mechanisms restores confidence and rule of law, and facilitates peace-building. To properly tackle the issue of impunity would require a unanimous UN Security Council. However, as little movement is foreseen in this regard, other venues must be explored. The second expected outcome for Finland is that **accountability mechanisms to tackle impunity are strengthened (outcome 1.2.)**. The related output is that transitional justice mechanisms, processes and stakeholders advocating for accountability are achieving results. This is mainly advanced (**inputs**) by financing the UN International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and the Syria Justice & Accountability Center.

The second impact area for Finland's cooperation is securing a **dignified life for affected populations in Syria and improved conditions for the safe return of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in stabilised areas**. In the absence of peace or a negotiated solution and with an active war ongoing against ISIL in Syria, it is imperative that assistance is channelled as far as possible to the affected populations within the country so that they can lead a dignified life. As the future of the conflict in Syria remains uncertain, maximum flexibility must be maintained regarding the modalities of aid. In any case large-scale humanitarian assistance and support to the resilience of host and IDP communities is needed in the non-linear process of stabilisation and to facilitate the return of refugees and IDPs. The stabilisation, early recovery and later reconstruction³ phases will eventually follow when the security and political contexts so permit.

³ The EU's joint line (FAC conclusions 3 April 2017) is that no reconstruction can be financed until credible political transition is underway, as stipulated in UNSCR 2254.

The first expected outcome under this impact area is the **increased stability, self-reliance and resilience of communities in Syria, enabling refugees and IDPs to return (outcome 2.1)**. The main source of destabilisation is the lack of protection, and therefore it is imperative to achieve a nationwide ceasefire. Meanwhile, the means currently available to Finland for increasing stabilisation are the provision of humanitarian aid and resilience support, demining and social cohesion/peace-building efforts. Furthermore, the outputs may vary to a greater extent under this impact area than in others. Larger multi-donor stabilisation, early recovery and finally reconstruction schemes may be set up that will require rapid deployment. **Humanitarian assistance is unpolitical by nature, and provided on the basis of needs in response to annual appeals by the UN and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.** It is not possible, therefore, to establish specific long-term outputs and indicators, and output 1 remains broadly defined. The outputs under this outcome are 1) Humanitarian assistance is provided effectively on a needs basis, through established humanitarian partners, and it reaches those in need, including vulnerable groups with special needs; 2) The most vulnerable youth, including girls, have increased access to quality education and livelihoods opportunities; and 3) Critical infrastructure for providing basic services is being reconstructed in opposition areas in Syria.

The main **inputs** are 1) Finnish humanitarian assistance, mainly through UNHCR, WFP, UNFPA, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and Finnish NGOs; 2) UNICEF and UNDP; and 3) Syria Recovery Trust Fund.

Finland recognises the Syrian Opposition Coalition as a representative of the Syrian people, while maintaining working-level contact with the Syrian regime. Support to local governing structures must be balanced and context-specific. With reference to the **New Deal principles**, the existing structures and capacities within Syria, however, are an asset that should be protected from further collapse. Furthermore, Finnish assistance is largely harmonised with the joint UN Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which covers both humanitarian and resilience-building interventions. Finland will seek ways of more effective implementation through Syrian stakeholders, especially civil society, and support efforts to build up their capacities.



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Women continue to be disproportionately affected by the conflict, and the international community's response is not gender-sensitive enough. The same goes for many vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and Palestine refugees. The 'dignity gap' should be closed for these vulnerable groups. Finland will seek to ensure that **international aid to Syria better addresses the special needs of women (outcome 2.2.)**. The outputs are Number of early marriages reduced, victims of SGBV supported, and maternal mortality reduced. **Inputs** to achieve these outputs include humanitarian and development policy dialogue through governance structures, participation in the humanitarian top donors group in Geneva, and future humanitarian funding to UNFPA.

The third impact area for Finland is a **dignified life for Syrian refugees and host-community affected populations in Syria's neighbouring countries** (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq⁴), which are bearing a high burden by hosting close to 5 million registered Syrian refugees. The 2017–2018 3RP estimates the number of beneficiaries at 9.2 million people (4.8 million refugees and 4.4 million impacted host community members). It is projected that this figure will actually increase by the end of 2018. Protracted displacement has led to the exhaustion of refugees' assets, with more than 70% in Lebanon and 86% in Jordan, for instance, living below the poverty line and many resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriages. The London Conference 'Supporting Syria and the Region' in 2016 helped pave way to large-scale programmes particularly in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. The emphasis was set on the creation of jobs and livelihoods and enabling all children to enter school. Finnish assistance is largely based on national development plans⁵ in Jordan and Lebanon. This is in line with the New Deal principles, which are applicable given the fragile situations in these countries.

