

ANNEX 3

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the 2014 special measure for the Syrian population

Action Document for Education for vulnerable and displaced children in Syria**1. IDENTIFICATION**

Title/Number	Education for vulnerable and displaced children in Syria CRIS number: 2014/037-730		
Total cost	Total estimated cost: EUR 16,923,000 Total amount of EU contribution: EUR 15,000,000 This action is co-financed in parallel co-financing by Japan and Saudi Arabia for an amount of EUR 1,923,000.		
Aid method / Management mode and type of financing	Project Approach Component 1- Indirect Management with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Component 2- Indirect Management with the World Food Programme (WFP)		
DAC-code	112	Sector: 11220	Primary education

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT**2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives**

This action is designed to help mitigate the impact of the current crisis in Syria. It aims to complement on-going humanitarian activities in Syria by addressing the medium and long term requirements of those in need. The action supports a number of the early recovery elements of the revised "Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan" (SHARP) for the period January to December 2013. While many refugees are leaving Syria to escape the violence, others are leaving due to the fact that they cannot access basic services and/or have no means of income. Unless the situation in Syria is improved – in terms of basic services and income earning potential – these factors will continue to swell the number of Syrian refugees leaving for neighbouring countries, notably Lebanon and Jordan. From both a political and development perspective, it is preferable to address the needs of the affected Syrian population inside Syria, before they become refugees in neighbouring countries. Besides, the needs of all kind inside Syria, in particular among internally displaced persons (IDPs), are huge. Providing assistance during a civil war is challenging, because of limited access due to the security situation and because of limited implementation capacity on the ground.

There is consensus that the current crisis is having a disproportionate impact on women and children. The UN estimates that more than 10.8 million people – nearly half of the Syrian population – are in need of humanitarian assistance. Nearly 6.5 million people are internally displaced, of which 50% are children. In addition, by September 2014, around 3 million Syrians had left Syria, registering as refugees in surrounding countries. In the northern areas of Syria – which are under the control of opposition forces – the central Government is often no longer providing basic services (water, electricity, waste management, etc.). While local governance

structures have emerged, these are often under resourced and lack the capacity to fulfil the role of service provider.

This action aims at improving access to primary and secondary education and the provision of complementary nutrition, education and psychosocial support to school-age children in Syria.

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Syrian crisis context

The Syrian conflict, now in its fourth year has led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent decades. In addition, the regional impact of the crisis has been amplified to a point that the crisis now risks destabilising the entire region, exacerbating divisions along religious, ethnic and political lines, particularly in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

With neither side able to gain a military victory, and barring a swift political solution, the conflict looks set to escalate in an unpredictable manner in Syria and perhaps beyond, potentially leaving a legacy of sectarian violence and conflict for years to come.

During 2014 the number of conflict-related deaths surpassed 190,000, with 650,000 injured. Besides the high numbers of IDPs and people in need of assistance, access remains a critical issue: at least 4.6 million Syrians are in areas hard to reach by humanitarian assistances as a result of insecurity. Over 241,000 people are in locations besieged by the Government or opposition groups without access to basic services.

2.2.1.1. Economic and social situation and poverty analysis

Syria's economic situation continues to worsen. Economic activity has dropped and/or stopped in many places as a consequence of the war. Since 2011, the economy has contracted considerably with estimates ranging from 40% to 60% of gross domestic product (GDP as of early 2014). GDP per capita, education rates and health standards have declined substantially, as many public infrastructures have been destroyed or damaged. Labour market participation rates have probably decreased even further. Estimates based on the latest labour force survey from 2011 suggest that the number of employed people declined by 55% between 2011 and the end of 2013. The unemployment rate is estimated to have increased from 10% to 54% during the same period, in a context of large numbers of IDPs, refugees and growing informality. The lack of economic opportunities has contributed to an increase of poor households; approximately 75% of the population now lives in poverty, and approximately 54% in extreme poverty.

