

UN Strategic Framework 2022 – 2024

(As of 21 March 2022)

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1. Country Context¹

1.1 Socio-economic outlook

The Syrian Arab Republic² is facing one of the world's most complex emergencies, with unparalleled levels of humanitarian needs, significant internal and external displacement, widespread destruction of civilian and agricultural infrastructure and disastrous impacts on development gains in the country. In 2021, 13.4 million people in Syria are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance - a 21 per cent increase compared to 2020 - with needs increasingly being exacerbated by economic decline.³

Given the well-documented increase in people's needs, including around basic services and livelihoods, as well as the new challenges posed by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, this document sets out key areas for the United Nations Country Team to contribute, in coordination with the Government of Syria, to meet the needs of the people of Syria through multi-year resilience and recovery programming that is complementary to the large humanitarian assistance efforts.

The Syrian people continue to suffer immensely from a crisis that is now protracted and compounded in nature, although "a relative calm now exists, at least in terms of front lines not shifting for a year now."⁴ Since 2011, countless lives have been lost, the economy has experienced an unprecedented downturn, and widespread damage to physical infrastructure, including the electricity, agricultural, industrial, health, education and housing sectors, as well as water resources, severely decimating the availability of and access to basic social services. The crisis has had a profound impact on society, with continued high levels of internal displacement⁵, while according to the UN, 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees⁶ remain outside the country.

The government continued to subsidize basic commodities and services, particularly bread, food supplies, electricity and drinking water, and sought to maintain subsidies for all components of household support despite the economic effects of the crisis, the impact of external factors and the higher costs. The total subsidies volume was estimated at about 1,360 billion Syrian pounds in 2018, representing nearly 15% of the GDP in 2018. However, this protracted situation caused damage and deficiencies to public services in two aspects: the first is the quality of services, and

¹ The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has expressed reservations about the numbers and some reports included in this document as they are not based on national sources.

² The Syrian Arab Republic is the official name of the country, as recognized by the United Nations. "Syria" is used as an acronym throughout this document.

³ Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021

⁴ UN Special Envoy for Syria's Briefing to the Security-Council, March 2021

⁵ UN source: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/idps-tracking>.

According to the Government of Syria, IDPs are estimated at 4 million. Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

⁶ In addition, over 120,000 Palestine refugees whose place of habitual residence was Syria also fled to Lebanon, Jordan and beyond.

the second is the gaps in coverage. The Government aims to prioritize these two dimensions in future national plans. At the same time, accredited humanitarian actors in Syria are continuing to provide direct assistance to a considerable part of the people in need, across different sectors.⁷

Over 5 million sought refuge abroad, including more than one third of health care personnel and teachers.⁸ The crisis is having particular consequences for women, many of whom have become the sole breadwinners and primary caregivers for their families, in addition to the increase in poverty rates and the difficulty of accessing reproductive health services, securing livelihoods, and food security⁹. COVID-19 has further disenfranchised women with access to specialized and social services such as malnutrition monitoring and screening, reproductive health and responsive counseling falling by as much as 50 per cent before and during the lockdown 2020.

Children and adolescents have also experienced significant and distinct impacts. The under-five mortality rate, neonatal mortality and maternal mortality rates increased significantly since the crisis began. Likewise, Kindergarten enrolment declined from 12 per cent in 2011 to 8.9 per cent in 2021¹⁰ and point at 1.90 million out-of-school children (ages 5–17), among a school-age population of about 5.52 million.¹¹ Further, this prolonged period has widened the scope and scale of protection issues affecting children. Additional diverse and deep-rooted protection issues affect children, including family separations and losses, trauma and depletion of family assets and coping capacity. Separated children and refugees, and internally displaced or returning children, are more vulnerable to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. Fear, anxiety, and grief affect their mental health. The limited social workforce is insufficient to tackle new issues emerging from the crisis.

Before 2011, Syria had achieved progress in gender equality¹². However, these gains have retreated, and a gender gap has deepened in terms of results and development indicators. Young women and girls have become particularly vulnerable, with increases in child marriage reported¹³. Hence women and girls should be put as a key priority of United Nations organizations in promoting gender equality and in changing some discriminatory practices that emerged because of the crisis.

⁷ https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/924/flows?order=directional_property&sort=asc

⁸ Source for health care personnel: WHO research “Health care a casualty of 6 years of war in the Syrian Arab Republic. <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/detail/15-03-2017-health-care-a-casualty-of-6-years-of-war-inthe-syrian-arab-republic>.

Source for teachers: HRP/HNO years 2018,2019, 2020 and 2021

⁹ Humanitarian needs overview for 2021, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/syria_2021_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

¹⁰ Source: Ministry of Education, 2021

¹¹ Source: National Population Committee of Syria, 2021.

¹² Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. The First National Report on Sustainable Development Goals SDGs ,2019

¹³ Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. The First National Report on Sustainable Development Goals SDGs (Executive Summary) 2019.

Gender transformative programming will be applied across UN programmes, in order to tackle the causes of gender inequality, improving the conditions of women and girls in their daily lives but also improving their social position and thus paving a path towards gender equality. This will include, without being limited to, identifying the specific needs of women and girls and how gender norms affect children growing up and women and girls in their lives under the current context; girls' education and empowerment; supporting men and boys to embrace behaviours and attitudes that promote gender equality; ensuring women and girls full participation and contribution to peace, stability, resilience and socio-economic recovery. Prioritization of female headed households will also be needed.

The categories of vulnerable people has expanded since 2011, to include new demographics, such as internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, vulnerable boys and girls, unaccompanied and separated children, orphans, and women heading their households. Palestine Refugees hosted by Syria pre-crisis, as well as other refugees legally residing in Syria have also been impacted.

The crisis negatively affected service delivery, already harder to access for marginalized people. A certain number of IDPs continue to live in temporary accommodation, including collective shelters and unfinished and damaged buildings. In this context, international organisations have worked, in coordination with the Syrian Government, to provide education, food, water and medicine, in addition to logistical and psychological support to mitigate their suffering. Finding long-term and sustainable solutions to displacement, including through support for refugees and IDPs who have willingly chosen to return home, is critical to prevent humanitarian needs from deepening further.

Since 2018, with a relative increase of security and stability in over two-thirds of the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian government has worked to restore access to services in response to the basic living necessities, in coordination with international, local and national organisations. 1.95 million IDPs have returned between 2018 and 2020, due to "a mix of push and pull-factors, primarily the improvement of the security situation in the area of origin (stated by 80 per cent of returnees) and/or a deterioration of the economic situation in the area of displacement".¹⁴ Working on enabling conditions for a voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their areas of residence and on reintegrating them into the life cycle and for their socio-economic reintegration is among the stated priorities of the future plans of the Syrian Government.

While relative price stability and a gradual rise in incomes had led for the first time since 2011 to modest GDP growth during 2017-2018, economic recovery has been hampered by the ongoing crisis and diverse internal and external factors. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated underlying weaknesses of the economy, further negatively affecting service provision and livelihoods in Syria. These effects need to be assessed over time, depending on the duration of the pandemic and the preventive measures taken to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

¹⁴ Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021

One additional important consequence of the ongoing situation is that the agricultural sector has become a principal contributor to GDP and yet remains one of the most adversely affected having suffered from climatic shocks, including drought as well as fires and flooding, and shortages of inputs (seeds, agrochemicals, tools and fuel). Farmers have been simultaneously hit by the loss of inputs imported into Syria, leading to the lack of basic requirements to boost wheat and other crops production; simultaneously, a substantial increase in prices for inputs (seeds, machinery and labour) has been noticed, resulting in an increase of the cost of production and a decline of the yields. Recurrent wheat shortfalls have, in turn, resulted in price hikes to the cost of commercial (private) bread as well as reductions in subsidized bread – with the former increasing by 325 per cent (to reach SYP 451/bundle) in 2020 alone.¹⁵ The sector has also been heavily affected by the widespread destruction of the irrigation infrastructure (estimated at USD 3.3bn in the 2017 FAO - CFSAM Damage Assessment). Food insecurity is on the rise with an unprecedented 60 per cent of the population now food insecure; while production of wheat – the main staple crop – is at 60-70 per cent of pre-crisis levels. The bulk of this is grown in areas currently outside of Government's control (principally in the Northeast). Despite these difficulties, agriculture remains the key source of income, food security and social stability for millions across the country.