The first expected outcome under this impact area is the **improved well-being and capacity of vulnerable refugee and host-community youth and women (outcome 3.1.)**. Supporting the well-being and capacity of Syrian refugees is crucially important both in view of their life as refugees, their

⁴ Under Impact 3, Iraq is considered a neighbouring country of Syria that is hosting refugees (approx. 250,000), practically all of them in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KR-I). Iraq is the main focus under Impact 4.

⁵ 3RP is based on strong national response plans, such as the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) 2017–2019 and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017–2020.

future return to Syria and rebuilding the country. The situation in Jordan and Lebanon remains fragile and the need for refugee and resilience support high. A successful response depends on three key assumptions or conditions: 1) the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis remain manageable in Jordan and Lebanon and any further escalation is avoided; 2) countries honour their commitments to refugees, i.e. fulfil their protection responsibility and the London conference pledges to provide access to jobs and education; and 3) donors honour their commitments to support national plans financially, among others through large-scale IFI programmes. The **outputs** under this outcome are 1) Humanitarian assistance is provided effectively on a needs basis, through established humanitarian partners, and reaches those in need, including vulnerable groups, and assistance to host community populations contributes to preserving protection space; and 2) Number of employment and education opportunities for women and youth has increased. As regards livelihoods, the Finnish niche lies in supporting **innovations, start-ups and entrepreneurship**. **Inputs** include for example the UNDP regional livelihoods programme, the UN Women's Eid-bi-Eid programme, the EBRD SEMED Trust Fund, the EU regional Madad Trust Fund and Finnish humanitarian assistance to refugees in the 3RP countries. Education also remains a crucial field that requires high amounts of contributions, and Finland will therefore likely continue to finance the sector. It should be noted that in the short term, parents' access to employment is considered a prerequisite for many children being able to attend school, for it means that children do not have to provide for their families and engage in child labour. In the long term, an educated population is economically more productive.

While the HRP and 3RP plans represent a paradigm shift in how the international community responds to protracted humanitarian and displacement crises, continued international – and Finnish – support is needed for UN efforts in joint planning. Likewise, it is paramount to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and resilience building. In order to ensure that this response provides a dignified life for also women and vulnerable groups, the second Finnish expected outcome under this impact area is an **increasingly inclusive refugee and resilience response in Lebanon and Jordan (outcome 3.2)**. Special focus will be given to the gender-sensitivity of the response. As for **outputs**, Finland's aim is to further strengthen the resilience-based approach and the humanitarian-development nexus and to facilitate consensus between the political parties in Lebanon on how to mitigate the impact of the Syrian crisis and coherent implementation thereafter. The main **inputs** are support and political backing to the UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility in advancing the resilience



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agenda and private sector engagement; political advocacy in UN and humanitarian agencies to the same end; and support to inter-party dialogue processes in Lebanon through the UNDP/Common Space Initiative and Geneva Call.

The fourth impact area for Finland's cooperation is the **sustained stability and resilience of communities in Iraq with a view to enabling IDPs and refugees to return**. In Iraq, the UNDP stabilisation and early reconstruction measure is operational, and if further conflicts and infighting can be avoided after the military victory over ISIL, there is a sound framework in place for stabilisation and recovery. The expected outcome under this impact area is that **conditions are improved for the safe return of refugees and IDPs in stabilised areas (outcome 4.1)**.

The first output is Humanitarian assistance is provided effectively on a needs basis, through established humanitarian partners, and reaches those in need, including vulnerable groups, and assistance to host community populations contributes to preserving protection space. The second output is that the Iraqi government is supported in addressing the immediate challenges for the return of IDPs (FFS output 1) and sustaining stabilisation gains through high-impact medium-size reconstruction projects and support for local businesses (FFS output 2). These indicators stem from the large, multi-donor UNDP-managed Fund for Stabilization (FFS). Other Finnish ODA **inputs** include humanitarian assistance, humanitarian mine action and Finnish NGO projects, for example in the sphere of mediation and conflict prevention.