But the impacts and costs of the Syrian crisis extend well beyond Syria's borders: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that by the end of 2014 the number of Syria refugees will reach 3.59 million, with 1.5 million refugees in Lebanon, 1 million in Turkey, 700,000 in Jordan, 250,000 in Iraq and 140,000 in Egypt. Were this to be the case, this would mean that by the end of this year Syrian refugees would account for more than 30% of the Lebanese and 16% of the Jordanian population. The Regional Response Plan for 2014 estimates that the cost of addressing the impact crisis in Lebanon and Jordan was USD 1.8 billion and USD 1.3 billion respectively. These countries and are now confronted with a situation which threatens their internal stability in the absence of substantial additional international support. In addition, the fate of the 529,000 Palestine

refugees that were living in Syria adds another threat to the political and stability of both countries.

2.2.1.2. National development policy

Syria's national development objectives have normally been laid out in a series of 5 year plans. The 10th five-year plan covered the period 2006-2010 and while the 11th five-year plan for 2011-2015 was drafted, it was not officially adopted. Due to the violence and unacceptable human rights situation, the Council of the European Union suspended EU bilateral cooperation with the Government of Syria in May 2011. Since then EU's economic and development assistance to address the Syrian crisis under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and its successor the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) has been channelled mainly through UN organisations and NGOs. UN organisations, as well as a number of NGOs, are currently working from Damascus (although a number of organisations also have offices in various governorates) and serve both Government-held and opposition-held areas (through cross-line operations). Meanwhile, a number of other NGOs are working from either southern Turkey or Lebanon and serve predominately opposition-held areas (through cross-border operations). The main priorities with regard to both humanitarian and early recovery (development) actions inside Syria are outlined in the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) January to December 2014, prepared in coordination between the United Nations System, the Government of Syria, and humanitarian actors in Syria.

This action supports a number of the activities foreseen under the SHARP, in particular those linked to education.

2.2.2. *Sector context: policies and challenges*

The education system is severely affected by the crisis, which limits children's access to education and undermines educational achievement. Despite the crisis, according to the Syrian Ministry of Education, four million children were enrolled at grades 1-12 in Syria for the school year 2013-14. However, an estimated one million children still remain out of school due to ongoing conflict and massive internal displacement. Low attendance rates are confirmed especially in hard-to-reach areas. Whilst the national average attendance rate still stands at 73%, the percentage varies greatly across the country. This implies that another million children, albeit registered with schools, are not going to school on a regular basis. That means that approximately half of school-aged children inside Syria are no longer attending schools regularly. UNICEF reports an acute paucity of functioning learning spaces, with more than 4,000 schools (approximately 1 out of 5) across the country damaged, destroyed, used as IDPs shelters or occupied by parties to the conflict.

In the international context, the comparison of the net enrolment rate of primary education between Syria and other countries showed that Syria ranked number 21 in 2010 out of 136 countries (WDI, 2013), but based on current enrolment, using the 2010 data, it is estimated that Syria has fallen to the bottom of the ranking in the 135th position, i.e. the second worst performance in the world.

Children have been subject to a range of physical, psychological and grave violations of their rights, including recruitment into armed groups. The psychosocial impact of the crisis on both individuals and Syrian society as a whole has been severe. The UN has warned of a "lost generation" in Syria due to the disproportionate impact that the conflict is having on children and youths and the lack of access to education, vocational training and psychosocial services.

At the same time, the conflict's negative impact on food and nutrition security threatens children's cognitive as well as physical development, compromising their ability to learn even when they are able to attend school. UN agencies report that many children enrolled in education facilities are too hungry to concentrate on lessons.

This situation requires an articulated response, providing different types of assistance (in particular educational and nutritional) to the children in need.

2.3. Lessons learnt

Given: i) the relatively recent onset of the crisis, ii) the fact that these interventions are designed to mitigate the impacts of the crisis and, iii) the on-going conflict situation, no independent reviews (like results-oriented monitoring) or external evaluations have yet been undertaken. However, reports from on-going projects show that despite the risks and complexities of operating in Syria during the conflict it is still possible to achieve results. Due to the dynamic nature of the conflict and shifting battle lines there is need for a considerable degree of flexibility in implementing projects so that they can adapt to these changes while still responding to beneficiaries' needs. In order to try to reduce tensions between communities, projects supporting vulnerable populations – such as IDPs or Palestine refugees – should also include host communities and other Syrians in need.

