

Country Assessment

Syria Hub

MENA Resource and Support Hub



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Background

The Country Assessment provides an analysis of the safeguarding landscape in Syria with the aim of informing the design and operationalisation of the Syria Hub.

It provides detail on the national context as well as the key stakeholders, initiatives and resources that already exist to address safeguarding and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) in Syria.

It identifies the strengths, gaps and needs, and provides recommendations on the immediate priorities and opportunities for the Syria Hub.



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Methodology

The information for the assessment was collected using a mixed-methods approach. Methodologies included:

1. A **desk review**
2. An **online survey** with 15 respondents
3. Four **key informant interviews** (KIIs) with 4 Syrian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
4. Twelve **stakeholder consultations**
5. One **focus group discussion** (FGD)

Limitations include a small sample size, respondents from outside the priority target group, an absence of representation from organisations in Damascus and limited qualitative data.



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Context in Syria

The risks and issues that impact on SEAH/safeguarding in Syria include:

- The protracted conflict has led to harmful coping mechanisms and a reliance on humanitarian assistance
- Vulnerable groups, such as women, children and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) struggle to access services, putting them at risk of exploitation
- Sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls by traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors continue to take place



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Context in Syria

The national laws and legislation that impact on SEAH/ safeguarding in Syria include:

- The Syrian Constitution (2012) does not provide for any specific article prohibiting discrimination against women
- The Criminal Code contains articles legitimise the murder of women in cases of “honor killings” (articles 548 and 192) and if committed “in rage” (article 242).
- Syria has ratified some international conventions and protocols however they are not implemented through national legislation. This includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment



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Key findings

The assessment revealed the following:

- Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and safeguarding are **not new** topics to the Syrian context
- **Training remains under-utilised** and falls short of translating into changes to individual organisations or the sector broadly
- **A limited view of safeguarding** which excludes sexual harassment and focuses more on beneficiaries than organisational staff
- Local culture and legal frameworks make **sexual harassment particularly challenging** to address
- Capacity building support seems to be mostly **short-term and for larger, better resourced organisations** in Syria
- Despite some safeguarding knowledge, organisations face **difficulties in implementation** of relevant policies and protocols due to lack of buy-in from senior leadership



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Key recommendations

Active support

- Design activities that require active rather than passive participation like face-to-face trainings or expert support

Long-term engagement

- Invest in long term activities that ensure the continuity of support versus a one-off training or webinar



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Key recommendations

System strengthening

- Design a comprehensive programme that addresses all the standards of PSEA and that work on culture building
- PSEA and safeguarding requires a comprehensive system and should be seen as a continues process

Coordinating with PSEA Network

- Early dialogue and collaboration with the PSEA Network to better understand what has been done and what remains a gap

Key recommendations

Creating space for dialogue across different levels

- Donors and International NGOs to engage in conversation with Syrian NGOs on what is realistic within the Syrian context
- Dialogue through other means where small NGOs can raise and have their concerns addressed

Expanding understanding of safeguarding roles

- Target different levels and departments within an organisation to promote safeguarding as a shared responsibility
- This could be done through a mentorship programme with each module covering a different department



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Thank you!

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