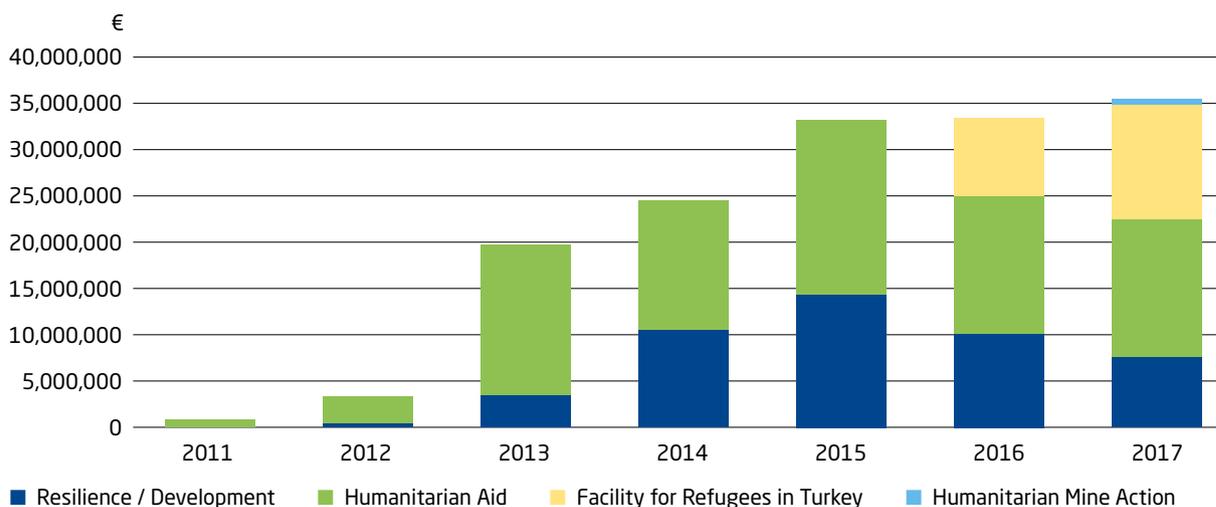
5) Tentative Financing Plan

Finnish funding to alleviate the consequences of the **Syrian conflict** amounts to 115 million euros in 2011–2016, with the pledge for 2017 amounting to 35 million euros. According to the **Oxfam Syria Crisis Fair Share Analysis 2016**, the annual ‘fair share’ of Finland out of the total UN & Red Cross/Red Crescent appeals is roughly 25 million euros. Finland has exceeded this benchmark in 2015 and 2016, and will do so in 2017.

Funding needs in Syria and Iraq and their neighbouring countries are not going to decrease at least for the next decade. If anything, **these needs are likely going to increase** when reconstruction properly gets underway in Syria and territories liberated from ISIL. Since 2013, five annual pledging conferences have been arranged for Syria, with a global trend of moving towards multi-year commitments. In the absence of a multi-year financing frame for the conflict response, Finland needs to secure its annual pledge for each year. **Finland will aim to maintain a high level of funding** in the coming years, with the Oxfam figure as a benchmark.

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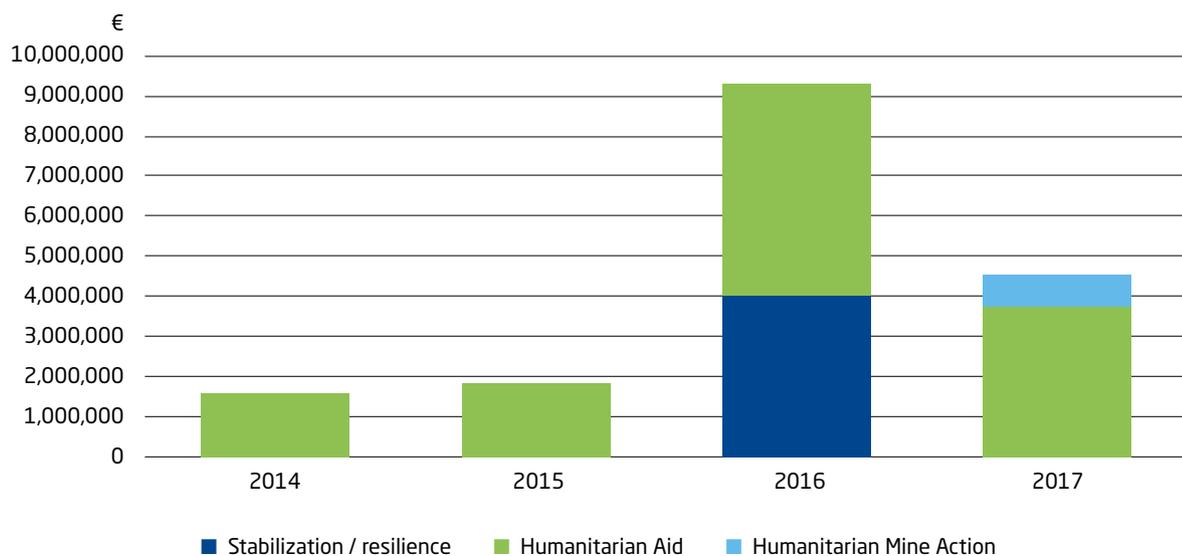
Figure 1: Finnish assistance (disbursements, 2017 estimated) to the Syrian conflict comprises humanitarian assistance, resilience funding, Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT) and humanitarian mine action.



