Meeting of the Board
29 June – 2 July 2026
Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Provisional agenda item 11

GCF/B.45/02/Add.03/Rev.01
26 June 2026

Consideration of funding proposals – Addendum III

Funding proposal package for SAP072

Summary

This addendum contains the following six parts:

a) A funding proposal titled "WATER-RES - Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria";
b) No-objection letter issued by the national designated authority(ies) or focal point(s);
c) Secretariat's assessment;
d) Independent Technical Advisory Panel's assessment;
e) Response from the accredited entity to the independent Technical Advisory Panel's assessment; and
f) Gender documentation.

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Simplified Approval Process
Funding Proposal

Project/Programme title:	WATER-RES - Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria
Country(ies):	Syrian Arab Republic
National Designated Authority(ies):	Ministry of Local Administration and Environment Mr. Ahmad Bakaya Deputy Director of Planning and International Cooperation
Accredited Entity:	Acted
Date of first submission:	[2026/01/29]
Date of current submission/ version number	[2026/04/09] [V.03]

GREEN CLIMATE FUND

Contents

Notes to accredited entities on the use of the SAP funding proposal template

- The Simplified Approval Process Pilot Scheme (SAP) supports projects and programmes with a GCF contribution of up to USD 25 million with minimal to no environmental and social risks. Projects and programmes are eligible for SAP if they are ready for scaling up and have the potential for transformation, promoting a paradigm shift to low-emission and climate-resilient development.
- This template is for the SAP funding proposals and is different from the funding proposal template under the standard project and programme cycle. Distinctive features of the SAP funding proposal template are:
  - *Simpler documents*: key documents have been simplified, and presented in a single, up-front list;
  - *Fewer pages*: A shorter form with significantly fewer pages. The total length of funding proposals should **not exceed 20 pages,** annexes can be used to provide details as necessary;
  - *Easier form-filling*: fewer questions and clearer guidance allows more concise and succinct responses for each sub-section, avoiding duplication of information.
- Accredited entities can either directly incorporate information into this proposal, or provide summary information in the proposal with cross-reference to other funding proposal documents such as project appraisal document, pre-feasibility studies, term sheet, legal due diligence report, etc.
- Submitted SAP Pilot Scheme funding proposals will be disclosed simultaneously with submission to the Board, subject to the redaction of any information which may not be disclosed pursuant to the GCF Information Disclosure Policy.
- For more information on how to develop Funding Proposals under the SAP please refer to the Simplified Approval Process (SAP) Funding proposal guidelines.

Please submit the completed form through the GCF Digital Proposal Submission Platform (DPS)[1]

[1] See the DPS user guide for further information on how to access and submit proposals.

A. PROJECT/PROGRAMME SUMMARY

A.1. Has this FP been submitted as a SAP CN before?			Yes ☒ No ☐		
A.2. Is the Environmental and Social Safeguards Category C or I-3?			Yes ☒ No ☐		
A.3. Project or programme	*Indicate whether this FP refers to a combination of several projects (programme) or one project.* ☒ Project ☐ Programme	**A.4. Public or private sector**	☒ Public sector ☐ Private sector	**A.5. RfP**	Not applicable

A.6. Result area(s)	*Check the applicable GCF result area(s) that the overall proposed project/programme targets. For each checked result area(s), indicate the estimated percentage of GCF and Co-financers' budget devoted to it. The total of the percentages when summed should be 100% for GCF and Co-financers' contribution respectively.*		
		GCF Contribution	**Co-financers' contribution**
	Mitigation total	Enter number %	Enter number %
	☐ Energy generation and access	Enter number %	Enter number %
	☐ Low emission transport	Enter number %	Enter number %
	☐ Buildings, cities and industries and appliances	Enter number %	Enter number %
	☐ Forestry and land use	Enter number %	Enter number %
	Adaptation total	Enter number %	Enter number %
	☒ Most vulnerable people and communities	50 %	50 %
	☒ Health and well-being, and food and water security	50 %	50 %
	☐ Infrastructure and built environment	Enter number %	Enter number %
	☐ Ecosystem and ecosystem services	Enter number %	Enter number %

A.7.1. Expected mitigation outcome *(Core indicator 1: GHG emissions reduced, avoided or removed / sequestered)*	N/A	**A.7.2 Expected adaptation outcome** *(Core indicator 2: direct and indirect beneficiaries reached)*	*Indicate total number of direct and indirect beneficiaries*	
			Indicate number of direct beneficiaries 198,620	*Indicate number of indirect beneficiaries* 1,500,000
			Indicate % of direct beneficiaries vis-à-vis total population 0.69%	*Indicate % of indirect beneficiaries vis-à-vis total population* 5.80%
A.8.1. Total investment (GCF + co-finance)	Amount: 27,700,000 USD	**A.8.2 Total GCF funding requested** (max USD 25M)	Amount:25,000,000 USD	
A.9. Type of financial instrument requested for the GCF funding	☒ Grant ☐ Loan ☐ Equity ☐ Guarantees ☐ Others:			

A.10. Implementation period (months)	*Indicate the number of months the project/programme is expected to be implemented. (i.e. From the effective date of the Funded Activity Agreement to the Completion Date)* 60 months	**A.11. Total project/ programme lifespan (years)**	*Indicate the maximum number of years over which the outcomes of the investment are expected to be effective, i.e. to lead to adaptation and/or mitigation results* 10 years
A.12. Expected date of internal approval	*The date that the Accredited Entity obtained/will obtain its own approval to implement the project/ programme, if available* *1/12/2026*	**A.13. Has Readiness or PPF support been used to prepare this FP?**	Yes ☐ No ☒
A.14. Is this FP included in the entity work programme?	Yes ☐ No ☒	**A.15. Is this FP included in the country programme?**	Yes ☐ No ☒
A.16. Executing Entity information	The project will have two co-executing entities: 1. Acted, acting through its Syrian Branch (Acted Syria) 2. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, acting through the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE)		

A.17. Scalability and potential for transformation (max. 100 words)

1. WATER-RES will create a paradigm shift by moving from fragmented water management to locally led, scalable climate-resilient water management in Barada and Awaj basin with a focus on Eastern Ghouta. It builds on Acted's existing efforts, as well the UN-led adaptation fund's efforts to establish groundwater monitoring, predictive water models, climate-informed planning, and inclusive governance in the region. Through three integrated components, 1) strengthening data systems and national and local capacities 2) climate proofing and optimizing public water infrastructure and systems, and 3) promoting climate-smart agriculture and ecosystem-based approaches, the project creates a replicable framework for broader geographic adoption. This approach strengthens operational efficiency, reduces agricultural water demand, and builds institutional capacity at both local and national levels. By establishing scalable systems for improved water management, it increases the resilience and adaptive capacity of 198,620 people, impacting indirectly more than 1.5 million people, and creates pathways for scaling the approach across Syria.