Concurrent with a renewed macroeconomic decline in 2019 and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, the extent of humanitarian needs remains staggering. In 2021, it is estimated that more than 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 6 million children and close to half a million Palestine refugees remaining in Syria, and the total number of IDPs stands above 6 million.¹⁶ Urban displacement has overburdened many communities, stretching already over utilized and under-resourced services further. The destruction of civilian infrastructure, depleted savings and limited economic opportunities have forced many to resort to negative coping strategies which affect in particular vulnerable people, including children, pregnant and lactating women, people with disabilities, older persons and other groups or individuals with specific needs or diminished coping mechanisms.

As mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic has added further to the multiple challenges which Syria is facing due to the manifold crisis and has caused further decline of economic and social indexes, particularly the total estimated GDP decrease of 9.15% during 2019-2020 with increase of unemployment rates and 240% price rise since June 2019.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the “consumer's prices index for 2010” increased from 1025.6 in June 2019 to 1900 in June 2020 and the average of workers in the micro, small and medium enterprise sector, which is considered a job generating sector and a driver of economic recovery, decreased. In March 2020, the Government of Syria and the UN agencies have started to coordinate in order to ensure the required preventive measures are put in place and to respond to COVID-19. Active control, mitigation and response measures to the longer-term impact of the pandemic will be a top priority in the implementation of the UN SF 2022-2024. Relevant specialized assessments would have to be undertaken to understand the nature and extent of the impacts on critical needs and long-term assistance.

¹⁵ Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021

¹⁶ Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021

¹⁷ Estimates from UN Socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19

In light of the above, the Government of Syria and the UN Country Team agree that creating enabling economic and social conditions and livelihoods opportunities and supporting basic social services and livelihoods are also key priority areas for future United Nations programs, as a necessary response to the most pressing people’s needs, and to complement its humanitarian assistance.¹⁸

As a final reference to the context, Syria has ratified most international human rights instruments¹⁹, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which alongside the recommendations emanating from the human right mechanisms²⁰, constitute the basis for the UN human rights-based approach to programming in the country.

1.2 National Priorities

In 2015, the Government of Syria aligned its national vision and plans with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in 2019, presented the above-mentioned First National Report for Sustainable Development which serves as a baseline report on the status of SDGs in Syria.

The report uses the progress and achievements on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) before 2011 as a reference point to assess the negative impact of the crisis on Syria’s projected development path. It identifies priorities and indicators that aim to serve as critical contributions to inform the formulation of national policies and plans. The report also provided the basis for Syria’s participation in the global 2020 Voluntary National Review (VNR) process which served to share its experiences and lessons learned, and to sought strengthening relevant policies, institutions and partnerships to enable and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

In October 2019, the Government issued the Strategic Plan “Syria 2030”. This document outlines the Government’s guiding policies and implementation framework in line with the 2030 Agenda.

It is based on a national analysis of the financial situation in the years before and during the crisis and emphasizes the linkage between the required needs-based response and essential service

¹⁸ These interventions will be conducted in support of the population given the rising needs, while it is widely acknowledged that “the only sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people”, UN Security Council Resolution 2254, December 2015

¹⁹ For a full list of the ratifications, please consult:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=170&Lang=EN

²⁰ Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

restoration, socio-economic resilience and social cohesion to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth and development. With a special focus on vulnerable people and the creation of enabling conditions for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees, the strategic plan "Syria 2030" is based on five strategic pillars that are responsive to the sustainable development goals, which are:

- 1- Institutional building and integrity strengthening.
- 2- Infrastructure and services development and renewal.
- 3- Growth and development (balanced and sustainable).
- 4- Human development (Social and educational dimensions).
- 5- National dialogue and political pluralism.

The pillars seek to implement an integrated approach which brings together the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. Based on its overall vision of a prosperous and self-reliant Syria which preserves its identity and adheres to the principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights, the Strategic Plan "Syria 2030" foresees to implement the five pillars in four phases over the next ten years, including relief, recovery, an upward phase, and a sustainable development phase. It also defines a set of 12 framework programmes to ensure coherent implementation of priority activities in each of the four phases.

2. UN Programming

Since the development of the 2016-2017 Strategic Framework in 2015, the country context has seen considerable changes although the repercussions of the last ten years are still ongoing and humanitarian needs remain significant. In order to bring UN programming in line with these developments, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic agreed with the Syria UN Country Team to formulate a new Strategic Framework (SF) for the period 2022- 2024. The scope of this document is limited to provide a multiyear socio-economic programming framework for the UN Country Team that focuses primarily on people's and communities' resilience, basic livelihoods, and early recovery activities, such as the ones recognized in the UN Security Council Resolution 2585, that complements the UN's humanitarian response, including activities conducted under the Humanitarian Response Plan's third strategic objective on increased resilience and access to basic services. While the latter has an annual planning cycle and focuses on emergency measures to improve communities' short-term coping mechanisms, including through emergency livelihoods and small scale local rehabilitation of civilian humanitarian infrastructures to access essential services, further efforts are required to diminish vulnerable Syrians' dependence on humanitarian aid and to support endogenous community recovery processes. Therefore, the SF presents multi-year programming that allows reap the rewards of downstream capacity building and promote more sustainable livelihoods for certain individuals/communities through area-based interventions. UN principles of human rights-based and context sensitive approach to programming, including participation, local ownership, and sustainability will be the basis for the UN strategies and approaches. The UN will prioritize its support based on the needs of the

population with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable people and their protection. In this way, UN assistance will leverage the gains of early recovery to enhance community resilience and provide more dignified opportunities to individuals and their families. In sum, the largest part of the UN work in Syria will still focus on responding to the humanitarian crisis under the HRP, while the Strategic Framework will focus on multi-year resilience and early recovery activities.²¹

2.1 Lessons Learned

In 2015, the Syrian Arab Republic team and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) agreed to develop a two-year Strategic Framework (SF). The UN SF focused on three broad priority areas:

- Capacity development and support for institutions
- Restoring and expanding more responsive essential services and infrastructure
- Improving livelihood opportunities, including economic recovery and social inclusion.

The SF 2016-2017 for the cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and UN, which has since been extended to cover the period 2016-2020, has formed a new starting point for resilience and early recovery activities, and thus it complemented the annual, needs-based humanitarian response plans, expanding the provision of essential services to the population, as a basis for supporting livelihoods, mitigating the impact of displacement and preventing long-term dependency on humanitarian assistance.

A review of the SF in 2017 confirmed its value as a forward-looking tool which enabled coordination on expanding programming and strengthening synergies between humanitarian and more sustainable resilience activities, including for expanded programming in livelihoods and social cohesion.

Over a period of four years, the three outcomes sought to reduce the severity of people's humanitarian needs by addressing some of the underlying risks and vulnerabilities. Focusing on basic services, strengthening the resilience and livelihoods elements, and social cohesion they provided the vision and foundation for the UN SF 2022-2024 based on the identified needs and in close alignment with the SDGs.