Finnish humanitarian funding for the response to the conflict in Iraq started in 2014 after ISIL took over significant parts of the country. In 2016, Finland significantly increased its support by joining the UNDP Fund For Stabilization (FFS) and providing funds for humanitarian mine action. In 2017 humanitarian funding remains high. Finland does not have in place a multi-year financing frame for the Iraqi conflict response, but is committed to continue supporting Iraq in the coming years.



Figure 2: Finnish assistance (disbursements, 2017 estimated) to stabilisation in Iraq comprises humanitarian assistance, resilience funding⁶ and humanitarian mine action⁷.



⁶ Funding to Facility For Stabilization (FFS) is valid through 2016–2018.

⁷ Humanitarian Mine Action to Iraq totals at least three million euros in 2017–2020.

6) Risk Management

The development cooperation and humanitarian aid interventions in Syria and Iraq are carefully planned, taking into consideration the fragile and conflict context that characterises the region. Finland acknowledges the risk that progress with implementation of the activities in this region is likely to be slow due to the conflict context and the constantly changing operating environment. **In fact, the risks arising from the armed conflict are likely to have a very strong impact on the prospects of achieving results at all.**

According to Results-based Management (RBM) Guidelines for Finland's Development Cooperation (2015), risk management is an integral part of RBM at all stages of aid interventions. According to the Guidelines for Finland's Development Policy and Development Cooperation in Fragile States (2014), Finland recognises that there are greater risks in engaging in fragile contexts than there are with other countries, but the failure of donors to act might constitute an even higher risk.

Risk assessments are conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the duration of cooperation, and necessary actions are taken in order to reduce the probability of risks or in order to mitigate their impact. It is also recognised that in challenging security and policy contexts such as Syria or Iraq, long-term results may be compromised and setbacks may occur during and after project implementation.

The risks are assessed in a threefold format which makes a distinction between contextual, institutional and programmatic risks.

Contextual risks are related to the constantly changing dynamics of armed conflict, domestic political developments in the neighbouring countries and the global geopolitical scene. The likelihood of armed conflict in Syria's neighbouring countries is lower, but the past few years have made it clear that acts of terrorism and sudden surges in violence do occur. Other major risks include the breakdown of consensus, firstly, in the UN-led aid architecture; and secondly, in the EU's regional Syria

and Iraq strategy. The failure of this aid paradigm would be devastating for a donor like Finland which does not have a strong capacity for bilateral implementation, but which relies instead on coordinated response mechanisms. However, these **risks have to be accepted**. It is both a political choice and an imperative due to Finland's limited administrative resources to rely on the UN political lead, on UN agencies' implementation capacity and the EU as the most important framework for Finnish foreign policy.

Institutional risks are related to weak governance, the breakdown of state structures, or misappropriation of funds due to the lack of capacity. Both the Ministry and Finnish embassies have limited administrative resources and no sectoral special advisors, and this is why Finland has chosen to concentrate mainly on large multi-donor, often UN-led, programmes. This, however, also means it has limited influence over implementation on the ground. To counter this, Finland concentrates its efforts on influencing **a few selected strategic policy issues**. The same focus is reflected in the indicators supporting the logic model. This advocacy work takes place both at the level of agencies' headquarters (multi-lateral policies) and in a regional context and steering boards.

Reputation risks, an integral part of institutional risks, must also be taken into account. While Finland gives assistance to people throughout Syria, including areas controlled by the regime and by the opposition, Finland may be perceived as supporting the survival of the Syrian regime. This perception might hamper the achievement of results in certain peace-building/mediation interventions. Important mitigation mechanisms include proactive communications and advocacy and careful planning and risk analysis on the programme level. If such decisions are made, proper communication and contingency planning needs to be put in place.