A.18. Project/Programme rationale, objectives and approach (max. 300 words)

2. Syria is among the most climate-vulnerable and water-stressed countries in the Middle East. The Barada and Awaj basin, a critical water source, faces intensifying climate hazards. Multi-year droughts, rising temperatures, and declining groundwater levels are exacerbating water insecurity. These hazards threaten municipal water supplies, and agricultural production particularly in the downstream areas including Eastern Ghouta, where post-conflict vulnerabilities limit adaptive capacity. Without targeted interventions, these climate stresses, compounded by degraded infrastructure, outdated irrigation practices and weakened water governance, will continue to reduce water security and increase social and economic risks.

3. The project's objective is to enhance climate-resilient water security for vulnerable communities through a coordinated approach that links basin-level planning with local action. The project focuses on adaptation by strengthening the capacity of institutions, and communities to manage water resources under increasing climate variability. Component one strengthens institutional capacities for climate-informed water management through improved groundwater and climate data systems, monitoring, and inclusive water governance. This enables more informed planning, coordination, and allocation of water resources. Component two applies this information to improve the performance and resilience of drinking water systems through targeted rehabilitation, efficiency measures, reuse, and strengthened operation and maintenance practices. Component three supports climate-resilient agriculture by promoting efficient irrigation, climate-adapted farming practices, ecosystem-based measures, and stronger farmer organizations, helping to reduce pressure on shared water resources.

4. GCF grant financing is essential due to high climate risk, limited fiscal space, and the 'public good' nature of the proposed investments. Following more than a decade of conflict and large-scale destruction, Syria's fiscal capacity to finance climate adaptation remains constrained. In this context, a GCF grant will serve as a catalyst to establish the systems, foundations, and capacities needed to address critical water security, whilst paving the way for a sustained paradigm shift through scalable models that attract further investment.

B. PROJECT/PROGRAMME DETAILS

B.1. Context and baseline (max. 500 words)

5. After more than a decade of conflict, Syria faces acute climate exposure combined with weakened institutional capacity for water planning and service delivery. The country is already classified as severely water-poor,[2] with a structural water deficit of approximately three billion cubic meters per year. Per-capita water availability has declined from 1,791 m³ in 1995 to 882 m³ in 2005 and is projected to approach 500 m³ by 2050, placing Syria close to absolute water scarcity.[3]

6. These challenges are particularly acute in the Barada and Awaj water basin, one of Syria's most strategically important and climate vulnerable basins. It supplies the majority of freshwater for the Damascus metropolitan area and surrounding peri-urban and rural communities, including Eastern Ghouta. Although the basin represents less than five percent of national renewable water resources, it supports a disproportionately large share of the population (estimated 5,700,000 or 21 percent of the population)[4] and economic activity. As a result, climate shocks translate rapidly into water shortages that have environmental, social and economic impacts.

7. Observed trends in the basin over recent decades indicate rising temperatures (18.4°C average in 2024, up from 17.6°C in 1991–2020), declining precipitation (245 mm in 2024, with historic lows of 123 mm), and severe drops in groundwater and baseflow, with baseflow collapsing by up to 80 percent in 2024–25 compared to the previous decade. At the same time, climate projections for the basin indicate worsening conditions. By 2040–2059, mean annual temperatures are projected to rise by 1.7°C to 2.3°C, while precipitation is expected to decline by 4.1 to 5 percent under medium (SSP2-4.5) and high-emission (SSP5-8.5) scenarios respectively. Extreme events will intensify, with the number of hot days exceeding 40°C projected to increase from 11 up to 21 days per year.[5] Longer dry spells will intensify evapotranspiration, reduce groundwater recharge, and accelerate depletion of already stressed aquifers, increasing risks to domestic water supply, irrigation dependent agriculture, and ecosystem stability across the basin.

8. Municipal systems in the basin are highly sensitive because they rely on winter precipitation, snowmelt recharge, and spring and groundwater-fed supplies (notably Ein al-Fijeh spring). Downstream peri-urban areas such as Eastern Ghouta face compounded vulnerability due to high population density, and dependence on residual flows and shallow groundwater after upstream abstraction for the metropolitan core. Conflict-related damage, high non-revenue water (estimated at 33 percent pre-conflict), proliferation of illegal wells (over two-thirds of existing wells), and limited cost-recovery further constrain reliable service delivery and sustainable abstraction. Recent droughts have caused sharp declines in spring discharge, leading to widespread drinking water supply interruptions and increased reliance on private wells and water trucking,[6] exposing them to higher costs, limited water quality oversight, and elevated public health risks.[7]

9. At the same time, agricultural production systems in the basin are highly vulnerable to climate variability. Most agriculture in Eastern Ghouta, the breadbasket of Damascus, relies on groundwater irrigation. Heat stress, irrigation deficits, and dust storms reduce crop yields and increase water demand.[8,9] Groundwater over abstraction has led to declining water tables and higher pumping costs, reducing farmers' ability to cope with climate shocks. Competition between agricultural and drinking water use intensifies during drought periods, particularly in downstream and peri urban areas.

10. Baseline adaptive capacity remains low and uneven. National water institutions have limited access to integrated climate and hydrological data for the basin, restricting climate-informed water management. Coordination across

[2] Isayed A., Menendez-Aguado J.,M., Jemmali, H., Mahmoud N., (2024), Water Poverty Index over the Past Two Decades: A Comprehensive Review and Future Prospects—The Middle East as a Case Study. Available here.
[3] Rida, F., Aw-Hassan, A., Bruggeman, A., (2004), The impact of food and agricultural policies on groundwater use in Syria. Available here.
[4] Mourad, K.,A., (2012), Marginal and Virtual Water for Sustainable Water Resources Management in Syria. Available here.
[5] World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal, (2025), Syrian Arab Republic. Available here.
[6] International Federation of Red Cross, (2025), Syria Droughts 2025. Available here.
[7] United Nations Children's Fund, (2023), Urban Water Fragility and Intermittent Supply in Syria. Available here.
[8] HortScience, (2025), Heat stress in hydroponic tomato cultivation significantly reduces yield (approx. 37%–98%) under high temperatures. Available here.
[9] Ahmadzai, H., Malhotra, A., Tutundjian, S., (2023), Assessing the impact of sand and dust storm on agriculture: Empirical evidence from Mongolia. Available here.

water, agriculture, environment, and local service delivery remains uneven, and local governance structures face gaps in capacity. Fiscal and technical constraints limit the ability of public authorities to restore or operate climate-resilient water services[10], while households and farmers often lack the resources and technical knowledge to adopt water-efficient and climate adapted practices. Gender disparities further exacerbate these challenges, as women frequently bear the brunt of water scarcity while having limited access to decision-making or technical support. In this context, coping mechanisms remain reactive with limited systematic climate adaptation planning.