The mid-term review of the SF in 2017 showed that around 70 per cent of activities envisaged under the SF were included in the HRP. The overlap was based on the reality that the vulnerabilities the UN is trying to address in Syria are so severe to require large scale humanitarian assistance, while the pathways towards offering more durable solutions in response to people's needs are being established. The remaining 30 per cent was funded by non-humanitarian funds

²¹ In addition, the United Nations' engagement is also guided by UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

and few Agencies' programme core funding. This was programmed to support multi-year resilience and early recovery interventions, mainly in the areas of small farming and agriculture, women and youth livelihoods, education and vocational training, prevention and response to gender-based violence.²² Respondents to the SF mid-term review found that programmatic analysis and planning efforts under the SF had helped strengthen corresponding sector priority setting under the HRP. However, it was agreed that the synergy between humanitarian assistance and a more sustained support to people's resilience should gradually translate into a clearer distinction between activities falling under either of the two main planning instruments for the UN, based on the nature and scope of the activities. This, notwithstanding the relation between these two types of activities and instruments.

The logic of the SF results matrix with three outcomes and the organization of the governance structure into three programming pillars has proven valuable to ensure coherent and effective planning and implementation, and to maintain dialogue and coordination with Government and other relevant partners to provide the best possible support to Syrians, Palestine refugees and other refugees legally residing in Syria. At the same time, it was felt that the SF Pillar Groups should be used more as primary platforms for strategic dialogue and planning. The new SF Pillar Groups, under the Joint Steering Committee and UN Programme Management Team (PMT), will serve to discuss and identify concrete opportunities and programming approaches to combine short-term humanitarian activities with more medium-term resilience-based programming, including through area-based approaches, joint programmes and participatory community-level engagement, ensuring full participation of women and girls to strengthen their agency and their capacity to represent themselves, as well as participation of vulnerable people at large.

The SF 2022-2024 presents opportunities for Pillar Groups to maintain technical-level coordination with key national counterparts, within the same scope and modalities of the previous programming cycle. This includes strengthening result-based annual planning and reporting of each Pillar and taking into consideration adjustment to changes in the country context and emerging priorities. There will be a focus on gender equality and ensuring dedicated children centered activities.

Additional lessons point to the need to reinforce a context sensitive approach that maximises contributions to social cohesion, community participation and protection across all programming and which strengthens risk mitigation to ensure *do no harm* at all operational levels. Expanding integrated area-based programming within the broader framework of people-centred approaches is seen as particularly relevant for resilience programming. Information and sex, age

²² During the same period these sectors continued benefitting from humanitarian support and given the present level of needs, multi-year programming in these areas as well as the other areas under this framework will remain complementary and additional to humanitarian assistance for the period covered by this document.

and disability disaggregated data collection and analysis, including gender sensitive analysis, should be strengthened in coordination with the institutions through multidimensional poverty assessments - to better apply “Leaving No One Behind” (LNOB) by targeting areas and vulnerable people.

2.2 Fundamental Principles:

The national standards and principles that Syria has included in its first National Voluntary Report²³ on the Sustainable Development Goals for the year 2020 will be applied to the Strategic Framework on the basis of, and together with, the relevant “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”²⁴, to ensure the implementation of the paragraphs related to early recovery projects contained in the UNSC Resolution 2585. In line with main inter-governmental guidance, the following key principles will be applied when supervising the preparation and the implementation of the Strategic Framework for the years 2022-2024:

National ownership:

Provides for broad, national leadership of the country’s socio-economic development path, in identifying the national priorities that reflect the needs of the Syrian people.

Coordination and avoiding duplication:

Through integrated work programmes, supported by a number of the concerned United Nations organizations as per their mandate.

Cross-sectoral issues:

The SF and its pillars deal with many issues in a cross-sectoral manner, including the safe, voluntary and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees, environmental sustainability, and the resilience of the most vulnerable people.

²³ “The guiding principles related to the report content: the following guiding principles were adopted in relation to the content to the VR and its analytical approach:

1. Approaching rights
2. Emphasize the perspective of the right to development
3. Leaving no one behind
4. Consistency
5. Unity of agenda, coherence and complementarity”

²⁴ The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.

Adaptability

A broad SF results framework with a focus on four strategic-level outcomes provides the national partners and the UN system with sufficient room to adjust to relevant changes in the country context during the period 2022-2024 while – at the same time - ensuring continuity and coherent programmatic direction. Annual Joint Work Plans will be used to adapt outputs, key activities and the SF funding framework to changes in the country situation and partnerships. Strong and effective Pillar Group mechanisms will be crucial to ensure timely adjustments and continued delivery in a changing context.

Integrated use of UN programming principles

The latest global set of UN core programming principles will be applied in alignment with the national basic principles, in an integrated manner, and at all stages of the programming process. Both UN wide programming under the SF 2022-2024, and UN agencies' individual programmes and projects, will be guided by the principles of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, neutrality, equity and impartiality, and will be used to maximize resilience-building and sustainability of results, while results-based monitoring and reporting will serve to strengthen transparency and accountability.

In order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming as a set of strategic as well as technical approaches is required across the UN interventions, including all those under the UN strategic framework in Syria for the years 2022-2024.

Disaggregated data per sex and age, as well as gender-sensitive indicators that specifically measure gender equality, are an integral part of gender mainstreaming and necessary to understand and address gender inequalities and the specific needs of women and girls, utilizing efficiently, effectively and with equity the limited available resources, to improve social and development outcomes. Through the collection and reporting of sex- and age-disaggregated data at the level of administrative units, the UN, national stakeholders and policymakers are better equipped to strategically plan and implement programmes to improve social and developmental outcomes.

Context Sensitivity

To implement the Strategic Framework, the Government of Syria and UN agencies commit to work in accordance with the UN Charter and in line with national priorities and relevant principles of the UN for aid delivery²⁵, humanitarian principles, and adopting a participatory approach in the social, economic and environmental resilience of their communities. UN Agencies understand the

²⁵ Including as they relate to International Conventions and Treaties ratified by Syria.

sensitivity of the context in which they are operating. They act upon their understanding of these dynamics in order to avoid unintended negative impacts, maximize positive change in people's lives, and develop more effective and responsive interventions to the multidimensional socio-economic environment.

To ensure context sensitive programming, programmatic interventions are informed by the following principles and approaches in order to maximize their positive impact on targeted communities: coordination with the concerned national authorities; regular situation assessments; inclusiveness and participation, to ensure all affected people benefit from programmatic interventions, and that their needs and challenges are taken into account and addressed; a focus on enhancing social cohesion and protection across all programming; gender sensitivity and focus on vulnerable people; responsibility and commitment towards beneficiaries²⁶.

Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse refers to acts that may be committed by the United Nations staff, its personnel or implementing partners. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse have always been unacceptable behavior and prohibited conduct for United Nations staff. Such conduct is prohibited by the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules. The prohibition of acts of sexual exploitation and abuse extends to all staff and personnel of the United Nations, including those affiliated with it such as its implementing partners. For the purpose of preventing and protecting against sexual exploitation and abuse that may be committed by staff, personnel or implementing partners of the United Nations, policies, protocols and guidelines have been developed by the United Nations globally, the United Nations in Syria is committed to the respect and implementation of these policies, protocols and guidelines.

2.3 Strategic Approaches

The design of the SF 2022-2024 is based on a coordinated effort between the Syrian Government and the UN to support people's resilience and early recovery, based also on lessons learned from years of implementation in Syria and globally, annual and mid-term reviews of the current SF, a close dialogue and consultation with UN partners and a comprehensive UN socio-economic context analysis covering the five key dimensions (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships) of the 2030 Agenda. The priority areas and structure of the SF 2022-2024 reflect the

²⁶ Within the United Nations, this principle is also called Accountability to the Affected Populations (AAP), which represents an active commitment of organizations to use power responsibly. This is done, by the organisations and humanitarian actors, through listening to and incorporating the feedback of the people in the formulation of programmes; through sharing information in an effective and transparent way; through listening the communities' points of view on the success and impact of interventions in the evaluations.

areas of major needs and vulnerabilities for the people in Syria that the UN intend to contribute to address, based on independent vulnerability assessments within agreed methodologies, and they are congruent with the national priorities included in the national Strategic Plan “Syria 2030”.