Programmatic risks relate mainly to difficult security situations and lack of political commitment to implement programmes and reforms on human rights. Non-commitment to London conference outcomes by donors and by Syria's neighbouring countries would compromise the policy environment for achieving a dignified life for the affected people and securing adequate financing to this end. As the main policy objective for Finnish assistance is to promote women's rights, sociocultural factors might hamper or prevent successful implementation of certain programmes relying on positive assumptions about development at the policy level.

7) Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of the Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid related to Conflicts in Syria and Iraq is based on ongoing assessments of development projects and programmes and related policy dialogue by the responsible MFA teams in Helsinki and in the embassies involved. However, since the main aid modalities are multi-bi projects and trust funds, primary responsibility for monitoring and project management in general rests with each relevant multilateral agency according to its own rules and regulations.

The main responsible units are the Unit for the Middle East and North Africa and the Unit for Humanitarian Policy & Assistance. In the case of Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the main responsibility rests with the Unit for South-Eastern Europe and for humanitarian mine action with the Unit for Arms Control. Embassies, particularly in Beirut and Ankara, provide important country-level monitoring by keeping in touch with relevant stakeholders. Permanent representations in Geneva, New York and Brussels also have an important role. Coordination between these actors is essential for successful monitoring of Finnish financing. Coordinating responsibility rests with the **Syria team** at the Unit for Middle East and North Africa.

MFA will receive monitoring data on project implementation through multilateral agencies' reports, but it will also work actively to ensure that the programmes are achieving their results according to the plans agreed in the project document (or similar) and funding agreement. Therefore, MFA will participate on a regular basis in the implementing partners' field monitoring missions. In joint arrangements, Finland will participate in joint reviews and evaluations. Participation in the governing bodies of projects and trust funds will be decided upon separately on a case by case basis.

The following MFA guidelines are used to benchmark the implementing partners' practices: Guidelines on Results-based Management, Human Rights Based Approach Guidelines, Manual for Bilateral Programmes, MFA internal guidelines for Multi-bi projects, Handbook on Corruption Prevention, and Evaluation Guidelines

The MFA team will continuously monitor the validity of the assumptions made in the Regional Strategy and its Logic Model (Annex I) as well as the risks identified, and take corrective measures as needed. The use of funds budgeted for the regional strategy is monitored on an ongoing basis.

The MFA team will prepare an annual report following the MFA reporting format and instructions for each calendar year. The annual report provides an overview of the strategy monitoring and reporting. The potential need for corrective measures will be determined under the coordination of the Department for Africa and the Middle East.

Findings of project-level management reviews and mid-term, final and potential impact evaluations, as well as relevant thematic evaluations also feed into strategy monitoring and annual reporting. The strategy as a whole will be evaluated towards the end of the strategy period (MFA Evaluation Unit).

Annex I. Logic Model

IMPACT	OUTCOME	OUTPUT	Key assumptions linking outputs/outcomes/ impacts	Instruments and Inputs	
IMPACT 1: Improved conditions for inclusive transition and sustainable peace in Syria	Outcome 1.1. Syrian peace processes are increasingly inclusive	Output 1.1.1. Regular inclusive intra-Syrian dialogues make progress (for example on tracks 1.5, 2 and 3 ⁸)	Impact-related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Syrian conflict is highly complex, involving local, regional and global levels. Conditions must be ripe on each level in order for sustainable peace to emerge from a political solution. • The Geneva Communiqué and UNSCR 2254 principles remain the most widely accepted political roadmap for peace in Syria. • In the absence of a track 1 agreement, opportunities must be seized on other tracks and in preparing the ground for post-conflict reconciliation and peace-building. These efforts could include de-escalating the conflict, upgrading options for ceasefires/truces, the delivery of aid and services, and a security sector reform. • Sustainable peace also needs to address the issues of impunity, justice and accountability. Making access to justice a reality for the most vulnerable through accountable mechanisms restores confidence and rule of law, and facilitates peace building. 	Policy dialogue and diplomacy, focusing on women's inclusion and political empowerment. --- Syria Initiative (CSI & FELM) 3.75 MEUR 2015-2018 EIP Syrian Voices 800,000 EUR 2016-2018 Berghoff Foundation, 970,197 EUR 2017-2018	
		Output 1.1.2. Bottom-up initiatives influence the track 1 process(es)		Outcome 1.2. Accountability mechanisms to tackle impunity are strengthened	Output 1.2.1. Transitional justice mechanisms, processes and stakeholders advocating for accountability achieve results.