11. While other initiatives, such as UN-led Adaptation Fund project in the basin have focused on community water resilience, this project targets both the Barada and Awaj basin and additional communities in Eastern Ghouta. This ensures the projects are geographically complementary and designed to address locally specific climate and water challenges. Lessons from these and other Acted's programmes have informed the approach, particularly on data collection, community engagement, and water-efficient practices, and are further iterated in Annex 02, section 9.3.

B.2.1. Project/Programme description (max. 1,000 words)

12. The proposed project is built on an integrated approach to enhance climate-resilient water security in Syria's Barada and Awaj basin, with a focus on Eastern Ghouta. The project integrates three components: 1) strengthen institutional capacities for climate-risk informed water management, 2) climate proofing and optimizing public water infrastructure and systems (to reduce waste and improve water recycling, and 3) improving water management in agriculture and ecosystem measures. The target beneficiaries include approximately **198,620 direct beneficiaries**, encompassing national and local water institutions, vulnerable communities, and smallholder farmers in Eastern Ghouta, with an estimated 1,500,000 indirect beneficiaries across the basin. Detailed information on beneficiary selection can be found in *Annex 2, section 7.5.*

13. **Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacities for climate-resilient water management (Barada and Awaj basin):** This component will strengthen capacities of key national and local institutions such as MoLAE, Ministry of Energy (MoE), Damascus and Rural Damascus Water Resources Directorate (DRD-WRD), General Commission for Water Resources (GCWR), Land Directorate of Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) as well as community-based governance structures such as Water User Associations (WUA) and a community structure (e.g CSO or municipality associated community group). Public institutions will be supported to improve data collection, processing and use this to make climate-risk informed decisions on water management. Their capacity to secure future financing through evidence-based design of programs will also be strengthened. Community-based structures (i.e. WUAs) will be capacitated to act as liaison between local governments and community members, helping cascade down climate-related information for users, and feed up community/user feedback to inform national planning processes. Thus participatory and technical assessments carried out at project inception and throughout implementation will be continuously leveraged by community structures identified under Component 1 to inform implementation. Multi-stakeholder climate forums and strengthened NDA capacity will support national policy uptake, learning and long-term climate finance, embedding evidence driven decision-making.

14. **Output 1.1: Integrated data systems for measuring, monitoring, and modelling groundwater resources (Barada and Awaj basin):** This output will focus on establishing a current baseline of water demand and availability in the basin, as well as build a future, climate-risk informed model to help decision makers plan for sustainable water use under climate uncertainty. This will include first collecting robust data through: hydrological desk study, water demand mapping using digital technologies such as satellite/remote sensing, GIS mapping, water quality mapping, pumping tests, non-invasive geophysical surveys such as Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) and setting up real-time data collection through existing boreholes/monitoring points. Secondly, based on this data, groundwater flow models will be developed to support sustainable water management, in addition to building cloud-based data management systems. All interventions under this activity will be carried out with the support of a technical consultant. Technical equipment alongside hands on training for at least 175 government staff from relevant departments on installation, operation and maintenance for knowledge transfer and long-term sustainability. The activities included under this output include:
    - Activity 1.1.1: Conduct integrated baseline assessments and establish groundwater monitoring networks
    - Activity 1.1.2: Develop climate-informed groundwater flow models and decision-support tools

15. **Output 1.2: Multi-stakeholder capacity strengthening for climate-informed water management (Eastern Ghouta):** This output will build on the data collected above, and the groundwater flow model developed to strengthen capacity of local stakeholders for evidence-based water management. Firstly, the capacity of at least

[10] Met Office, (2025), Climate risk report for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Available here.

30 DRD-WRD, Environmental Directorate staff and staff from relevant sub-branches will be built to use the data collected for planning such as drought preparedness, water allocation and development of local integrated water management plans, as well as conduct analysis such as climate risk mapping. DRD-WRD will be further supported to run governorate level scenarios, utilizing data from Output 1 through GIS-based dashboards. In addition, capacity of estimated 200 WUA members will be built for internal management and external coordination to act as liaison between community members and local water authorities. This will include equitable and meaningful participation of women. Their knowledge of climate data from Output 1 will also be strengthened, so that communities can make climate-risk informed decisions related to water use. A community structure with demonstrated experience in community facilitation, social accountability and inclusive engagement (e.g CSO, community-elected municipality volunteer board) will also be supported as an independent entity to facilitate at least five community water resilience workshops and collect and amplify community feedback on water resources planning and infrastructure. It will also implement a participatory monitoring tool to ensure accountability. Roles and responsibilities for community structure representation will be formalized under the project's Operations Manual. The activities under this output include:

- Activity 1.2.1: Strengthening capacity of Damascus and Rural Damascus Water Resource Directorate and Environmental Directorate
- Activity 1.2.2: Build local water management accountability systems

16. **Output 1.3: Knowledge sharing and financing for sustained water resilience (national):** This output will focus on building national knowledge networks to mobilize future investments in climate-proofing the water sector in Syria. In order to build national knowledge, awareness and capacities for sustainable water management, the project will: conduct a review of existing water and greywater reuse laws and regulatory framework at a national level, to understand their impacts on users within the target area, develop and disseminate policy briefs on key gaps within existing regulatory frameworks, develop a business case for grey-green infrastructure and set up of at least five multi-stakeholder exchanges for sharing best-practices/ lesson learnt and emerging trends in climate-risk informed water management. In parallel, the project will strengthen the capacity of the NDA and relevant line ministries to engage with international climate finance mechanisms and to develop a pipeline of investment-ready projects.
    - Activity 1.3.1: Participatory review and recommendations to the local water use regulatory framework
    - Activity 1.3.2: Multi-stakeholder forums for knowledge exchange and coordination of investments
    - Activity 1.3.3: Strengthening of the NDA's capacity to catalyse climate financing

17. **Component 2: Improving community water infrastructure and re-use systems (Eastern Ghouta):** This component directly improves climate resilience and water security for vulnerable communities by climate-proofing existing boreholes and water networks that are critical water infrastructure, supporting demand management at household level and strengthening cost recovery systems for improved operation and maintenance. Further, this component will promote greywater recycling at household level to improve circularity in water use. The interventions will be guided by data and governance systems established in Component 1 while real-time data will produce feeds directly into decision-support dashboards and local water management plans. Key beneficiaries include vulnerable households, MoE's Public Corporation for Drinking Water and Sanitation and water utility staff, and communities in Eastern Ghouta. Activities will be delivered in close cooperation with MoLAE and MoE.