The regional nature of the crisis as well as the twin-pronged response (both humanitarian and economic and development assistance) require a high degree of coordination in order to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure complementarity between the various actions. Lastly, there is a need for better reporting on the results that are being achieved.

2.4. Complementary actions

The EU has responded to the Syrian crisis by progressively making available increasing amounts of funding in order to match the escalating needs. To date, the EU has contributed more than EUR 2.8 billion with EUR 1.3 billion coming from EU Member States and more than EUR 1.5 billion from the EU budget which includes around EUR 665 million in humanitarian aid provided by the Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). While humanitarian assistance is generally focused on immediate lifesaving activities, economic, stabilisation and development assistance is working on the "other side of the humanitarian line" to support measures that seek to minimise the medium to long term impacts of the crisis (civil society organisations' capacity building, education, support to livelihoods, access to basic services, etc.). The Commission continues to ensure a clear division and complementarity between humanitarian and economic, stabilisation and development assistance and its various funding instruments. The actions proposed are thus also complementary to those funded by the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace in Syria under the "Regional Support Programme for Populations Affected by the Crisis in Syria"¹ and the "Assistance to Conflict Affected Communities in Syria, including through the Support to Civilian Structures of the Opposition"². Despite the suspension of bilateral aid with the Government of Syria a number of economic and development projects implemented mainly through the UN and/or NGOs are still going on and further projects are expected to be

¹ C(2012) 8720 of 27.11.2012.

² C(2013) 2602 of 05.05.2013.

contracted before the end of 2014. On-going projects inside Syria in the Education sector under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) particularly include:

- i) "Creating a path to early recovery for Education in Syria" which is implemented through a contribution agreement with UNICEF for an amount of EUR 15.7 million. This project is expected to assist vulnerable and displaced children to access education and psycho-social support. The current action is conceived as a direct follow-up of this former project and expected to scale up its results.
- ii) "Engaging Youth Phase II" which is implemented through a contribution agreement with UNWRA for an amount of EUR 7.3 million. The 54 month project is expected to improve employability of Palestine refugees and Syrians by providing them with technical and vocational training to improve their skills.

The project will – where appropriate and operationally necessary – be coordinated with other actions implemented by other donors, in support of – or directly by - the Interim Government or any other structure of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

2.5. Donor coordination

Concerning Syria, due to the fact that assistance is using different delivery mechanisms ("cross-line" and "cross-border"), donor coordination is taking place in a number of different fora at different levels. These include:

- The informal "core group" on donor coordination for recovery, resilience, and development response to the Syria crisis which is chaired by the EU and includes key bilateral and multilateral donors. This group aims at improving the effectiveness of development assistance provided in response to the Syrian crisis, both inside Syria and in the neighbouring countries, but does not include humanitarian activities which are coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
- In addition, coordination is also conducted in the frame of the Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development of the Friends of Syrian People. Here the focus is on coordination of donor support to the opposition held areas of Syria which is mainly supported from southern Turkey (cross-border), although there is also cross line support.
- The UN also co-chairs a number of sectoral coordination meetings based in Damascus.

There is very close and regular internal coordination within the European Commission between the various services involved in the response and with the European External Action Service. The Joint Communication "Towards a Comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis"³ helps provide the framework for coordinating all aspects of the EU response to the crisis.

In addition, the revised "Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan" (SHARP) provides a coordinated response strategy for all UN agencies and humanitarian actors.

³ JOIN (2013) 22 final of 24.06.2013.

3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the action is *to contribute to the mitigation of the risk of a "lost generation" in Syria due to the disproportionate impact that the conflict is having on children and youths and the lack of access to education, vocational training and psychosocial services.*

The specific objective of the action is *to contribute to improving access and attendance rates to primary and alternative education for children and adolescents most affected by the conflict in selected intervention areas in Syria.*

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The action has two components for which the expected results and corresponding activities are detailed below.

