

CASE STUDY

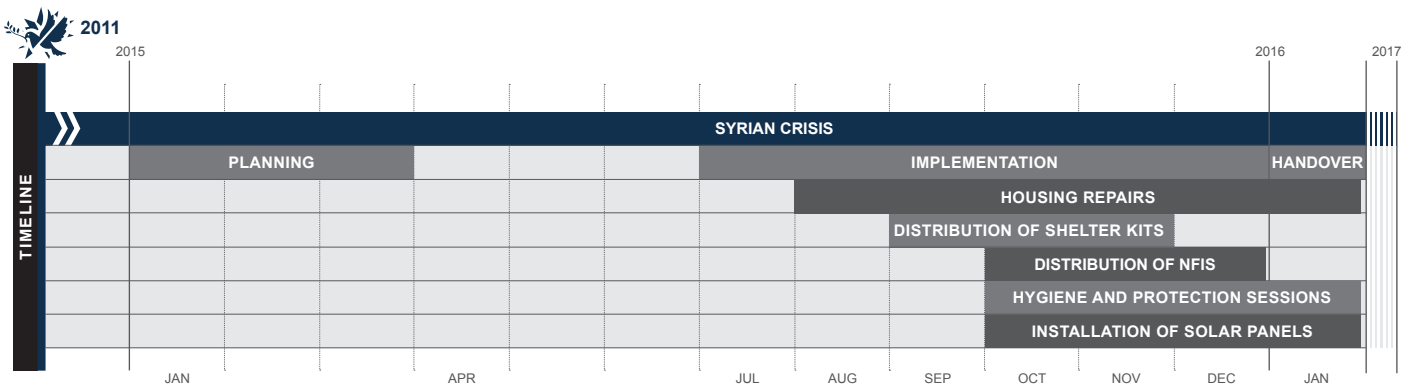
SYRIAN ARAB REP. 2015-2016 / CONFLICT

KEYWORDS: Housing repair, Host family support, NFI distribution, Training, Structural assessment, Gender and GBV mainstreaming, Protection

CRISIS	Syrian conflict, March 2011 - ongoing.	
TOTAL HOUSES DAMAGED	1.2 million damaged (approx.). 400,000 destroyed.	
TOTAL PEOPLE AFFECTED	13.5 million total people in need within the Syrian Arab Republic (6.3 million IDPs, 5.7 million in acute need), including 6 million children. 6.2 million total estimated Syrian refugees.	
PROJECT LOCATIONS	Idlib and Aleppo governorates	
BENEFICIARIES	873 households (552 in Idlib and 321 in Aleppo). 143 (16.4%) were headed by women . Total of 5,722 individuals . 51% female and 52% were children (1-18 years of age).	
PROJECT OUTPUTS	463 houses rehabilitated - 1,460 winter and kitchen NFI kits distributed - 150 solar panels for lighting installed 305 shelter kits provided - 600 people attended 15 awareness sessions on hygiene and protection.	
COSTS	Materials cost per household: USD 226.8 / Project cost per household: USD 322.7 .	
OUTCOME INDICATORS	1/ Beneficiary satisfaction: 46.5% were very satisfied and 35.5% satisfied with the assistance received, in average. 2/ 80% of beneficiaries (IDP and host community) had increased awareness on hygiene and protection topics through mainstreaming activities.	

PROJECT SUMMARY

Linking relief to recovery, the project targeted IDPs and host communities with repairs to the main damaged parts of their houses and distribution of shelter repair kits, heaters, winterization kits and kitchen utensils. All activities were accompanied by awareness sessions on protection as well as hygiene habits.



STRENGTHS

- + Installation of solar panels.
- + Coal heaters: suitable for indoors, easy to maintain and more affordable.
- + Using local materials and labour.
- + Integration of protection and hygiene components.

WEAKNESSES

- Short duration of the project.
- Limited budget allocated for shelter rehabilitation.
- Delays in the procurement and transport of materials.
- Dissatisfaction of most beneficiaries with the shelter repair kits.



Repairs included the replacement of window frames or sealing off of openings.



The extent of the damage to private properties, particularly the housing stock, has reached extreme levels within the Syrian Arab Republic. Before the rehabilitation of each house could start, the technical team had to check the local conditions and structural integrity.

CONTEXT

See overview A.29 for more on the crisis and shelter response within Syria and neighbouring countries.