18. **Output 2.1: Existing boreholes and networks are climate–proofed and optimised (Eastern Ghouta):** To improve climate-resilient water for vulnerable communities, in partnership with the Public Corporation for Drinking Water and Sanitation and MoLAE, this output will rely on the pumping tests conducted under Output 1.1 to prioritize maintenance for 28 existing public water boreholes and networks. Secondly, to non-revenue water, a leak detection system will be established for the maintained networks. This will include building capacity of 30 staff of the Public Corporation and relevant utilities through use of technologies (portable acoustic leak detection devices, smart bulk meters installed at key inlets and outlets) and strengthened operational procedure (i.e. integration of leak data into existing network management systems) and a community-based leak reporting mechanism. Over 168,000 people residing within the improved water service coverasge area will directly benefit. Thirdly, to ensure sustainability of the interventions on the boreholes and networks, the project will strengthen capacities of relevant stakeholders on operation and maintenance including on cost recovery. The focus will be on practical, transparent cost-recovery mechanisms that support routine O&M while remaining sensitive to affordability and vulnerability. This will be supported through installation of metering devices for at least 20,000 households. To further strengthen the cost-recovery initiatives of the local utilities, a community awareness campaign will be developed focused on increasing network subscriptions.
    - Activity 2.1.1: Climate-proof and upgrade public priority drinking water infrastructure

- Activity 2.1.2: Establish a robust leak detection and response system
- Activity 2.1.3: Strengthen water resource directorate capacities for O&M and cost recovery

19. **Output 2.2: Improved water-use efficiency and re-use in vulnerable communities (Eastern Ghouta):** To further climate proof the water supply, borehole and network level interventions will be complemented by household level interventions to improve water use efficiency and water recycling in close cooperation with MoLAE and MoE. Up to 19,500 households and 25 institutions in the target communities will benefit from the provision of water efficient fixtures. To change community perspective on water recycling and reuse and trigger long-term behaviour change, 400 households and 25 institutions will benefit from installation of small-scale greywater recycling systems. This will be complemented by robust training on operation and maintenance to ensure safe handling and management of the systems. The system design will take into perspective the differentiated needs of men and women to ensure no additional burdens are placed on women's roles within the household. For these households and institutions, non-potable water reuse will be further promoted for public green spaces, home gardens and fodder for livestock.
    - Activity 2.2.1: Installation of water efficient fixtures
    - Activity 2.2.2: Installation of small-scale greywater recycling systems for household reuse

20. **Component 3: Supporting climate-resilient agriculture (Eastern Ghouta):** This component enhances the climate resilience of agricultural production and local ecosystems and strengthens Components 1 and 2 by aligning farmer decisions. It supports local extension services, agricultural research centres and nurseries under the management of MoA, and farmers to scale up uptake of efficient irrigation, climate-adapted practices, use of drought-resistant crops, and small-scale water harvesting. Locally led financing options for the adoption of these practices will help creating lasting impacts, reinforcing the paradigm shift. Ecosystem-based measures, such as infiltration trenches and re-vegetation, will improve groundwater percolation in farming communities and soil management. Key beneficiaries include smallholder farmers, farmer associations, extension, research centre and public nursery workers, agri-businesses as well as vulnerable households. Activities will be delivered in close cooperation with MoLAE and MoA.

21. **Output 3.1: Smallholder farmers are supported to improve water management (Eastern Ghouta):** This output will focus on building capacities of local farming communities and improving technology uptake/ finance for climate resilient agricultural systems. This will be done through first, building capacity of 10 farmer associations to monitor water demand/supply management through incorporating data from Component 1, including data from pumping tests (irrigation abstraction surveys) and provision of tools such as flow meters. Second, the project will work with and through extension and agricultural research centres to establish demonstration plots and train at least 2,000 local farmers on sustainable farming practices that reduce water use and improve climate-resilient land management. Capacities of extension services and agricultural research centre will be strengthened through ToT training for 40 staff and provision of equipment to ensure the long-term functionality. Third, in kind support and training for at least 50 staff will be provided to the General Organisation for Seed Multiplication (GOSM), and public nurseries in Rural Damascus for strengthen a local supply of drought resistant seeds. Fourth, at least 2,060 farmers will be supported with improved access to capital, for implementing such water efficient and climate-resilient agricultural practices, through either cost-sharing grants or the establishment of a revolving grant fund in cooperation with a local financial institution. Inclusion will be ensured by leveraging community structures and feedback (Output 1.2) to ground-truth criteria for technical assistance; all capacity building will ensure accessibility and suitability for women and youth in terms of financial and digital literacy, including gender-inclusive measures; and the two-track financing structure is designed around capacity, not exclusion. Micro-farmers access cost-sharing grants, ensuring the most vulnerable receive direct support without repayment obligations. The revolving grant fund (RGF), by contrast, targets small- and medium-scale farmers with greater capacity to engage with the on-granting mechanism. An Operations Manual will govern the RGF, setting out its governance and operating procedures alongside explicit gender, inclusion, and PSEAH considerations. The activities included under this output include:
    - Activity 3.1.1: Capacity-building for farmer associations
    - Activity 3.1.2: Training on climate adapted agricultural practices
    - Activity 3.1.3: Support to government nurseries for increased supply of drought resistant crop seeds
    - Activity 3.1.4: Establish locally driven financing models

22. **Output 3.2: Community level ecosystem-based adaptations to improve aquifer recharge (Eastern Ghouta):** This output will focus on improving water percolation and retention in farming communities through Ecosystem based Approaches (EbA). Two sets of activities will be carried out. Firstly, the project will work closely with DRD-

WRD and Environmental Directorate to improve groundwater recharge and enhance infiltration of water into aquifers through rehabilitation of at least 50 existing recharge assets (e.g. wells) or establishment of infiltration trenches where feasible. Clear O&M plans will also be developed to ensure their sustainability. Community consultations facilitated under Outcome 1 will enable consultations with diverse user groups to ensure O&M reflect on-the-ground realities. Following this, MoA's nurseries in Eastern Ghouta will be supported to strengthen production of pasture and forest seedlings through training of at least 60 staff and technicians and provision of equipment. These will be used for revegetation on public lands, thus improving overall land quality and leading to improved water retention in these areas. Additionally, an educational site for sustainable land revegetation will be established in cooperation with MoA and MoLAE to provide a practical learning space showcasing locally appropriate species and techniques that support ecosystem restoration under climate stress for at least 500 trainees. The activities included under this component include:

- Activity 3.2.1: Enhance natural infiltration
- Activity 3.2.2: Restore degraded public land through revegetation with native plants

23. Further information on the project design, theory of change, and activities/sub-activities are detailed in *Annex 2, Section 7.*

B.2.2. Outcome mapping to GCF results areas and co-benefits categorization

Outcome number	GCF Mitigation Results Area (MRA 1-4)				GCF Adaptation Results Area (ARA 1-4)			
	MRA 1 Energy generation and access	**MRA 2** Low-emission transport	**MRA 3** Building, cities, industries, appliances	**MRA 4** Forestry and land use	**ARA 1** Most vulnerable people and communities	**ARA 2** Health, well-being, food and water security	**ARA 3** Infrastructure and built environment	**ARA 4** Ecosystems and ecosystem services
Outcome 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
Outcome 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
Outcome 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐

