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# BEYOND BARRIERS

**NW SYRIA CASE STUDY:**  
SYRIA SOLIDARITY FUND (SSF)

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# ADVANCING LOCAL AGENDA AND FUNDING LOCAL ACTORS

The Syria Solidarity Fund (SSF), an alternative Pooled-Fund mechanism, was established following the February 2023 earthquake response and the precarity around the July 2023 non-renewal of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) cross-border resolution. The two events had compounded an already complex humanitarian crisis that caused severe hindrance on the access to humanitarian aid. The non-renewal of the UNSC cross-border resolution, that allowed UN humanitarian aid delivery into Northwest Syria (NWS) through Türkiye without the consent of the Syrian Government, had left NWS populations without aid for weeks.

The initiative aims to address issues related to the delay in advancing the localization agenda and the provision of flexible and high quality funds that are funded directly to local actors. Additionally, with the absence of the UNSC cross-border resolution, an alternative was needed to ensure the continuation of pooled funding. This initiative aims to promote localization by ensuring national/local actors are controlling and managing the funds. Similarly, it also aims to increase the participation, inclusion, and visibility of local actors. The initiative also relies less on traditional methods of capacity strengthening. For example, local actors have flexibility in budgeting, allowing more funds to be designated for organizational capacity strengthening.

The SSF is a funding mechanism that aims to provide flexible funding to local humanitarian actors directly from multiple donors. The pooled fund provides an alternative to traditional disaster responses that are often time-consuming and not suitable to the context. The SSF strives to reach the most vulnerable populations by involving various actors, including typically marginalized actors such as grassroots organizations and volunteer groups. The network also includes members that are both registered and unregistered in Türkiye.

The national pooled fund relies on a localization approach that allows members to submit proposals in Arabic, while simultaneously prioritizing projects that partner with members who are not registered in Türkiye. The Syrian Networks League (SNL) also hired a Syrian fund manager to ensure language and contextual barriers are addressed. The SSF also relies on a multi-needs assessment based programming, where local actors are able to design projects that respond to the multi-dimensional/cross-sectoral needs. The duration of projects can range from 3 to 12 months. The annual budget limit per partner is 250,000 USD.

The SSF also relies on a technical review committee, that is comprised of various sector experts that are best places to provide allocation decisions. The committee, which does not have a fixed number of members, is comprised of experts from the humanitarian response community in northern Syria. The committee is formed on an ad hoc basis for each allocation call. This committee reviews concept notes, eligibility, scoring, and recommends projects for funding. Ultimately, this committee ensures that approved projects are of high quality.

**The initiative was first funded through a leading organization (NEAR) who partnered with the Syrian Networks League (SNL) – an umbrella of 7 different Syrian NGO networks.**

**In its first iteration, the SSF relied on NEAR, as an intermediary, at the request of the SNL, with accompaniment as a capacity strengthening methodology. This was mainly since the earthquakes had impacted NGOs in Türkiye, where most projects are managed from.**

**In its second iteration, however, the SNL is receiving funding from and reporting to donors directly, without NEAR's involvement. This was possible since the SSF enjoys flexibility in budgeting, where the SNL was able to strengthen their organizational capacity.**

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Locally managed pool funds can improve the inclusion, participation, and visibility of local actors.**
- **Funding local actors directly can offer opportunities to a more responsive, impactful, and faster disaster responses.**
- **Flexible budgets allow local actors to identify their capacity strengthening needs, and how to address them.**
- **Locally managed pool funds can overcome language and contextual barriers, ensuring a quicker and faster responses.**
- **Multi-needs assessments can ensure responses are more relevant to local communities and are responding to their identified priorities.**