The level of damage sustained by residential infrastructure in high-conflict zones in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) is evident in the destruction of homes that have been targeted by aerial strikes, tanks, shootings, and other violent mechanisms. The uninhabitable nature of damaged buildings have forced people to reside in inadequate and unsafe spaces, without access to basic amenities, such as electricity, water, and latrines. Many of these makeshift homes lack doors and windows, causing privacy, safety and protection concerns, and exposing households to theft, abuse, and other hazards. Further, given the reduced housing and the amount of displacement, many homes are inhabited by two or more families.

LOCATIONS AND BENEFICIARY SELECTION

The organization and its local partner identified six regions in Aleppo and Idlib governorates marked by significant destruction, as a result of continued attacks. Due to the unstable security situation, selected sites were constantly monitored prior to launching operations, to ensure they were safe for staff to carry out daily operations.

Residents of the selected regions consisted of both host communities and returning IDPs that hoped for stability and safety for their families. The following vulnerability criteria were used:

1. Families hosting IDPs in their home;
2. IDPs living in unfinished buildings due to inability to afford rent;
3. Home was 40-75% destroyed by the conflict and residents cannot repair it;
4. Household with more than eight members and with teenagers who do not have any privacy;
5. The family has disabled/elderly and does not have the means to cover their needs;
6. Female- and child-headed households.

According to these criteria, the organization identified beneficiaries with the local council, while the field team verified the selected households, by conducting visits before the interventions were performed. A second visit was conducted by the technical team, to check that the conditions and structural integrity of the house would allow the project to proceed with the rehabilitation. Finally, MoUs were signed with homeowners, to make sure IDPs could be accommodated for at least one year after the completion of the works, therefore avoiding the risk of eviction and speculation.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project was implemented by the organization from its office in Turkey, in partnership with a local NGO. After recruiting key personnel in the target governorates, the two partners performed community needs assessments, in conjunction with local councils and community groups, and distributed over 500 questionnaires to gather demographic data.

Damage assessments were conducted by a technical team, to categorize homes as mildly, moderately, or severely damaged. Families residing in mildly or moderately damaged homes were provided with shelter repair kits, and received training from the organization's field staff on how to conduct repairs independently. On the other hand, field staff directly repaired homes identified as severely damaged. Repairs were carried out within six months of the assessments, to ensure that families had adequate living conditions in advance of the winter. Specific repairs for each home were made in accordance with the full-home assessment, on a case-by-case basis, with repairs such as the following:

- Conversion of dirt floors to concrete;
- Repair of plumbing/piping of homes in damaged bathrooms;
- Installation of electrical wiring for solar panels for lighting purpose (150 panels were distributed);
- Latrine installation in homes without functional bathrooms;
- Replacement of damaged doors and addition of locks;



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The project included installation of solar panels for selected households.

- Replacement of broken windows;
- Repair of damaged walls and replacement of destroyed walls;
- Repair or replacement of ceilings according to the level of damage.

Beyond the repair of homes, over 50 jobs were created for locals from the target communities who had technical backgrounds, including civil, architectural and electrical engineers, carpenters, construction workers, plumbers and electricians. Brief training sessions were conducted and maintenance kits were designed and distributed to be used in rehabilitation activities.

Additionally, charcoal or firewood for heating units (*Sobas*) was distributed to beneficiary families in lieu of fuel, given the high cost and intermittent availability in Syria and the logistical barriers of cross-border procurement and delivery. Beneficiary families received trainings on the safe usage of heating units, to avoid fire hazards and ensure adequate ventilation for poisonous gases produced.

PROTECTION AND HYGIENE COMPONENTS

Given the scale and devastation of the Syrian conflict, the organization decided to extend the reach of its interventions to a wider target, not only the most vulnerable. Throughout this project, protection awareness and education were integrated into the other activities, viewing physical and psychological protection as a priority, alongside other aid and development efforts.

Protection encompasses both physical safety and the emotional and psychological needs of survivors of conflict. The most pressing physical protection needs are from aerial bombardments, warfare, gender-based violence (GBV), as well as environmental conditions, such as exposure to harsh weather, and other factors that contribute to poor physical health, such as poor sanitation. Creating safe havens within communities, wherever possible (homes, schools, underground sites), and privacy within households, by establishing barriers between genders, can address some key elements of protection.

The most relevant emotional and psychological protection efforts for Syrians requires addressing outlets for grief, anger and aggression, frustration over continued poverty, lack of employment opportunities for both men and women, and creating GBV referral pathways and post-traumatic support.