Given the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SF 2022-2024 also integrates the key elements from the “UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19” (SERP), putting in practice the UN Secretary-General’s Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity report on the same subject. A timely and tailored socio-economic response represents one of three critical components of the UN’s COVID-19 interventions, alongside the public health and humanitarian response.

Since the first half of 2020, the UN team worked to capture its collective effort towards addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 into globally identified streams of work under this framework – that represent an integrated support package offered by the United Nations until the end of 2021 to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic, with particular focus on the most vulnerable people. The activities under this framework that go beyond immediate emergency health response and humanitarian assistance are integral part of the UN SF.

This section illustrates some key strategic approaches applied in the SF.

People-centered programming

Based on the UN socio-economic context analysis which identified widespread poverty and unemployment as two of the main socio-economic challenges, the SF 2022-2024 promotes people-centered, inclusive and equitable socio-economic resilience which is tailored to address challenges in rural and urban contexts and targets the most vulnerable people and areas of Syria. Its programmatic focus is oriented on the basis of gender analysis and the use of sex, age and disability data. This also include enhancing community participation in recovery and resilience, as well as psychosocial support and public health.

In order to realize the vision of LNOB, the UN SF also works on strengthening of data and statistics capacities, in consultation and according to current practices with the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in data generation, monitoring, analysis and use, with a focus on sex, age and disability disaggregated data on the most vulnerable areas and people to enable effective gender evidence-based and resilience-based programming.

Forward-looking and risk-informed programming

To address the growing needs of the people, and in line with the collective outcomes agreed in 2018, the SF 2022-2024 seeks to gradually complement the short-term humanitarian response implemented under the HRP, with a mid-term resilience approach. In this way, the SF seeks to contribute to more sustainable community recovery and resilience-building that can mitigate the

risks of a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation resulting from worsening socio-economic conditions and the shrinking of already limited essential services. This risk-informed programmatic scope requires supporting the conditions for displaced people and refugees' safe, voluntary and dignified return, as well as addressing their needs, risks and vulnerabilities in finding sustainable solutions, with a focus on protection, basic social services, economic development, livelihood opportunities, and social inclusion.

Integrated and area-based programming

Based on the vision and commitment to combine short-term responses with mid-term resilience-based interventions to address people's humanitarian needs, more holistic and integrated programming will be used to cover early recovery needs in targeted areas. Modalities for applying integrated programming include cross-sectoral joint programmes and decentralized area-based programming, with a focus on local, community-based resilience in a manner that can achieve integration and non-duplication in planning and implementing program activities across different levels, in a participatory manner between actors on national and sub-national level.

Leveraging, when relevant, area-based programming is a way to align with the situation of crisis-affected populations. Using geographic areas as entry points for multi-agency assessments and multi-sectoral interventions, area-based approaches enable collaboration of multiple stakeholders and communities based on a more holistic identification of interrelated needs, risks and vulnerabilities, as well as opportunities for programmatic synergies and achievement of sustainable results. With a focus on community-level recovery, it puts emphasis on effective and sustainable service delivery, as well as social cohesion.

In relation to the above, the SF 2022-2024 will include urban-area-based recovery at the level of cities, districts and neighborhoods, with a focus on rehabilitation of critical life-sustaining infrastructure, access to services for all people in general and vulnerable people²⁷ in particular, economic recovery, and urban planning.

Supporting technical capacities

As a central approach for achieving the four SF outcomes the focus will be on addressing people's needs, ensuring the technical capacities necessary to provide sustainable, equitable, inclusive and responsive access to quality basic services for all Syrians.

²⁷ "At its basic level, vulnerability is defined as an exposure to a marked decrease in standard of living. It is of special concern when it is prolonged, and when standards of living fall below critical thresholds, to a point of deprivation." (source: hdr.undp.org). For the purposes of this document, vulnerabilities are defined by the severe lack of access to basic services, livelihoods, and minimum living conditions in response to basic human needs and rights.

Mainstreaming environmental sustainability

The crisis has aggravated a number of environmental problems and deepened the shortage of natural resources. This shortage had already been identified as a new challenge added to other principal development challenges before the crisis. Together with an increased focus on climate change, and sustainable management for natural resources, the SF is mainstreaming environmental sustainability across its four pillars and outcomes to strengthen environmental protection, regulatory control of emissions and effective management of water and other natural resources, as well as integrated waste management.

Expanding partnerships

To better deliver its activities at local level and to the benefit of the people, the SF will continue to strengthen and expand partnerships with relevant national and international stakeholders in the policies, capacity building and service delivery areas. Partnerships will be based on the engagement of communities, women and young people, engagement of people affected by the crisis, and participation of the private sector, focusing on micro, small and medium enterprises.

Centrality of UN programming

In line with the confirmation of the centrality of the UN programming process in the SG's reform and the new UNSDG global guidance, the annual work plans will be set jointly by the concerned national authorities, the relevant UN organizations with the support of the Operations Management Team (OMT) and related inter-agency mechanisms and directly aligned with the vision and strategic results of the SF 2022-2024. This will ensure maximum coordination to support all UN contributions and inter-agency mechanisms at country level for effective implementation of the SF 2022-2024 and achievement of its Outcomes and Outputs.

Overall, the UN system in Syria will use its technical comparative advantage as a relatively distinct partner in its field of work to promote universal principles and values, provide technical assistance to relevant stakeholders, and facilitate international expertise, knowledge transfer and financing to enable all people in Syria to cope with the impact of the crisis and engage in a path towards realizing their full potential.

3. Programme Pillars

Pillar I: Availability and Access to Basic and Social Services

Outcome 1: Improved, equitable, inclusive and safe access to quality basic services.

Priority SDGs:

SDG2, SDG3, SDG4, SDG5, SDG6, SDG7, SDG9, SDG10, SDG11, SDG 16

Related Pillar of the Strategic Plan “Syria 2030”:

Pillar 4: Human Development

Pillar 2: Infrastructure development and renovation

Context, Rationale and Approaches

The availability, accessibility and quality of basic services in Syria, as well as housing and other public infrastructure, have deteriorated significantly as a result of crisis. Widespread damage and destruction combined with large-scale urban displacement, and a sharp decline in public resources have further reduced the capacities and effectiveness of service providers to ensure equitable, inclusive and safe access to sustainable basic quality services.

The education system has been severely affected, with a large number of completely or partially destroyed schools and many children out of school or at risk of dropping out.

The persistent effects of the crisis and the recent COVID-19 pandemic spread have had a negative effect on children's education and psychological well-being; therefore, multi-dimensional policy, programmatic and service-oriented responses are required.

The crisis has created substantial challenges for the education sector, and widespread poverty and unemployment have pushed a great number of children to abandon their education in order work and support their families. Overall, the education system, including the quality of education, are affected. However, substantive continued efforts continue to strengthen the coordination and coverage within the education system through the Syrian National Curriculum Framework 2019 and the non-formal education framework development.

With regards to the health system, it suffered from the destruction and degradation of health infrastructure, attrition of staff and lack of essential medicines. Women and girls are especially impacted by the lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Ten years of crisis have also resulted in high need for psychological health and disability services across various age groups. Widespread poverty, as well as shortages and high prices of food, fuel and electricity, further

contribute to an increase in morbidity and mortality rates, especially amongst the most vulnerable populations including children and elderly people.