IMPACT	OUTCOME	OUTPUT	Key assumptions linking outputs/ outcomes/impacts	Instruments and Inputs
IMPACT 2: Dignified life for affected populations in Syria and improved conditions for the safe return of refugees and IDPs in stabilised areas	Outcome 2.1. Increased stability, self-reliance and resilience of communities in Syria, allowing refugees and IDPs to return.	Output 2.1.1. Humanitarian assistance ⁹ is provided effectively on a needs basis, through established humanitarian partners, and it reaches those in need, including vulnerable groups with special needs.	Impact-related As the future of (the conflict in) Syria remains uncertain, maximum flexibility has to be maintained regarding the modalities of aid. Outputs may therefore vary to a greater extent under this impact area than in others. Larger multi-donor stabilisation, early recovery and finally reconstruction schemes may be set up that will require rapid deployment. The EU's joint line is that no reconstruction can be financed until credible political transition is underway, as stipulated in UNSCR 2254. The EU should make strategic use of its leverage through this, and the joint EU line should be adequately maintained. Women continue to be disproportionately affected by the conflict, and the international community's response is not gender-sensitive enough. The same goes for many vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and Palestine refugees. The 'dignity gap' should be closed for these vulnerable groups.	Political advocacy on PWD questions, no direct interventions. --- Humanitarian aid interventions in 2017: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR (1.0 MEUR protection and shelter, NFIs); • UNFPA (2.5 MEUR health); • UNRWA (share for Palestine refugees in Syria); • ICRC/IFRC (4 MEUR health, WASH, food, NFIs, shelter); • FCA (0.3 MEUR health, livelihoods, protection) --- UNDP livelihoods programme (1.4 MEUR within Syria; part of regional resilience programme.) 2016-2017 UNICEF No Lost Generation (2.5 MEUR within Syria and 2.5 MEUR in Jordan) 2017-2018 Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF, 6 MEUR) 2013-2017 --- Humanitarian Mine Action through ICRC and Mine Action Group (2.5 MEUR, 2017-2020)
		Output 2.1.2. The most vulnerable youth, including girls, have increased access to quality education and livelihoods opportunities.		
		Output 2.1.3. Critical infrastructure for providing basic services is being reconstructed in opposition areas in Syria.		
	Outcome 2.2. International aid to Syria better addresses the special needs of women.	Output 2.2.1. Number of early marriages reduced, victims of SGBV supported, maternal mortality reduced.	Outcome level The main source of destabilisation is lack of protection, and therefore a nationwide ceasefire is required. Meanwhile, the means currently available to Finland for increasing stabilisation are the provision of humanitarian aid and resilience support, demining and social cohesion/peace-building efforts. Finland recognises the Syrian Opposition Coalition as a representative of the Syrian people, while maintaining working-level contact with the Syrian regime. Support to local governing structures must be balanced and context-specific. The existing structures and capacities within Syria, however, are an asset that should be protected from further collapse. Finland will seek ways of more effective implementation through Syrian stakeholders, especially civil society, and support efforts to build up their capacities.	Policy dialogue and participation in the humanitarian top donors group in Geneva. Political advocacy on women's issues particularly through UN-WOMEN and UNFPA on relevant fora. --- Humanitarian financing to UNFPA

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IMPACT	OUTCOME	OUTPUT	Key assumptions linking outputs/ outcomes/impacts	Instruments and Inputs
IMPACT 3: Dignified life for Syrian refugees and host-community affected populations in Syria's neighbouring countries.	Outcome 3.1. Improved well-being and capacity of vulnerable refugee and host community youth and women.	Output 3.1.1 Humanitarian assistance ¹⁹ is provided effectively on a needs basis, through established humanitarian partners, and reaches those in need, including vulnerable groups, and assistance to host community populations contributes to preserving protection space.	Impact-related Supporting the well-being and capacity of Syrian refugees is crucially important both in view of their life as refugees, their future return to Syria and rebuilding the country. Even if a political agreement is reached soon, conditions within Syria mean that the majority of Syrian refugees will not be able to return at least during this strategy period. The situation in Jordan and Lebanon remains fragile, and the need for refugee and resilience support remains high.	Humanitarian aid interventions in 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR (4.0 MEUR protection, shelter, NFIs in regional refugee/host community response); • WFP (1.5 MEUR food and nutrition in regional refugee/host community response); • ICRC (0.5 MEUR primary health care, refugees in Lebanon); • Plan Finland (0.25 MEUR child protection) ---
		Output 3.1.2 Number of employment and education opportunities for women and youth has increased.	A successful response depends on three key assumptions/conditions: 1) the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis remain manageable in Jordan and Lebanon and any further escalation is avoided; 2) countries honour their commitments to refugees, i.e. fulfill their protection responsibility and London pledges of access to jobs and education; and 3) donors honour their commitments to support national plans financially, among others through large-scale IFI programs.	--- Targeted interventions in women's employment. UN Women Eid-bi-Eid, 1.5 MEUR 2017-2018 UNDP livelihoods programmes in Jordan (1.4 MEUR; Part of regional resilience programme, 2016-2017.) UNICEF No Lost Generation (2.5 MEUR in Jordan, 2.5 MEUR in Syria 2017-2018) EBRD SEMED-MDA (1 MEUR; 2016-2018) EU Madad Trust Fund (3 MEUR, 2016-2018) WB Lebanon Crisis TF (3 MEUR, 2014-2017) --- Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT) 28.4 MEUR 2016-2019