The organization delivered sessions to families receiving shelter and winter kits, and communities at large, based on the results from questionnaires distributed in the project areas. These sessions focused on 1) human rights; 2) anti-violence, and prevention of domestic abuse and GBV; 3) energy sources; and 4) hygiene and health promotion, and the importance of maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Particularly, the organization emphasized the need for gender equality, shared decision-making between men and women, early marriage prevention, family planning decisions and mutual and self-respect.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project partners coordinated and collaborated with local authorities and consulted IDPs and vulnerable people, particularly to identify the items for the repairs, aiming to use local materials appropriate for the area. All staff recruited for the implementation were from the target communities, and all activities were implemented side by side with the heads of household. Where possible, beneficiaries contributed to the reconstruction efforts. In post-implementation assessments, they identified that participating in the work had a positive effect on their morale, such as giving them the feeling of being able to take care of their family.

PROCUREMENT AND MATERIALS

All contents of the kits were established after coordination amongst other shelter agencies. Items were procured from local markets as much as possible. Most of the construction materials for rehabilitation were purchased nationally, while the kits and a few other items were purchased in Turkey. The delays associated with transport of procured items across the border delayed the implementation of shelter and NFI distributions. As a result, the bulk of activities were carried out during the winter and were then impacted by slight weather-related delays.

In terms of winterization, coal heaters – which can also burn wood and olive pomace – were chosen due to their affordability, as fuel-burning heaters are expensive to maintain. However, the coal heaters came with safety concerns, as families were unfamiliar with how to operate and maintain them, with the main risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. To address this issue, instructions were printed onto aluminium panels that were later attached to the heaters.

SOLAR PANELS

An interagency study in early 2015 revealed that roughly 83% of the electricity operating in the country before the conflict had been cut off. In severely damaged areas, such as the Aleppo district, only 3% of the electricity sources remained active. Limited access to power has resulted in widespread hardships, including the dependence of hospitals and clinics on costly fuel-powered generators, the inability to resume basic daily activities and the increased risks of theft, kidnappings and violence, due to a lack of lighting. Considering the severity of the impact on people's well-being, long-term, sustainable and efficient solution to the power shortage were essential. This prompted the organization to install 150 solar panels on the rooftops of beneficiaries' homes, each providing 100 watts. The free electricity provided by the panels had a significant impact on households' lives, leading the organization to increase the use of this technology for future responses.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED



The project included repairs and upgrades to walls, floors, ceilings, doors and windows and installation of wiring, plumbing and latrines.

WEAKNESSES

- **Short duration of the project**, which affected the quality and extent of the repairs.
- **Limited budget allocated for shelter rehabilitation** activities, which resulted in many households being dropped from the beneficiary list; with more funds, more vulnerable families could have been reached.
- **Delays in the procurement and transport** of materials across the Turkey-Syrian border.
- **Dissatisfaction of most beneficiaries with the shelter repair kits**, as the needs were very diverse for each house, and much greater than what could be solved by the materials provided. Also, some households felt that they did not have the skills to do the repairs, and this led the organization to change its modality.

STRENGTHS

- + **Installing solar panels**, which provided an efficient and renewable energy source.
- + **Distribution of coal heaters**, which were suitable for indoor usage, easier to maintain and more affordable compared to other types.
- + **Using local materials and labour** for implementing rehabilitation activities.
- + **Integration of protection and hygiene components** for the communities at large.

MATERIALS LIST			
Items	Unit	Quantity	Cost per unit
Winterization Kit	Kit	300	USD 107
Kitchen Utensils	Kit	300	USD 31
Shelter repair kit	Kit	305	USD 81
Solar lighting panels	Panel	150	USD 325
Heaters (Soba)	Pcs	430	USD 46
Heating fuel	ton	430	USD 220

LEARNINGS

- **Necessity of conducting trainings for local labours** (on carpentry and construction) to enhance the quality of shelter interventions for future programmes.
- **The importance of finding local alternatives for fuel** used for cooking and heating.
- **The need for more comprehensive projects** that include multisectoral activities, such as shelter, WASH and protection.
- **Ensuring the integration of protection** to improve dignity and taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable (women, elderly, children, etc.) in a culturally appropriate manner.
- **The amount of kits (both repair and winterization) should be decreased** in future projects, in order to increase the funding allocated to each household to cover more critical shelter needs. Following this project, the organization was also **considering the use of voucher and cash-based approaches**, which improve the dignity and choice of beneficiaries, on the precondition that markets are accessible and functioning. Given the unstable situation in Syria, this has proven challenging. However, the organization was piloting a voucher programme for fuel in an area where the market is working.