The electric power sector has been affected severely, with an impact to access basic services which depend upon electricity such as health, water, education and agriculture services. Lack of access to electricity also gravely curtails livelihoods, both urban and rural.

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting extra burdens on the already fragile healthcare system with additional emerging repercussions. Preparedness and response to the pandemic across Syria is affected by limited information and a lack of trained health workers, facilities and medical equipment necessary to respond to the increase in infections, especially among the most vulnerable populations. The multi-faceted and potentially severe impact of COVID-19 on peoples' lives and livelihoods, as well as the economy and society in general, needs for the response to COVID-19 to be across the health system, including increased specialized services for testing and treatment in line with WHO guidelines as well as revitalization of the primary health care. The severe deterioration in the socio-economic situation, disruption and destruction of primary health system, problem of growing food insecurity driven by diminishing production as well as the erosion of livelihoods and coping strategies at the family level have significantly impacted maternal and child nutrition status.

Water and sanitation systems have also been severely affected due to the crisis. The destruction or damage to water networks, combined with the displacement and drain of qualified technical water and sanitation staff, have decreased communities' access to safe water. The same applies to irrigation, noting that around 85 per cent of water use is for agricultural purposes (limited restoration of this basic infrastructure is covered in Outcome 2). Many households rely on alternative and unsafe water sources to meet or complement their water needs which increases public health hazards including outbreaks.

With regards to the housing sector, large-scale destruction and damage to the housing stock, limited access to the cadastral records system, reduced the availability of safe and adequate shelter, whilst also hindering return to urban centers. Houses severe destruction increased building materials and rapid building demands.

While continuing to meet humanitarian imperatives, ensuring consistent, sustainable and safe access to basic services and removal of physical obstacles is essential to achieve community resilience, environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources needed for people's subsistence, attention to local resilience, and enabling the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of displaced persons to the place of origin or their choosing, when the conditions are met.

Work under this Outcome will integrate also the stream of work 1. (*Ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems*) and 2. (*Helping people cope with*

adversity, through social protection and basic services) of the “UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19”. Joint planning and implementation under Outcome 1 will be risk-informed and shock-responsive, incorporate new opportunities and use - in a flexible manner - different approaches to increase equitable, inclusive, safe, and resilient access to quality services and good infrastructure.

Priorities

In the given context, and based on consultations with key stakeholders, the UN system’s support will focus on increasing improved, inclusive, safe and equitable access and coverage of essential basic services and essential infrastructure, specifically for the most vulnerable people.

Given the programmatic linkages between its four pillars, Pillar 1 constitutes an essential foundation for the work under the other three pillars.

In view of the range of themes addressed under this Outcome, key programming priorities can be clustered as follows:

- Support increased access to equitable and inclusive quality education, including to children with special needs, decreasing the rates of out-of-school children, and improving the school environment. Support the acquisition of skills and competencies for employment to support livelihood and facilitate access to non-formal education.
- Support and strengthen essential health services to reduce morbidity and mortality, across primary, secondary and tertiary health and strengthening health information and surveillance systems including the utilization of standardized electronic support.
- Strengthen and scale up crucial nutrition services across the primary health care services to prevent malnutrition in early childhood and pregnancy and to promote growth and development of children and the nation.
- Support inclusive and equitable access to safe drinking water and clean sanitation (including improved hygiene practices), as well as solid waste and debris management to alleviate health and environmental hazards in target areas.
- Contribute to the rehabilitation of critical civilian infrastructure linked to the delivery of basic and social service and the emergency restoration of damaged housing (including specialized social protection centers) to improve living conditions for all of the population with focus on those most in need in urban and rural areas, in order to pave the way for the dignified, safe and voluntary return of displaced populations, and to strengthen resilience and socioeconomic revitalization of host communities.
- Support small scale rehabilitation of electricity systems essential to the provision of basic services to people (health, education, housing and water)
- Support cadastral and land administration services, to enable the people in Syria to access necessary documentation that will facilitate a return to their homes and properties, with a

review on women's right to land and housing ownership, in line with international HLP rights and the Government of Syria's international commitments, where applicable.

- Contribute to improving spatial connectivity and productivity through safer access and light civil works/rehabilitations of local damaged roads, public spaces and transportation systems.
- Contribute to achieve environmental sustainability through integrated management of natural resources, focus on forests, biodiversity, water resources, and the use of renewable and alternative energies.

Pillar II: Sustainable Socio-economic Recovery

Outcome 2: Better access for people, especially the most vulnerable, to social protection services, sustainable livelihoods, and inclusive and equitable socio-economic recovery.

Related SDGs: SDG1, SDG2, SDG5, SDG6, SDG7, SDG8, SDG9, SDG10, SDG11, SDG13, SDG15

Related Pillars of the Strategic Plan “Syria 2030”:

Pillar 2: Growth and Development

Pillar 3: Infrastructure and Energy

Pillar 4: Human Development

Context, Rationale and Approaches

The prolonged crisis has led to widespread loss and destruction of human, social, natural, physical and financial capital with negative impacts on socio-economic development and livelihoods, especially for the most vulnerable people in Syria. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has had an impact on the vulnerabilities of people in Syria that still needs to be accurately and fully estimated and mapped.

Poverty and food insecurity rates and vulnerability amongst the population, in both rural and urban areas across Syria, increased due to combined impact population movements, including large scale internal displacement, disruption to lives and livelihoods, massive damage to infrastructure and a huge drop in food production. Thus, the most vulnerable people – who often use negative strategies to cope with multiple shocks – women, youth, older people, persons with disabilities and people with a legal refugee’s status in Syria, are often affected by the socio-economic impact of the crisis.

In response to this context, and congruently with the Strategic Plan “Syria 2030”, the SF will apply a gender-responsive pro-poor strategy, which provides integrated support to inclusive economic growth, and improved equitable income distribution.

Outcome 2 aims at inclusive and equitable participation of the poor and the most vulnerable people, and better integration of the least developed areas in the socio-economic recovery of Syria. It will use a multi-sectoral, issue-based approach to programming, with a focus on area-based recovery activities in the targeted areas and in coordination with the relevant governmental institutions of each sector, in order to strengthen livelihoods and socio-economic recovery while ensuring food security through small scale restoration of damaged vital irrigation infrastructure and sustainable management of natural resources, including adoption of improved on-farm water use.

Work under this Outcome will also integrate the stream of work 2. (*Helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services*) and 3. (*Protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes*) of the “UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. These streams are connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to build back better.

Whereas programme interventions under the SF 2016-2020 have been sporadic and short-term due to the instability of the context, thus limiting their impact towards mid-term recovery, activities under this Outcome will promote horizontal integration across sectors, and between rural and urban contexts, with a focus on partnership with relevant national authorities, municipalities, universities, CSOs and the private sector, for example through reinforcing relevant value chains; and temporal integration between short-term interventions which respond to urgent needs and medium-term programming for early recovery, including to boost sustainable employment, income generation, and reintegration of returnees, as well as food security through sustainable natural resource management.

Priorities

Programmatic activities under Outcome 2 will focus on addressing the high unemployment rates, especially amongst women, persons with disabilities, and youth, to prepare them for successful entry and participation in the available labor market opportunities, to contribute to improving social protection systems and to organize informal sector in terms of work standards improvement.

Other thematic focus areas under Outcome 2 include labor market participation and employment across all sectors of the economy, social assistance and insurance, small scale limited restoration of damaged productive civilian infrastructure and assets for sustainable production, as well as protection/restoration of the natural resource base, and mainstreaming climate change adaptation.

In line with the LNOB principle, Outcome 2 identifies and targets the most vulnerable people – comprising women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, IDPs, refugees and returnees who are in need, and smallholder farmers.