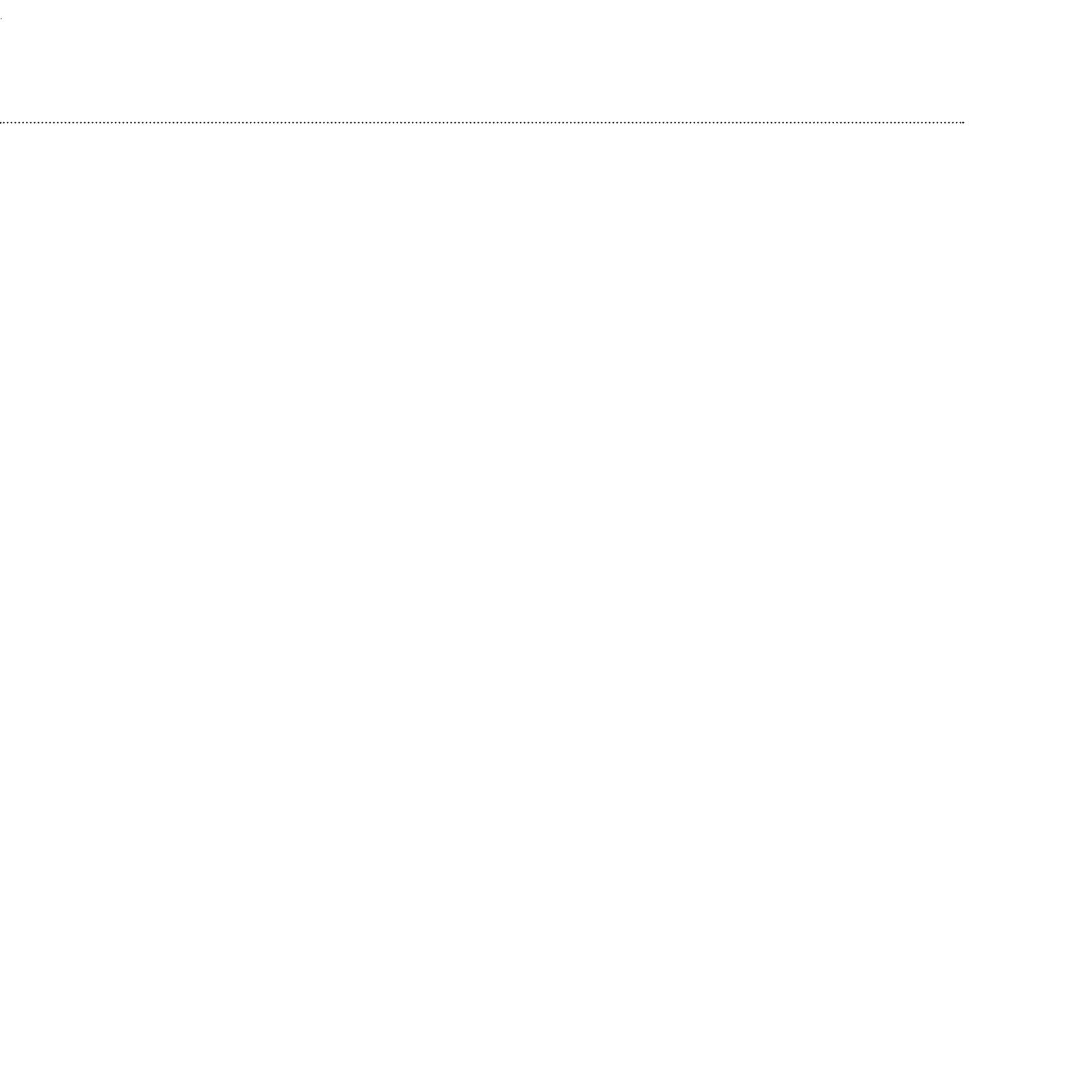
IMPACT	OUTCOME	OUTPUT	Key assumptions linking outputs/ outcomes/impacts	Instruments and Inputs
	Outcome 3.2. Increasingly inclusive national refugee and resilience response in Lebanon and Jordan	Output 3.2.1. Resilience-based approach and humanitarian-development nexus further strengthened	Outcome-related In the short term parents' access to employment is considered a prerequisite for many children being able to attend to school as they do not have to provide for their families and engage in child labour. In the long term an educated population is economically more productive.	Support and political backing to UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility in advancing the resilience agenda, humanitarian-development nexus and private sector engagement. (As part of UNDP regional resilience programme, 800,000 EUR, 2016-2017) Political advocacy in UN and humanitarian agencies for the same. --- Support (finance and political backing) for inter-party dialogue processes in Lebanon through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP/Common Space Initiative (364,000 EUR as part of the regional resilience programme, 2016-2017) and; • Geneva Call (577,030 EUR, 2017-2019) in order to better respond to the Syrian refugee crisis.
		Output 3.2.2. Consensus between the political parties in Lebanon on how to mitigate the impact of the Syrian crisis and coherent implementation thereafter.	Continued international – and Finnish – support is needed for UN efforts in joint planning and to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and resilience building. Syria and its neighbouring countries rank very low in gender equality. Women's role in patriarchal societies is traditional, the level of domestic violence is high (and even higher in refugee communities) and it is rare for women to work outside of home. It is necessary to foster political will to (gradually) change legislation and policies regarding women's employment. Host governments continue to allow refugee/displaced women to access income generation schemes.	