3.2.1. Component 1 - Assisting vulnerable and displaced children in Syria to access education

This component will be implemented by UNICEF. It will support the scaling up of activities that are already being supported under the on-going Contribution Agreement "Creating a path to early recovery for Education in Syria" which was signed in June 2013 for an amount of EUR 15.7 million. The action on access to education through distribution of supplies and textbooks will be expanded to at least 500,000 more children. Under the current action, the creation of school clubs providing remedial classes and recreational activities, the self-learning programmes and the provision of remedial education and vocational life skills training for adolescents will be continued. The action on physical environmental support for education will continue to be improved, replacing rehabilitation of damaged schools with pre-fabricated classrooms which are more appropriate for the Syrian crisis context. The activities on training for teachers, protection and psychosocial support, early childhood development and the scholarships programme for girls on vocational education will also continue.

Expected results and indicative activities:

Result 1: Access to basic education within the targeted areas is provided for all children, including adolescents.

Activity 1.1: Provide basic teaching and learning materials (school bags, stationery, textbooks);

Activity 1.2: Print and distributing self-learning programme material;

Activity 1.3: Roll-out the self-learning programme in the selected governorates.

Result 2: Children within the targeted areas are provided with remedial education, psycho-social support and recreational activities.

Activity 2.1: Create School-clubs, including the provision of remedial education classes, of recreational activities (i.e. sports) and of psychosocial support.

Result 3: The physical learning environment of the targeted schools is improved.

Activity 3.1: Provide safe learning spaces such as pre-fabricated classrooms.

Result 4: Teachers' capacities on protection and psychosocial skills is improved.

Activity 4.1: Induction / training on active learning methodology for school club teachers;

Activity 4.2: Provide specialised training for teachers.

Result 5: Vulnerable children of less than 6 years have access to Early Childcare Development programmes.

Activity 5.1: Develop programmes and materials;

Activity 5.2: Build capacities of staff and parents, including on psycho-social support.

Result 6: Remedial education and vocational education for adolescents are made available to out of school children and children at risk of dropping out, including specific scholarships for girls.

Activity 6.1: provide adolescents remedial education;

Activity 6.2: provide adolescents vocational training;

Activity 6.2: Award scholarships for girls for formal school, remedial or vocational training programmes.

Result 7: A management and monitoring system for the two programme components is in place and running.

Activity 3.1: Together with WFP, set up a joint data management system for the two programme components;

Activity 3.2: Monitor the programme results, including gender elements.

3.2.2. *Component 2- School feeding programme*

This component aims at providing nutritious fortified snacks to food insecure and vulnerable primary school children so that they are encouraged to enrol and regularly attend school. The provision of the snacks will also aim at supporting local production and distribution.

This component will benefit at least 200,000 children and take place in schools already covered by UNICEF under component 1 of the present project. Areas with the highest drop-out rates will be targeted in priority to provide incentives for school attendance. The timeframe for this component is foreseen to be one school year (September-June). The two components will be regularly aligned and coordinated.

Expected results and activities:

Result 1: At least 200,000 children receive a nutritious snack every day at school.

Activity 1.1: Distribute snacks.

Result 2: Local suppliers' capacity is enhanced and production standards meet international nutrition standards.

Activity 2.1: Contract local suppliers;

Activity 2.2: Train the school personnel in running the programme.

Result 3: A management and monitoring system for the two programme components is in place and running.

Activity 3.1: Together with UNICEF, set up a joint data management system for the two programme components;

Activity 3.2: Monitor the programme results, including gender elements.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The risks of operating in Syria during the conflict are clearly significant. Projects will have to include a high degree of flexibility in order to ensure that they can adapt to the changing situation on the ground. The main risk is the deterioration of the already grave security situation in Syria. Localised occurrences can be mitigated by projects either temporarily or permanently relocating staff and activities. There is a risk of duplication of EU funding between humanitarian and development activities. This continues to be mitigated by close and frequent coordination between the relevant Commission services based on an agreed division of labour. In addition, there is a risk of duplication of EU funding for development activities given that a number of actions are addressing similar objectives. This will be mitigated by ensuring a clear targeting of beneficiaries (including geographical aspects), information sharing and coordination among the various partners, and ensuring that UN agencies adhere to their respective mandates.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

All components of this action will integrate issues of human rights and gender equality into the implementing projects. Where relevant and feasible, all indicators will be broken down by gender.

