

# ***ToR FOR SYRIA INITIATIVE EVALUATION***

## **1 The purpose and use of the evaluation.**

The purpose of this participatory, impartial and independent summative evaluation is to examine the results of the Syria Initiative from 2014-17 and its impact on peace and conflict dynamics in the Syrian conflict. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Finland and Norway will use this evaluation when deciding on future funding of the Initiative. The evaluation results will be used to inform the implementation of the ongoing programme where necessary and to feed into the design of the new programme.

## **2 Background**

### ***Country context***

After six years of violence in Syria, the situation can no longer be explained using 2011 narratives, nor idealistic proposals for a fast-paced political transition process. The country is fragmented along multiple and overlapping military, economic, social and moral geographies sustained by a multitude of internal and external priorities and interests. The prospects of a political solution, though a preferred outcome by most international stakeholders, is not likely to take place in the near to medium term. The critical balance of power on the ground, among allies and foes alike, prohibits the emergence of a political solution in the near future. The conflict will be intractable and the major stakeholders are already digging in the sand to brace themselves for the long term waiting game.

Within this context, Syrian communities are striving to survive and are demonstrating heroic resilience in the face of violence. While external observers are busy mapping the demarcation line separating belligerents, ordinary Syrians are putting their lives on the line to negotiate access to life's necessities, attempting to maintain social cohesion and advancing creative initiatives to reduce violence. Individuals, groups, networks and local processes active in bridging the front lines of the conflict constitute indispensable infrastructure for peace without which no top-down process is likely to succeed. The Syria Initiative is a platform to empower these peace assets by linking them together and leveraging their impact.

### ***Syria Initiative***

Syria Initiative aims to empower peace assets in Syria to establish the necessary local, national and international platforms to manage the transformation of the violent conflict raging in the country and shift it to a non-violent political arena. Syria Initiative has a multi-entry approach, which is a multi-layered, multi track and multi-stakeholder one, to the peace building process in Syria.

The Syria Initiative works in partnership with various local, regional and international partners to support the establishment of the social, institutional and economic catalysts for peace building on the ground. The Initiative provides technical, logistical and financial support to the following:

- Supporting peace assets working for community reconciliation programs, negotiating agreements for reduction of violence or developing win-win services to sustain local peace on the ground. Partners include actors from diverse political backgrounds and from all parts of Syria helping them to cooperate, network and share knowledge.

- Working to improve long-term outcomes of political dialogue by linking the efforts of various track 2 and 3 processes and leveraging their outcomes to support the track 1 process. This is done by supporting diverse actors and stakeholders to assess the outputs of these tracks and build their own capacity to engage in dialogue and negotiation.
- Leveraging the efforts of multiple platforms working on advocacy for peace inside and outside Syria. This is done by supporting the creation of common spaces that bring Syrian actors and international partners to mobilize around specific peace agendas and build advocacy partnerships that transcend the political divide in the country.
- Empowering the Syrians to network, advocate and communicate for peace using media, art and culture. Advocating for diversity and local voices to be heard in the media coverage on Syria.

The Syria Initiative is an inclusive platform put at the disposal of the widest possible spectrum of actors working for peace in Syria. It does not proclaim to play the role of a hub nor of replacing any of the other processes, but to forge stronger synergies and linkages. It is supported financially through grants from the governments of Finland and Norway, partnership agreements with UN-Habitat and the Peace Appeal Foundation as well as donations from Finnish Parishes and Churches. The implementing partners are the Common Space Initiative (CSI) of Lebanon, a platform supporting regional dialogues in the Arab region; and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Felm) one of the main Finnish NGO's working on enabling local initiatives for development and peace building world-wide.

Finland has supported the Syria Initiative since August 2014 and Norway since September 2014. The pilot phase run from August 2014 until April 2015. The funding for the second phase is for three years (5/2015 – 4/2018) amounting 3.748.1999 Euros, which makes Syria Initiative currently one of the largest Finnish-funded operative peace building project. Norway also contributed with 583.557 Euros (9/2014 – 6/2016) - and an additional 638.362 Euros (7/2016 – 6/2017).

### 3 Evaluation objectives, questions and criteria

The **objective** of this evaluation is to provide an independent and objective assessment on the performance and results achieved and to determine to what extent the Syria Initiative have reached:

1. Its project level objectives:

The projects direct objective is 'Peace assets in Syria are empowered to establish the necessary local, national and international platforms to manage the transformation of the violent conflict and shifting it to a non-violent political arena'.

Objectives of the three project components and their indicators are:

1. Syrian peace assets take charge of bottom up process in their communities, indicator: Network of 50 peace assets in all over the country and 150 initiatives within 3 years;
2. Syrian stakeholders build their political leadership role through engaged in consensus building and dialogues, indicator: 300 Syrian stakeholders enabled by SI to engage in track 2 and track 3 processes (including preparation, facilitation and documentation);
3. Syrian Peace voices influence into public opinion and decision making, indicator: I) At least one major policy shift towards supporting the multi-entry point process promoted by SI is documented in the US, EU, UN, BRICS. II) Multi-media channels deliver key messages to be

disseminated through IS enabled advocacy alliance to reach at least 100 million recipients around the world.