Co-benefit number	Co-benefit					
	Environmental	**Social**	**Economic**	**Gender**	**Adaptation**	**Mitigation**
Co-benefit 1	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Co-benefit 2	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐

B.3. Implementation / institutional arrangements (max. 750 words)

24. The project will be implemented under **Acted**, serving as the **Accredited Entity (AE)** and grant holder, assuming full fiduciary responsibility in accordance with the Funded Activity Agreement (FAA) and GCF Standard Conditions. As AE, Acted will oversee project appraisal, administrative, financial, and technical management; fiduciary management; monitoring and evaluation; and project closure and knowledge capture. These functions will be coordinated by Acted Headquarters (Paris) through a dedicated Project Task Force (PTF), including a Finance Manager, Lead Technical Advisor, and Grant Manager, supported by HQ technical specialists. The PTF will operate separately from Acted Syria's Executing Entity (EE) functions, in line with GCF Board Decision B.19/09, to maintain accountability and objectivity.

25. The project will be implemented through two EEs: The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, acting through **MoLAE** and **Acted Syria**, with clear roles, responsibilities, and coordination formalized through implementation agreements in line with GCF policies. **MoLAE** will execute activities related to institutional capacity building, knowledge management, and coordination with line ministries and public institutions, including MoA and MoE's General Commission for Water Resources. As co-EE, MoLAE will likewise contribute to monitoring and evaluation activities. Implementation will be led by the Climate Change Directorate, ensuring alignment with national policies and integration of climate considerations into local planning and investment processes. As NDA to the GCF, MoLAE will also support national coordination, documentation and dissemination of lessons learnt, and strengthen institutional capacity for leveraging climate finance. This dual role ensures that project outcomes inform national policy and contribute to long-term climate-resilient development pathways.

26. **Acted, acting through its local branch, Acted Syria,** brings extensive operational presence and technical experience, active in the country since 2012 with offices in Damascus and field bases across multiple governorates. Its programming focuses on access to basic services, climate-resilient water management, sustainable livelihoods, and strengthening local capacities. With a strong track record in climate adaptation, including hydrogeological assessments and groundwater management, Acted Syria will execute activities related to capacity transfer, climate proofing of water infrastructure, climate adapted agricultural practices and community engagement. Acted Syria will also utilize its robust monitoring, evaluation, gender equality, social inclusion, and environmental safeguards to oversee alignment with GCF investment.

27. To ensure national ownership and multi-stakeholder coordination, a **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established for the duration of the project. Chaired by MoLAE, the PSC will include representatives from key line ministries (MoE, MoA, Emergency and Disaster Management, Finance), Acted Syria, and the Project Director. The PSC will meet at minimum on an annual basis and in accordance with project developments to provide strategic guidance, review work plans and budgets, appraise implementation progress, and ensure alignment with national climate and water priorities.

28. A dedicated **Project Management Unit (PMU)**, chaired by the Project Director, will provide operational and programmatic oversight. The PMU will include sub-units for finance, monitoring, evaluation, appraisal, learning (MEAL), and partnerships. Convening at least quarterly in Damascus, the PMU will coordinate implementation across components, ensure technical standards, prepare materials for the PSC, and address operational challenges. The specific Acted/MoLAE staffing composition of the PMU will be defined during the project inception phase. Further, day-to-day implementation and reporting to the PMU will be handled by the project staff within the project implementation teams of MoLAE, Acted and implementing partners.

29. A **Technical Working Group (TWG)** will provide technical oversight and advisory support to the PMU. Composed of designated technical focal points from the NDA, relevant line ministries, and EEs, the TWG will meet quarterly or as needed to review methodologies, technical designs, safeguards, and quality assurance. The TWG will provide recommendations but hold no fiduciary or procurement authority; operational and strategic decisions remain with the PMU and PSC respectively.

30. Further, the locally led, participatory approach embedded in the project design will empower community structures to meaningfully inform planning, implementation, and adaptive management of water and agricultural interventions. The project will institutionalise community voice and accountability through sub-grants to local civil society organisations to facilitate consultations and participatory monitoring, ensuring transparency and equitable water management. Thus, community feedback and monitoring will be systematically channelled through the PMU to inform adaptive management decisions and, where necessary, strategic guidance by the PSC.

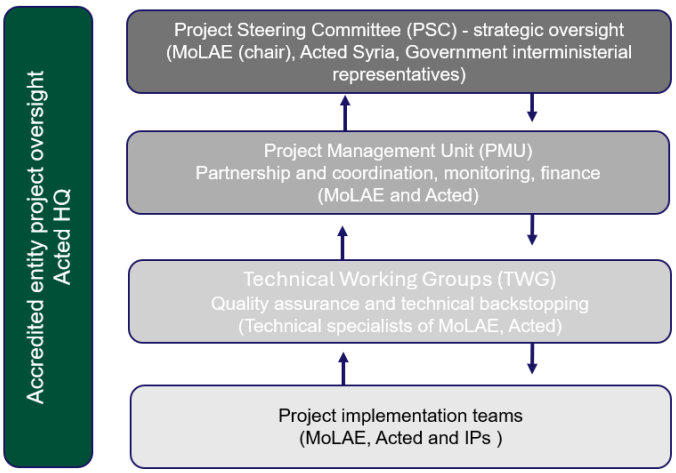

Figure 1: Project governance structure

31. GCF funds will be disbursed to Acted (HQ) in its capacity as AE and flow to the EEs – the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, acting through MoLAE and Acted Syria, following established fiduciary and reporting procedures. The flow of funds between Acted (HQ) and Acted Syria will follow normal Acted financial procedures. The transfer of funds between Acted (HQ) and MoLAE will be governed by a project-specific Subsidiary Agreement to be concluded for the purposes of the AMA. This Subsidiary Agreement will include provisions addressing MoLAE's co-financing contribution, including the allocation and use of such funds, reporting requirements, and the respective roles and liabilities of the parties in relation to both GCF financing and co-financing. MoLAE and Acted Syria will establish sub-grant agreements with third-party implementers, including government partners, community structures, and the local financial institution, for the implementation of project activities, ensuring fiduciary integrity, transparency, and full alignment with GCF financial management standards. These sub-grants are intended to provide the necessary legal and programmatic framework governing the relationship between MoLAE, as Executing Entity, and the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Energy, as well as between Acted and a local financial institution in relation to the implementation and oversight of the RGF, in addition to supporting the co-development and application of participatory community monitoring tools through local organisations. Acted as EE will also direct agreements with final beneficiaries (selected smallholder farmers and micro-producers) for cost-sharing grants. These agreements govern the provision of cost-sharing grants, disbursed in instalments against approved business plans and verified milestones. All financial transfers will be conducted through formal banking channels and subject to verification and monitoring requirements. Sub-grant beneficaries will be fully accountable for the use of funds, reporting results and achievements to the relevant EE, and ensuring full transparency in project expenditures. Any sub-granting by the EE will be fully aligned and follow the detailed scope of work for activities as outlined in Section 7 of Annex 2. This arrangement for the flow of funds will ensure that MoLAE is empowered to manage their funding and scope of work directly, while also helping to strengthen their experience, expertise, and track record in managing climate finance funds.