3.5. Stakeholders

The direct stakeholders are the respective UN organisations (UNICEF and WFP), their grant beneficiaries and selected contractors.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country, referred to in Article 184(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

4.2. Indicative operational implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in sections 3.2 and 4.3 will be carried out, is 36 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement or, where none is concluded, from the adoption of this Action Document, subject to modifications to be agreed by the responsible authorising officer in the relevant agreements. The European Parliament and the relevant Committee shall be informed of the extension of the operational implementation period within one month of that extension being granted.

4.3. Implementation components and modules

4.3.1. Indirect management with an international organisation

This action with objective to contribute to improving access and attendance rates to primary and alternative education for children and adolescents most affected by the conflict in selected intervention areas in Syria may be implemented in indirect management with UNICEF for component 1 and with WFP for component 2 in accordance with Article 58(1)(c) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012. This implementation is justified because; i) bilateral aid is currently suspended and; ii) both these organisations have an international mandate to implement the activities in their respective component. Component 1 is the continuation of an on-going project with UNICEF (2013/318-335).

These international organisations will be responsible for the award, signing and management of contracts (grants and procurement) and for making payments.

These entrusted entities are currently undergoing the ex-ante assessment in accordance with Article 61(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012. In anticipation of the results of this review, the responsible authorising officer deems that, based on a preliminary evaluation and on the long-standing and problem-free cooperation with these entities, it can be entrusted with budget-implementation tasks under indirect management.

The change of management mode from indirect to direct management, where partially or entirely, is not considered a substantial change.

The Commission authorises that the costs incurred by the entrusted entities UNICEF and WFP may be recognised as eligible as of 1st September 2014, in order that the action can increase access to education and nutrition in schools from the start of the school year 2014-2015.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

Subject to the following, the geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement procedures and in terms of origin of supplies and materials purchased as established in the basic act shall apply.

In accordance with Article 9(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014; the Commission decides that natural and legal persons from the following countries having traditional economic, trade or geographical links with neighbouring partner countries shall be eligible for participating in procurement and grant award procedures: Turkey, Iraq. The supplies originating there shall also be eligible.

The responsible authorising officer may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 9(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

4.5. Indicative budget

Module	Amount in EUR thousands	Third party contribution (indicative, where known)
4.1. – Indirect management with:		
4.1.1 UNICEF	11,970	N.A.
4.1.2 WFP	3,000	1,923
4.2. – Evaluation and audit	30	N.A.
Totals	15,000	1,923

4.6. Performance monitoring

Appropriate reporting measures indicators and quantitative targets will be incorporated into each contract. While primary responsibility for the monitoring of the performance of each of the components rests with the implementing organisation, the EU will closely monitor performance by each of the implementing organisations and reserves the right to carry out verification missions as necessary.

4.7. Evaluation and audit

Each of the 2 contracts will include a final end of term review as part of the contract. A mid-term review is also foreseen for each of the 2 contracts after the end of the first school year. These will be paid for under the respective contract. The EU may contract an independent evaluation to be paid from budget line 4.2.

The EU may undertake an ad hoc overall final evaluation and audit covering the two components at the end of implementation if considered necessary. Any such evaluation would be contracted by the EU.

The two contracts shall be subject to the auditing procedures laid down in the financial regulations, rules and directives of that organisation.

4.8. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated before the start of implementation and supported with the budget indicated in section 4.5 above.

The measures shall be implemented either (a) by the Commission, and/or (b) by the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, financing agreements, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

To date the visibility of the EU's support to the Syrian crisis has been insufficient.

The public perception is that the EU is not addressing the Syrian crisis, when in fact it is the largest donor. The lack of visibility to the EU's actions weakens the EU's political traction in the region and its standing in Europe. While EU visibility within Syria should be judged on a case-by-case basis, as it could jeopardise the safety and security of an implementing organisation's staff, any reduction in the visibility should be compensated by an increase in other means, for example by ensuring that beneficiaries are regularly informed by word-to-mouth that the support they are receiving is from the EU. In addition, visibility actions by implementing partners outside the area of conflict should be stepped up. Each implementer will have to draw up a comprehensive visibility and communication plan and submit a copy to the EU Delegation. The related costs will be covered by the budgets of the two contracts.