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IMPACT	OUTCOME	OUTPUT	Key assumptions linking outputs/outcomes/impacts	Instruments and Inputs
IMPACT 4: Sustained stability and resilience of communities in Iraq, enabling IDPs and refugees to return.	Outcome 4.1. Conditions improved for the safe return of IDPs and refugees in stabilised areas.	Output 4.1.1. Humanitarian assistance ¹¹ is provided effectively on a needs basis, through established humanitarian partners, and reaches those in need, including vulnerable groups, and assistance to host community populations contributes to preserving protection space	Impact-related As the future of (the conflict in) Iraq remains uncertain, maximum flexibility must be maintained regarding the modalities of aid. Any escalation of violence along traditional divisions after the military defeat of ISIL has the potential to undermine existing stabilisation results. Women continue to be disproportionately affected by the conflict, and the international community's response is not gender-sensitive enough. The same goes for many vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and certain religious minorities. The 'dignity gap' should be closed for these vulnerable groups.	Humanitarian aid interventions in 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR (1.0 MEUR protection, assistance to IDPs, refugees and returnees); • WFP (1.0 MEUR food assistance) • FRC/ICRC (0.5 MEUR health, livelihoods, protection); • World Vision (0.5 MEUR WASH, livelihoods); • Save the Children (0.44 MEUR); • Fida International (0.3 MEUR protection, education) --- UNDP Iraq Funding Facility for Stabilization (4 MEUR, 2016-2018) --- Humanitarian Mine Action through UNMAS and Mine Action Group (3 MEUR, 2017-2020)
		Output 4.1.2 Iraqi government is supported in addressing the immediate challenges for the return of IDPs (<i>FFS output 1</i>) and sustaining stabilisation gains through high-impact medium-size reconstruction projects and support for local businesses (<i>FFS output 2</i>).		

Annex I: Footnotes

- ⁸ The tracks of mediation are: 1) Official, governmental and decision-making level, in the Syrian case the Geneva process led by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, and the Astana process. 2) Non-official, but influential and linked to decision-makers; and 3) Grassroots and civil society. Source: Mediation Support Project Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich. Track 1.5 refers to mediation between track 1 and 2. People close to party leaderships usually talk informally and in a personal capacity.
- ⁹ Humanitarian assistance is neutral and impartial by nature and independent from political, military, economic or other objectives. It is provided on the basis of needs against annual appeals and response plans developed by the UN and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement. Thus, it's not possible to establish specific long-term impact indicators for HA and output 1 remains broadly defined.
- ¹⁰ Humanitarian assistance is neutral and impartial by nature and independent from political, military, economic or other objectives. It is provided on the basis of needs against annual appeals and response plans developed by the UN and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement. Thus, it's not possible to establish specific long-term impact indicators for HA and output 1 remains broadly defined.
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