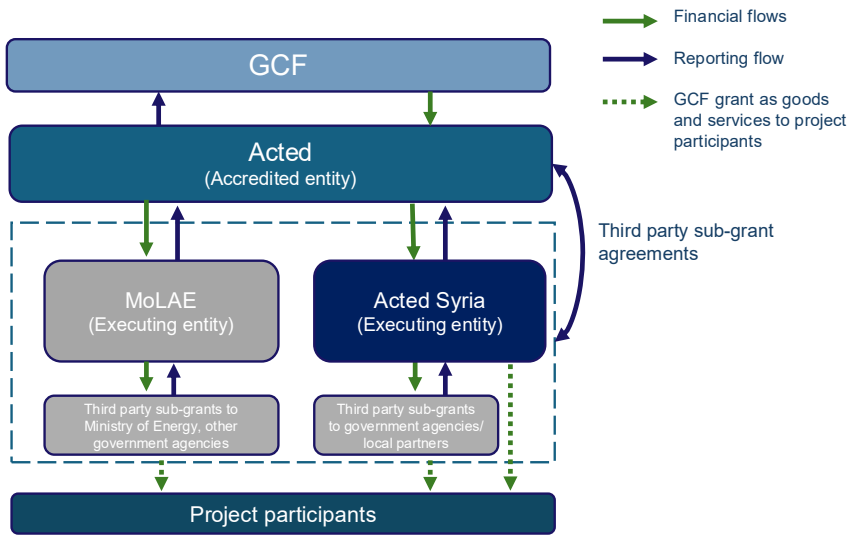

Figure 2: Flow of funds

C. FINANCING INFORMATION

C.1. Total financing

(a) Requested GCF funding (i + ii + iii + iv + v + vi)	Total Amount: 25		Currency: million USD ($)	
GCF Financial Instrument	**Amount**	**Currency**	**Tenor & grace**	**Pricing**
(i) Senior loans	Enter amount	Options	Enter years	Enter %
(ii) Subordinated loans	Enter amount	Options	Enter years	Enter %
(iii) Equity	Enter amount	Options		Enter % equity return
(iv) Guarantees	Enter amount	Options	Enter years	
(v) Reimbursable grants	Enter amount	Options	Enter years	
(vi) Grants	25	million USD ($)		

(b) Co-financing information	**Total amount**			**Currency**		
	2.7			million USD ($)		
Name of institution	**Financial instrument**	**Amount**	**Currency**	**Tenor & Grace**	**Pricing**	**Seniority**
Syrian Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE)	In kind	1	million USD ($)	Enter years Enter years	Enter %	Options
Acted Syria	Grant	1.7	million USD ($)	Enter years Enter years	Enter %	Options

Click here to enter text.	Options	Enter amount	Options	Enter years Enter years	Enter %	Options

(c) Total investment (c) = (a)+(b)	Amount	Currency
	27.7	million USD ($)
(d) Co-financing ratio (d) = (b)/(a)	10.8%	
(e) Other financing arrangements for the project/programme (max ½ page)	*N/A*	

C.2. Financing by component

Component	Output	Indicative cost million USD ($)	GCF financing		Co-financing		
			Amount million USD ($)	Financial Instrument	Amount million USD ($)	Financial Instrument	Name of Institutions
Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacities for climate-resilient water management (Barada and Awaj basin)	Output 1.1: Integrated data systems for measuring, monitoring, and modelling groundwater resources (Barada and Awaj basin)	4,081,830.90 USD	3,699,138.93 USD	Grants	239,834.83 USD	Grants	Acted
					142,857.14 USD	In kind	MoLAE
	Output 1.2: Multi-stakeholder capacity strengthening for climate-informed water management (Eastern Ghouta)	841,982.19 USD	742,418.94 USD	Grants	28,134.67 USD	Grants	Acted
					71,428.57 USD	In kind	MoLAE
	Output 1.3 Knowledge sharing and financing for sustained water resilience (national)	1,728,168.05 USD	1,641,091.89 USD	Grants	87,076.17 USD	Grants	Acted
Component 2 Improving community water infrastructure and re-use systems (Eastern Ghouta)	Output 2.1: Existing boreholes and networks are climate–proofed and optimised (Eastern Ghouta)	8,761,339.61 USD	8,019,179.93 USD	Grants	527,873.96 USD	Grants	Acted
					214,285.71 USD	In kind	MoLAE
	Output 2.2 Improved water use efficiency and re-use in vulnerable communities (Eastern Ghouta)	1,738,541.90 USD	1,506,145.79 USD	Grants	89,538.96 USD	Grants	Acted
					142,857.14 USD	In kind	MoLAE
Component 3: Supporting climate-resilient agriculture (Eastern Ghouta)	Output 3.1 Smallholder farmers are supported to improve water management (Eastern Ghouta)	6,510,077.74 USD	5,854,013.78 USD	Grants	370,349.68 USD	Grants	Acted
					285,714.29 USD	In kind	MoLAE
	Output 3.2: Community level ecosystem-based adaptations to improve aquifer recharge (Eastern Ghouta)	1,687,114.64 USD	1,458,985.78 USD	Grants	85,271.72 USD	Grants	Acted
					142,857.14 USD	In kind	MoLAE

MEAL	MEAL	715,944.96 USD	579,024.96 USD	Grants	136,920.00 USD	Grants	Acted
Project Management Cost	PMC	1,385,000.01 USD	1,250,000.00 USD	Grants	135,000.01 USD	Grants	Acted
Contingency	Contingency	250,000.00 USD	250,000.00 USD	Grants	Enter amount	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Indicative total cost (USD)		27,700,000 USD	25,000,000 USD		2,700,000 USD		

C.3 Capacity Building and Technology development/transfer

C.3.1 Does GCF funding finance Capacity building activities?	Amount: 485,545 USD
C.3.2. Does GCF funding finance Technology development/transfer?	Amount: 5,884,925 USD

C.4. Justification for GCF funding request (max. 500 words)

32. Syria faces acute water insecurity exacerbated by 14 years of conflict, which has weakened institutions. Syria ranks fourth on the 2024 Fragile State Index, 158 on the ND-GAIN Index, and ranks high risk on the INFORM Climate Change Risk Index 2025, signalling high climate exposure and extremely low adaptive capacity.