Activities under Outcome 2 of this SF will focus on:

- Creating and strengthening sustainable and inclusive livelihoods.
- Restoring production for food and nutrition security (including a focus on supporting farmer returnees to resume farming activities).

- Support malnutrition detection and management, and healthy lifestyle, with healthy food measures long life.
- Restoring income, and ensuring sustainable living opportunities (active labor, receiving technical training and qualifications in all sectors, public markets, value chain development, etc.).
- Contribute to improving basic productive resources infrastructure, and the required assets for sustainable production (including rural development centres and rural industry units for vocational training and skills development).
- Supporting the development of a social protection system (including social insurance, integration of social services, specialized social protection centers, gender equality and women empowerment programs...) that assists people to recover, with a focus on the SDGs and inclusive and effective participation of communities and vulnerable people.
- Strengthen awareness and support community initiatives to enhance the resilience, the recovery and the wellbeing of communities.

Pillar III: Enabling environment for a resilient return

Outcome 3: Improved living conditions of displaced people, returnees and affected communities²⁸.

Priority SDGs: SDG1, SDG2, SDG4, SDG5, SDG6, SDG7, SDG10, SDG11, SDG16, SDG17

Related Pillars of the Strategic Plan “Syria 2030”:

Pillar 2: Administrative Reform and strengthening Integrity

Pillar 3: Infrastructure and Energy

Pillar 4: Human Development

Context, Rationale and Approaches

The ongoing trends in spontaneous returns amongst Syrian refugees and IDPs²⁹ are indicators of the need for support to communities where returns are taking place, as well as to prepare for future returns. Outcome 3 will therefore serve to enhance the resilience of internally displaced people, Syrian refugees who have exercised their right to return voluntarily, returning Palestinian refugees and that of their communities. Building the resilience of returnees and their communities is key to their socio-economic reintegration. Assistance towards the reintegration of refugees and IDPs will have a strong focus on enhancing their protection, social cohesion and effective participation in their communities and strengthening enabling conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has recognized “the safe and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees to their areas of origin”³⁰ as a significant issue during the relief phase and as an essential base for recovery. The focus on reintegration of returnees within their communities is consistent with the “2030 Agenda” for Sustainable Development and its central, transformative promise to “leave no one behind” and Do No Harm.

²⁸ The primary beneficiaries of this outcome include Syrian refugees who have freely chosen to return to Syria, people displaced inside the country, communities that have been affected due to exodus or influx of IDPs, Palestine refugees hosted by Syria before and during the crisis, and refugees legally residing in Syria.

²⁹ From 2016 to 2020, UNHCR has verified that some 267,170 refugees have spontaneously returned to Syria (source: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions). The numbers reported are only those verified or monitored by UNHCR and do not reflect the entire number of refugee returns. For the corresponding period, OCHA’s IDP Task Force estimated some 3,121,036 IDPs have returned to their governorates of origin (source: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/syrian-arab-republic-idp-movements-and-idp-spontaneous-return-movements-data>)

³⁰ Strategic Plan Syria 2030

Under this Outcome, returning Syrian refugees and internally displaced people will be enabled to restart their lives together with their communities, including through engagement by UNHCR with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to promote the establishment of an enabling environment that responds to their challenges³¹, and measures to facilitate activities in support of resilient return under Outcomes 1, 2 and 4. Assistance will be provided in compliance with global guidance on gender equality, protection and responsibility and commitment to beneficiaries, and will be adapted to the different needs.

Outcome 3 recognizes the crucial importance of robust and lasting partnerships to inform and ensure a collective response to the returns. It will play a catalytic role in combining efforts and promoting greater information exchange amongst UN agencies, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant stakeholders thus ensuring that resilience building is incorporated into various outputs and activities across the other three Outcomes of the SF.

Outcome 3 uses an inclusive area-based approach which enables sub-national administrative units, municipalities, local community and, where needed, national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and accredited international NGOs to provide services with high quality and efficiency.

Similar to Outcome 2, in coordination with concerned national authorities, UN agencies contributing to this Outcome aim at programmatic integration at three levels: 1) across sectors and issues (horizontal); 2) from macro-level analysis, coordination and recovery planning to projects on the ground (vertical); and 3) across interventions focused on the short, medium, and long-term (temporal), as agreed within the annual plans of the Pillars groups which will be formed for framework implementation.

Priorities

While Outcome 1 and 2 will ensure the availability and access to basic services and livelihoods also for IDPs, refugees and the host communities as key elements to respond to their primary needs, the focus of Outcome 3 is to:

- Support relevant institutions' capacities to ensure the provision of legal and administrative services aimed at facilitating the reintegration of IDP and refugee returnees and at enabling them to easily access those services in order to exercise their rights according to national law, including information related to their properties and documentation.

³¹ According to the survey results, refugees have indicated their main areas of concern being lack of livelihoods, safety and security, access to adequate housing or concern over property, and inadequate basic services inside the country. Source: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/68443> - 5th regional survey on refugee return perceptions and intentions March 2019

- Enhance humanitarian access and integrated work of relevant UN agencies and implementing partners to enable the provision of timely, well designed protection services³² and reintegration support to returning IDPs and refugees as well as receiving communities.
- Strengthen technical capacities related to analysis of population data, displacement dynamics and return and at the municipal, sub-national and relevant national level to facilitate evidence-based policy and programming, and to support returning refugees and internally displaced people by targeting and delivering services more effectively.
- Enable the effective design and targeting of activities undertaken under the other three pillars, including through technical support to relevant national authorities, including through improved sex, age and disability disaggregated data collection and analysis, according to relevant national regulations, to inform planning and prioritization of early recovery and livelihoods interventions in return areas.
- Enhance the safety and dignity of voluntary return through technical advice on facilitating procedures, public health measures, provision for persons with special needs, necessary civilian infrastructure repair and rehabilitation for access to critical basic services.³³

Under Outcome 3, UN agencies support interventions in enhancing technical capacities and promoting coordination with national and subnational institutions, and where needed national and accredited international NGOs, involved in livelihoods, social protection, gender equality, food security and emergency preparedness with the purpose to respond to people’s needs.

³² These include supporting legal aid, support to persons with specific needs, prevention and response to gender-based violence, etc.

³³ Examples of facilitating procedures undertaken by governments in such circumstances have included specific legal and administrative measures related to customs procedures, civil documentation, and other entry formalities for returnees. “Public health measures” in support to returnees. “Necessary civilian infrastructure repair and rehabilitation” might include repair to a health point at the border to enable access to first aid by returnees, or a damaged civil registry or cadastral office in an area of high return, to enable access to civil documentation or housing, land and property related services.

Pillar IV: People resilience and institutional responsiveness

Outcome 4: Vulnerable people' resilience is enhanced through increased institutional responsiveness in planning and providing services

Priority SDGs: SDG3, SDG4, SDG5, SDG6, SDG7, SDG10, SDG11, SDG16

Related Pillars of the Strategic Plan "Syria 2030":

Pillar 1 of the "Syria 2030" Strategy: Administrative Reform and Promoting Integrity

Pillar 4 of the "Syria 2030" Strategy: Human Development

Context, Rationale and Approaches

The crisis has increased vulnerabilities, depleted coping mechanisms, and led to considerable brain drain of national capacities resulting in declining quality of services and livelihoods, that are fundamental to address the needs, risks and vulnerabilities of all people. Implementation of the SF 2016-2020 has confirmed the importance of national institutions being able to respond in an inclusive and responsible manner to people's basic socio-economic needs. This is particularly important at municipal level where closer to citizens' services and entry points are offered to enhance the participation of communities in building resilience and ensuring inclusion of all age, gender and different vulnerable people, so that no one is left behind.