2. Impact on the broader effects on drivers of conflict beyond the participants and what are the likely longer and sustained impacts either at project/participant level or beyond:

- Syria Initiative's indirect overall objective is 'Syrians lead the change process in an inclusive deeply participatory manner to establish peace and reconstruction'.

The **five DAC evaluation criteria** will be used to assess the programme: relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

The evaluation should respond to the following key **evaluation questions**:

- **Is the main theory of change of the Initiative valid?**
- **Have we strengthened the change instruments and processes at different levels (Geneva, national level, local level)?**
- **Is it possible to change international discourse on Syria? Has the Initiative been able to reach international decision making on policy and funding?**
- **What are the areas to be prioritised in the future?**
- **Is the organisational structure able to support the future work or does it need to be changed?**
- **Has implementation included ongoing conflict analysis (including political economy analysis) and gender analysis to ensure the intervention remains relevant and does not do harm? Does the implementing agency have sufficient capacity for ongoing analysis?**

#### **4 Methodology and approaches**

Because of the very complex conflict situation in Syria it is important that the evaluation team has **complexity perspective** instead of linear approach in the evaluation. Syria Initiative has worked from a multi-entry approach to respond to the rapidly shifting political context. It is expected that the tender will propose and outline a suitable methodology to allow for evaluating the project results in a complex operating environment. Mixed methods for the collecting and analysing data will be used (both qualitative and quantitative). The findings have to be triangulated and validated by using multiple methods.

It is expected that the evaluator will conduct an **evaluation with participatory approach** that will allow participation of project implementers and target beneficiaries in all key evaluation tasks.

*Up to date and in depth conflict analysis* is critical to evaluation of peacebuilding impact to understand and test the *relevance* of the intervention to the conflict drivers. For evaluating peacebuilding impacts, it is not enough to demonstrate that the intervention has contributed to changes in the *context*; the intervention must be relevant to those. Therefore, the evaluators are expected to undertake a participatory conflict analysis and then draft an inception report describing

how they will answer the key evaluation questions. The inception report should include detailed evaluation questions and evaluation matrix, methodology (data collection and data analyses), detailed work plan and division of labour, reporting plans and outline of the final report. Prior to field visit the evaluation will include a desk review of relevant policy documents of Finnish and Norwegian MFA, the Syria Initiative project proposal, annual and quarterly reports and internal review. The evaluation team will visit Lebanon and Turkey to have participatory workshops and interviews with Syria Initiative staff, wider peacebuilding community and key stakeholders/networks as well as programme participants.

## **5 Management arrangements, quality control and reporting**

The evaluation team will manage the evaluation process with support from Syria Initiative's team. The evaluation team will report to the Steering Board composed of representatives of the Norwegian and Finnish Foreign Ministries and executive representatives of CSI and Felm, who will review and comment on the Inception and Final Reports. The evaluation team will complete a field report which will be presented in a participatory workshop to Syria Initiative staff before completing the field mission. The report will be presented to the Steering Board which will review the final report and its recommendations before it is accepted. There will be a formal management response to the evaluation to ensure follow up to the recommendations.

Final output is expected in report format, which should adhere to the Finnish MFA's evaluation instructions. The report should be submitted in English language. Additional outputs include a PowerPoint presentation on key findings and a final report to be circulated in stakeholder meetings.

## **6 Team requirements**

The team selected to undertake the evaluation of Syria Initiative is expected to have a strong track record on evaluation of peacebuilding and civil society capacity building initiatives undertaken in complex environments. The team will have an excellent knowledge of monitoring and evaluation in theory and practice, a good overall understanding of the CSOs contribution to security policy and decision-making processes and adequate capacity in conflict analysis (including political economy analysis) and understanding on the Syrian conflict. At least one member should be fluent in Arabic and all members should be fluent in English and comfortable working under difficult circumstances and should have good communication skills and sensitivity and competence in working with professionals from the front lines of peace building. It is anticipated that the mission team will comprise of the following:

### **International consultant (team leader)**

The team leader is responsible for the quality of the final evaluation. (S)he will author the final evaluation report and lead the final evaluation team through the implementation of the evaluation methodology.

### **National consultant**

The national consultant will give specific insights of the Syrian situation. (S)he will be key in interpreting Syrian culture and language to the team to ensure that findings are clear and sound. (S)he will take the lead in facilitating face-to-face meetings and interviews within the community in order to understand the progress that has been made since project inception.

## **7 Budget and schedule**

The evaluation is to be carried out between 15 August and 15 October 2017. The maximum budget for the evaluation is 40 000 euros.

## **8 Tendering process**

Common Space Initiative and Felm invite tenders from teams with the required skills and experience. The expression of interest should comprise:

- Capacity and experience to meet the requirements of the ToR (including short CV for all team members).
- A broad outline of the approach and methodology that you would use to review the programme (1-2 pages max)
- Indicative budget (0.5 page) covering daily rate(s). Rates should be in EUR and inclusive of VAT.

Please submit completed expressions of interest with all supporting information to [kristiina.rintakoski@felm.org](mailto:kristiina.rintakoski@felm.org) **on 7 August 2017**.