33. Climate-resilient water management in Syria requires substantial financing. While the government recognizes the urgency, national resources are limited after years of economic contraction, with GDP at half 2010 levels, and the country now classified as low-income. The country has experienced territorial fragmentation, the growth of the informal economy and tax revenues are 10 percent of pre-conflict levels.[11] This limits the ability of the government to invest in reconstruction efforts, key when half of the country's infrastructure has been destroyed.[12] With the central bank reporting debt of 128 percent of GDP,[13] Syrian financial system faces challenges that have the potential to impede recovery and limit government investment. Early policy adjustments have opened opportunities for private investment and fiscal revitalization. Authorities are prioritizing investment-friendly reforms, simplified business procedures, and private-sector development to support reconstruction and rebuild institutional trust.[14] Despite these efforts, government or private investment in local water infrastructure at the scale required will not be likely for some years.

34. GCF investments will allow provide seed funding to build data systems that would not attract private investments and for which there are no public funds currently available. Once this data systems are operational, we can generate an evidence base for de-risking infrastructure investments in the country. Although the country is experiencing a transitional climate, early investment in these public goods provides the evidence needed to position the country for further public/private investment from countries around the world. By establishing credible data, operational models, and tested adaptation approaches, the project reduces uncertainty and creates the enabling conditions for future public and concessional investment in the water sector.

35. To improve investments in climate-resilient agriculture, the project will pilot approaches through demonstration plots, allowing farmers to develop a compendium of best practices. This will then be scaled up through capital instruments such as grants and the revolving grant fund through a local financial institution. GCF funding will allow for initial testing of different approaches to identify adaptation practices best suited to the local context.

36. The grant also represents a critical step toward long-term, sustainable water security and replicable climate resilience in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Additionally, GCF financing will provide a key opportunity to strengthen the capacity of Syria's NDA, MoLAE, to engage effectively with the fund and develop a critical pipeline

[11] World Bank, (2025), Syria Macro- Fiscal Assessment. Available here.
[12] United Nations Development Program, (2025), The Impact of the Conflict in Syria: A Devastated Economy, Pervasive Poverty and a Challenging Road Ahead to Social and Economic Recovery. Available here.
[13] World Bank, (2022), The Welfare of Syrian Households after a Decade of Conflict. Available here.
[14] Reuters, (2025), Syria's finance minister says foreign investors welcome after US sanctions move. Available here.

of eligible projects. This project provides the opportunity for MoLAE, under the direct access entity accreditation process, to gain track record with GCF funding and other institutional requirements, as an Executing Entity.

C.5. Exit strategy (max. 300 words)

37. The project impacts are secured through building long term, climate resilient water management capacities within authorities (ministries, local directorates of the MoLAE/MoE, extension centres of MoA) and community structures (WUAs, farmers associations), ensuring sustained benefits and ownership beyond the project duration and target area.

38. Under **Component 1**, General Commission for Water Resources (GCWR), DRD-WRD, and technical departments will operate digital water information systems, and continue to utilize SOPs, and training to manage groundwater models, water-quality maps, and cloud-based platforms. By the project end, GCWR will independently operate and update these systems without reliance on external technical assistance. Inclusive WUAs and community-led mechanisms embed devolved decision-making will continue to inform DRD-WRD planning beyond the project. Inclusive multi-stakeholder forums and strengthened NDA (MoLAE) capacity will embed evidence-based decision-making, support national policy uptake, and facilitate access to future climate finance.

39. Under **Component 2**, all climate-proofed infrastructure, including rehabilitated boreholes, upgraded network sections, leak detection systems, and metering devices, will be handed over to local water departments (namely Public Corporation for Drinking Water and Sanitation). Solarization and early leak detection measures will further optimize energy use and system efficiency. O&M protocols for leak detection, flow meters, and small-scale greywater recycling units will be institutionalised within local authorities, ensuring sustained functionality. Installation of smart metering for improved services will strengthen cost-recovery mechanisms to ensure long-term O&M.

40. Under **Component 3**, farmer associations and agricultural extension services will retain skills and tools for climate-resilient water management (e.g. soil moisture meters) and farming practices. Demonstration plots will remain as permanent learning hubs managed by extension centres. The revolving fund grant will be sustained by the local financial institution under both MoA and MoF oversight, ensuring continuous financing for farmers adopting resilient practices. Ecosystem-based adaptation assets, namely infiltration trenches and revegetated public land, will be maintained by the DRD-WRD and the Badia Management and Development Authority (BMDA) in line with co-developed O&M plans.

C.6. Financial management/procurement (max. 300 words)

41. Financial management of the project will be overseen by Acted HQ, in its role as the AE, and implemented by the EEs (MoLAE, Acted Syria) in accordance with clearly defined roles, internal delegation of authority, and robust internal control procedures. GCF funds will be managed through secure international and local banking channels, using phased disbursements based on validated cash-flow forecasts. This approach ensures sufficient liquidity for implementation while limiting exposure to foreign exchange volatility and fiduciary risk.

42. Acted applies standardized financial management systems covering budget planning, authorization, accounting, expenditure verification, and reporting. All expenditures are subject to segregation of duties, multi-level approvals, and supporting documentation to ensure traceability and auditability. Financial reporting to GCF is conducted in USD, in line with international accounting standards and Acted's internal financial policies. Foreign exchange risks are actively monitored through regular budget follow-up, expenditure forecasting, and variance analysis, with coordination between finance, procurement, and programming teams to anticipate and manage cost fluctuations. Where material risks are identified, mitigation measures will be applied, in coordination with GCF.

43. Procurement and contracting are governed by Acted's global procurement framework – which emphasizes transparency, competition, value for money, and ethical conduct – whilst ensuring alignment with Syrian government guidance and standards. Procurement methods are selected based on defined thresholds, market conditions, and risk levels, with clear documentation and approval requirements proportionate to contract value and complexity. Conflict-of-interest declarations, segregation of roles, and record-keeping requirements are systematically applied. All suppliers, contractors, and partners undergo due diligence and sanctions screening prior to contracting, and contractual agreements clearly define financial, reporting, and compliance obligations.

44. Third-party engagements, including service contracts, sub-grants, and partnership agreements, are managed through formal agreements aligned with GCF requirements. Acted applies a risk-based Partner Due Diligence

framework, complemented by ongoing oversight through financial reporting, monitoring visits, and performance reviews. As an Executing Entity, MoLAE manages downstream contractual arrangements with relevant sectoral ministries in accordance with national procedures, while remaining subject to project-level oversight and coordination mechanisms established under the Subsidiary Agreement concluded for the purposes of the AMA..