With a focus on locally based social structures and institutions, Outcome 4 uses participatory and gender-responsive planning and budgeting, and enhances the collection and analysis of sex, age and disability disaggregated data through the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)

Work under this Outcome will integrate also the stream of work 5. (*Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems*) of the "UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19".

In enhancing the responsiveness of relevant national institutions and NGOs, activities under Outcome 4 ensure the centrality of protection and apply its core principles in programming, in particular looking at context sensitivity and a human-rights based approach to UN programming. This is primarily achieved by focusing on local actors, including civil society organisations and institutions, which as duty bearers or service providers, play a central role in delivering essential services to vulnerable populations, including services contributing to protection and to the enjoyment of basic socioeconomic rights, and by building their capacities to deliver in a more equitable, inclusive and responsive way.

Outcome 4 is focused on the specific needs of people most in need (women, children with focus on persons with disabilities and displaced persons). Integrated, human rights-based, people-centered and area-based programming (which was included in the first Voluntary Review report “Syria after war 2020”), will serve to strengthen resilience and social safety nets, consistently with supporting activities to basic services and socio-economic recovery delivered under the other Pillars of the SF. All activities under this Outcome closely consider the substantial differences in the realities and socio-economic challenges between rural and urban areas, as well as between areas and governorates, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations.

Priorities

In close linkage to the other priority areas and outcomes of the SF 2021-2024, Outcome 4 is dedicated to:

- Support national institutions and communities at the subnational and national levels, as relevant, in the identification and fulfillment of the needs to achieve best standards of social protection, cohesion and inclusion, facilitating community participation to identify appropriate solutions.
- Strengthen technical capacities of the selected relevant national institutions, particularly in the fields of inclusive and participatory data collection and dissemination, research, analysis, planning and policies, and impact assessments to provide responsive and inclusive access to services and ensure resilience of vulnerable people.
- Strengthen the capacities of selected national institutions to implement and report on ratified international instruments and the SDGs.
- Promote administrative capacities (both at national and municipal levels, as relevant) in order to strengthen a responsive and effective local governance system and support effective community engagement.
- Support national institutions and communities in ensuring available capacities and quality services, including for the protection of vulnerable people, in line with applicable international instruments.
- Raise awareness and support collective understanding and work, especially at community level, to ensure positive engagement of all community members in the promotion of social cohesion, positive behaviours and attitude, rights, gender equality and better understanding of the specific needs of women and girls, in particular, to enhance the wellbeing of communities and the society at large
- Support the establishment of community child and women friendly spaces to facilitate wellbeing.

4. Assumptions and Risks

The achievement of SF Outcomes, and the effective implementation of related key outputs and activities in each of the four priority areas of the SF 2021-2024, depend on a number of assumptions, including improved stability and accessibility, favourable and enabling political commitment from all relevant stakeholders, macro-economic and environmental conditions, institutional capacities to contribute to relevant policies and program delivery approaches, as well as availability and use of disaggregated quality data and analyses for transparent and inclusive evidence-based planning and programming. This will allow the provision of more sustained service delivery and socio-economic recovery, which are at the heart of the SF 2022-2024.

All assumptions are made in a responsive context to humanitarian needs in the foreseeable future, particularly in areas hosting large numbers of IDPs, as well as those where significant spontaneous returns take place. Linked to these assumptions, the Syrian country context presents several interlinked risks, which need to be considered and mitigated to ensure successful achievement of SF results. To account for these risks, the SF 2022-2024 applies a risk-informed approach and uses resilience-based and participatory programming to mitigate risks across all priority areas and interventions.

Potential risks to the implementation of the SF include circumstances beyond UN control, such as limited access to hard-to-reach areas and target populations, explosive ordnance contamination, weak local-level administrative and technical capacities, severe economic conditions, that may cause specific risks for women and children, climate risks including droughts, lack of available funding.

In line with global UN programming guidance, the UN system in Syria applies risk mitigation through regular updates of the UN context analysis, as well as frequent situational scanning and assessment of structural, operational and programme criticality risks, in collaboration with implementing partners. Regular monitoring of the country context at UN system level also draws on the risk mitigation plans of individual UN agencies and the UN Country team which are updated on an ongoing basis to effectively prepare for and safeguard against various risks during the implementation of UN programmes. Sharing of knowledge and good practices, as well as enhanced coordination with key national counterparts and relevant partners in providing coherent and effective support to key SF priorities and results, constitutes another risk mitigation approach. Risks of increased violence and social tension will be mitigated by applying context sensitive approaches and targeted risk-informed programming.

By working to improve access and the provision of basic services and enabling conditions for returnees, the SF seeks to prevent the risk of significant further displacements. The long-term demographic, structural, and socio-economic impact of such mobility could be significant for the future of Syria.

Over the three-year SF implementation cycle, it is very important to focus on the prospects for resource mobilization to minimise a financial risk requiring recalibration of programming. In

addition, it is still difficult to assess the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of future waves. The use of a flexible approach to programming therefore constitutes a fundamental part of effective risk mitigation for the SF 2022-2024 as it allows to adjust the scale and areas of interventions according to contextual developments, in consultation with relevant partners.

5. Implementation of the UN Strategic Framework

5.1 Key modes of implementation

In addition to global programming principles and tailored strategic programming approaches, the operationalization of the SF is guided by three mutually reinforcing modes of implementation, namely results-based management, capacity development and coherent programming and policy support:

Results-based management helps ensure the efficient and effective use of resources to improve the lives and livelihoods of targeted populations guided by gender equality principles and the results framework for programmes and projects. This requires making realistic assumptions and identifying relevant risks about the programming environment, as well as using quality indicators to monitor progress in achieving planned outcomes. A strong focus on results will be maintained throughout the entire SF cycle, including through evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Capacity development – the process whereby people, national institutions and society as a whole create, strengthen, adapt and maintain their potential, abilities and means to sustain and improve their social, economic and environmental conditions – will be used across all SF Pillars, within the relevant “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria”³⁴ – to ensure the implementation of the paragraphs related to early recovery projects contained in the UNSC Resolution 2585 and that country level relevant stakeholders can effectively, efficiently, and self-sufficiently manage and deliver basic and social services to identified target groups.³⁵ With a focus on resilience-based programming, capacity building also serves to support efficient and effective economic and environmental management, including sustainable management of natural resources for people subsistence.

Coherent programming and policy support: In close alignment with the SDGs, the SF focuses on providing more coherent, cross-sectoral programming approaches and policy support in

³⁴ The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.

³⁵ National institutions’ capacity development will focus on those capacities strictly necessary to improve the direct provision of essential services to the people in need or to support adherence to international commitments.

coordination with national partners. The UN system in Syria combines its diverse and complementary mandates, expertise and technical contributions to support consistency across national legal, policy, and programmatic frameworks in line with internationally and regionally agreed norms/standards, policies and approaches, enhance synergies between sectors and intervention areas, and strengthen coherence between resilience and humanitarian efforts.

5.2 Implementation arrangements

The framework will be the legal and operational strategy for the UNCT in Syria, and as such, it is congruent with national priorities and agreed by the Government.

To deliver on the priority areas and outcomes outlined above, the UN system works in coordination with relevant Government authorities at various stages and levels of action in the implementation of the programmes under this framework, involving when relevant private sector and non-governmental national and international organizations in the implementation of activities, in accordance with Syrian procedures and UN rules and regulations. In line with SDG 17 and a holistic and integrated programming approach, broad-based operational and strategic partnerships across the humanitarian, development, human rights and peace pillars of the UN system are central to the efficient and effective achievement of SF Outcomes. To ensure continued relevance of the SF over the implementation period 2022-2024, the UN system, in consultation with relevant partners, will make every effort to adjust its programming, as and when needed, to new developments in a changing country context, based on annual joint work plans, flexible funding mechanisms, improved data collection and analysis, and a focus on knowledge and innovation.

5.2.1 Joint Work Plans

The SF will be coordinated on the basis of annual Joint Work Plans (JWPs) for each of the four priority areas with participating UN agencies and in close coordination with key national governmental counterparts. The plans include detailed activities, implementation matrixes, budgets, indicators, implementation follow up indicators and impact assessment on the targeted groups. Work progress reports will be presented on a participatory basis, with the Planning and International Cooperation Commission (PICC), to ensure engagement of targeted groups in development impact assessment to measure achievement of outcomes and goals.

5.2.2 Governance

The Strategic Framework will be under the overall co-ordination of a Joint Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the Head of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission (PICC) and the UN Resident Coordinator. Membership will consist of UN Heads of Agency, high-level representatives of MoFA and PICC, and other Ministries as required. The JSC will meet at least once a year to review achievements and strategic management issues arising from the

implementation of the Strategic Framework, and take decisions required to enable the partnership to achieve the agreed outcomes.

The UN Programme Management Team (PMT) serves as an internal coordination mechanism across the UN agencies and ensures coherent planning, implementation and regular progress reporting on the SF, with direct accountability to the UNCT. In addition, Pillar Groups will seek to strengthen coordination between national institutions and the UN. Cross-cutting themes including gender and youth are supported by dedicated UN theme groups. The UN M&E Group provides technical quality assurance to the SF indicator framework.

The UNCT will continue efforts to ensure effective implementation of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), while adapting to the evolving context. HACT implementing agencies will base this on the standard HACT provisions outlined in the annex. The Operations Management Team (OMT) ensures efficient and effective business operations in close support and interaction with the PMT. Each UNCT member maintains its functional relationships with relevant line Ministries on the basis of their own country programmes and action plans, setting and implementing priorities with their government partners in a coordinated way.

The UNCT and PICC will determine the level of outputs achievement and how far they are likely to contribute to the Outcomes.

5.2.3 Mandatory programme management and accountability arrangements

The programme will be executed in overall co-ordination with PICC. Government coordinating authorities for specific UN system agency programmes are noted in the Legal Annex. Government institutions, relevant NGOs and UN system agencies will implement programme activities. The Cooperation Framework will be made operational through the development of annual Joint Work Plans (JWPs) and agency-specific work plans and project documents. These work plans and documents describe the specific results to be achieved and will form an agreement between the UN system agencies and each implementing partner on the use of resources. To the extent possible the UN system agencies and relevant partners will use the minimum documents necessary, namely the signed Strategic Framework and signed joint or agency-specific work plans and project documents to implement programmatic initiatives. However, as necessary and

appropriate, project documents can be prepared using, inter alia, the relevant text from the Strategic Framework and joint or agency-specific work plans and / or project documents.³⁶

Cash assistance for travel, stipends, honoraria and other costs shall be set at rates commensurate with those applied in the country, but not higher than those applicable to the United Nations system (as stated in the ICSC circulars).

5.2.3.1 Resources and Resource Mobilization Strategy

The UN system agencies will provide support to the development and implementation of activities within the Strategic Framework, which may include technical support, cash assistance, supplies, commodities and equipment, procurement services, transport, funds for advocacy, research and studies, consultancies, programme development, monitoring and evaluation, training activities and staff support. Part of the UN system entities' support may be provided to non-governmental and civil society organizations as agreed within the framework of the individual work plans and project documents within the Strategic Framework.

Additional support may include access to UN organization-managed global information systems, the network of the UN system agencies' country offices and specialized information systems, including rosters of consultants and providers of development services, and access to the support provided by the network of UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes. The UN system agencies shall appoint staff and consultants for programme development, programme support, technical assistance, as well as monitoring and evaluation activities.

Subject to annual reviews and progress in the implementation of the programme, the UN system agencies' funds are distributed by calendar year and in accordance with the Strategic Framework. These budgets will be reviewed and further detailed in the workplans and project documents.

5.2.3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

The UNCT and PICC monitor the Strategic Framework achievements and implementation issues on an ongoing basis, using a simplified set of indicators. Implementing Partners, that administer cash provided by the UN system agencies, agree to cooperate with the UN entities for monitoring all activities and will facilitate access to relevant financial and personnel records.

To that effect, Implementing Partners agree to the following:

³⁶ In the case of UNDP, the Government Coordinating Authority will nominate the Government Co-operating Agency directly responsible for the Government's participation in each UNDP-assisted workplan. The reference to "Implementing Partner(s)" shall mean "Executing Agency(s)" as used in the SBAA. Where there are multiple implementing partners identified in a workplan, a Principal Implementing Partner will be identified who will have responsibility for convening, coordinating and overall monitoring (programme and financial) of all the Implementing Partners identified in the workplan to ensure that inputs are provided and activities undertaken in a coherent manner to produce the results of the workplan.

- Periodic on-site reviews and spot checks of their financial records by the UN system agencies or their representatives, as appropriate, and as described in specific clauses of their engagement documents/ contracts with the UN system agencies.
- Programmatic monitoring of activities following the UN system agencies' standards and guidance for site visits and field monitoring.
- Special or scheduled audits. Each UN organization, in collaboration with other UN system agencies (where so desired and in consultation with the respective coordinating Ministry) will establish an annual audit plan, also in line with specific donors' agreements when required, giving priority to audits of Implementing Partners with large amounts of cash assistance provided by the UN system agencies, and those whose financial management capacity needs strengthening.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

In order to ensure successful implementation of the broad and flexible SF results framework – in line with the key principle of flexibility and adaptability (see 2.2 above) – and to make timely and effective adjustments, the SF 2022-2024 relies strongly on an effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan.

The M&E Plan provides a systematic basis for monitoring and reporting regularly on the quality of implementation, results achieved, funding, as well as emerging risks, threats and opportunities for achieving the SDGs. Specifically, the M&E Plan serves to ensure effective regular tracking and reporting on SF outcomes, indicators and overall funding estimates, as well as monitoring and reporting on the outputs, related indicators and budgets of the annual Joint Work Plans (JWP) for each SF priority area.

As basic principle of results and evidence-based management, the M&E Plan seeks to ensure and support the update, collection and use of good quality data, in line with global standards and practices. It also maximizes direct linkages and use of relevant national SDG indicators. A key function of the M&E Plan is to ensure availability and access to all relevant required data to measure the progress and targets of all SF and JWPs results. This will be particularly important to ensure effective and complete annual reporting against all outcomes and outputs through the four SF Pillar Groups. The M&E Plan also foresees the conduct of a final independent evaluation in the last quarter of the second year of SF implementation.

In view of challenges in ensuring timely availability of disaggregated quality data across all SF results areas, the M&E Plan anticipates and addresses identified data gaps through planning and budgeting for additional studies and analyses required to track and report on agreed SF results and indicators. In detecting needs and opportunities for additional data generation/collection, the UN system maintains close communication and coordination with national data and statistics

entities including the Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as programmatic support to strengthening their capacities, across all four SF priority areas.

Assessments of programmes under the SF are performed jointly with PICC, as national party responsible for following up plans and programs implementation and international assistance coordination, follow up and impact assessment, and the UN M&E Group, composed of M&E experts from different UN agencies.

An independent evaluation of the Strategic Framework will take place in the third quarter of 2024 (the third and last year of the cycle) to assess the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the UN system's programming. It will determine whether the Strategic Framework results made a worthwhile contribution to respond to people needs. The UNCT and Government will agree on the arrangements for conducting the Strategic Framework evaluation. The findings from the evaluation will guide the UNCT's analytical contribution and the strategic planning of the subsequent UN planning framework.