45. In addition to these internal controls, the project's financial statements will be subject to annual independent external audits, conducted in accordance with internationally recognized accounting and auditing standards. Audited financial statements will be submitted to GCF within four months of the fiscal year-end, in line with Acted's Accreditation Master Agreement. At the institutional level, Acted publishes annually audited financial statements prepared under GAAP and audited by a well-established external audit firm, which are publicly available. Together, these financial management, procurement, and audit arrangements ensure that GCF funds are used solely for their intended purposes and that fiduciary risks are effectively managed throughout project implementation.

D. EXPECTED PERFORMANCE AGAINST INVESTMENT CRITERIA

D.1. Impact potential (max. 300 words)

46. The project is designed to have significant adaptation impact by addressing acute water scarcity in Syria's most climate-exposed and densely populated basins - Barada and Awaj basin, a region experiencing severe climate-induced drought and groundwater depletion.

47. The project will contribute to ARA 1: Most vulnerable people and communities, and ARA 2: Health food and water security, in line with the GCF core indicators reported in the Logical Framework (Annex 2a).

48. Under ARA 1, core indicator 2, at least 198,620 people will directly benefit from enhanced institutional capacity for climate-informed decision-making, strengthened local water governance and accountability mechanisms, improved access to reliable water services, and climate-adapted agricultural support. These will include government officials, participants in water-governance and accountability activities; households with improved access to drinking water services, water-efficient household fixtures, greywater reuse systems; and participants in project-supported agricultural training, financing mechanisms and ecosystem-based services. Indirectly, 1.5 million people within the broader basin will benefit from improved water management through groundwater modelling and climate informed planning.

49. ARA 2, supplementary indicator 2.3, 168,000 individuals residing within the service coverage area of rehabilitated or climate-proofed drinking water systems will experience improved water availability.

50. ARA 2, supplementary indicator 2.5. 12,360 people will benefit from project-supported grants or on-grants to adopt climate-resilient agricultural and ecosystem-based practices.

51. The project contributes to increased climate resilient sustainable development by addressing the major drivers of water scarcity: uneven management of water resources and inefficient use of water in agricultural production.

52. The project will work at the local level in the Barada and Awaj basins to gather data, develop a groundwater monitoring model, and strengthen the capacities of users and local water authorities to apply it for climate informed planning. This localized model will support informed decision making in the face of current and future climate induced water scarcity, while also serving as a transferable approach that can guide the development of water management plans across the six other water basins in Syria. The Barada and Awaj basin represent one of the most vulnerable water basins in Syria, with respect to exposure (population served) and risk (to climate hazards). Improved management of groundwater in this basin will have a clear and measurable impact on the health and wellbeing of the target population.

D.2. Paradigm shift potential (max. 300 words)

53. The project represents a paradigm shift in climate-resilient water management in Syria, moving from an uneven and reactive approach toward an integrated, locally led approach. The theory of change contends that: **IF** vulnerable, water-scarce communities are empowered to lead locally driven climate adaptation using climate and groundwater data, inclusive governance, and sustainable water and agricultural practices **AND** are supported by resilient infrastructure and institutions **THEN** water security will improve, sustain agricultural productivity and reduce climate vulnerability **BECAUSE** locally led, data-informed decisions enable efficient, equitable, and anticipatory water and agricultural management.

54. This shift is cultivated through an interlinked results chain of activities, outputs, and outcomes. Component 1 builds institutional capacities and climate-informed data systems; Component 2 operationalises this foundation for resilient service delivery through the climate-proofing of water infrastructure and promotion of efficient practices; and Component 3 aligns agricultural water use with basin-level sustainability by supporting water efficiency and re-use. Together, these outcomes foster a drive toward the project paradigm shift of moving Syria's water management toward an integrated, anticipatory, and locally owned system.

55. **Scalability:** The project's modular, basin-level design creates scalable models for water governance, climate-proofed infrastructure, and agricultural demand management. Standardised protocols, packaged solutions, and the institutionalisation of skills, knowledge, and equipment within MoLAE and GCWR provide transferable frameworks for replication across other water-scarce basins in Syria.

56. **Knowledge sharing:** Learning and knowledge exchange is embedded across all activities, from the co-led implementation alongside national and local institutions to the peer-to-peer hubs fostered via community structures (WUAs, farmer associations). Outcome 1 incorporates specific provisions to consolidate and share lessons learned through MoLAE-led forums, fostering the systematic dissemination of evidence-based practices across governance levels.

57. **Enabling environment:** By embedding climate data management, participatory governance and basin-level planning within MoLAE, MoE's GCWR, MoA, and local entities, the project creates the institutional foundations for sustained climate-informed water governance, mainstreaming climate risk considerations into water planning processes and strengthening regulatory linkages between national and local actors.

D.3. Sustainable development (max. 300 words)

58. The project establishes a holistic framework for climate-resilient water management that provides wide-ranging sustainable development co-benefits and directly contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 13 Climate Action
- SDG 2 Zero Hunger
- SDG 15 Life on Land
- SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 5 Gender Equality
- SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

59. **Economic co-benefits:** Reduced water losses through leak detection and efficient irrigation, sustained agricultural productivity through climate-resilient practices, and the establishment of locally driven finance models create pathways for long-term economic resilience and sustained livelihoods protection measures.

60. **Gender-sensitive development benefits:** By improving the reliability of community water sources and introducing greywater reuse systems for households, the project reduces the time burden of water collection and management that disproportionately falls on women and girls. Women will be actively represented in governance structures and will be empowered through technical training to become leaders in water resource management.

61. The project's gender action plan (Annex 4) provides detailed measures to ensure the benefits outlined above are met, namely that meaningful participation from women (including representation of women engaged in Women-Led Organizations) is ensured whilst addressing differentiated needs. Key actions of the plan that are aligned with GCF's Gender Policy include:

- Conducting a dedicated Gender and PSEAH baseline assessment, integrated into the overall project baseline and workplan
- Sustaining minimum participation targets for women in WUAs and farmer associations (20-30%)
- Prioritising female-headed households for water-efficient fixtures and greywater systems under Component 2 (30%)
- Ensuring women's access to climate-adapted agricultural training and financing under Component 3 (30%)
- Embedding women's priorities into all climate-planning and service delivery processes

62. Women's engagement will be facilitated through the active involvement of female project staff and continuous technical oversight from a dedicated Gender and Safeguarding Specialist, ensuring gender-responsive measures are consistently applied across locations and activities.

D.4. Needs of recipient (max. 300 words)

63. Syria faces extreme vulnerability shaped by severe climate hazards and socioeconomic fragility after years of conflict. Climatically, Syria is among the world's most water-stressed countries. Average temperatures are projected to rise by up to 2.3°C, while the number of extremely hot days (>40°C) is expected to increase from 11 to 21 days per year by 2040–2059. These trends are intensifying evapotranspiration, reducing surface and groundwater recharge, and increasing the frequency and severity of droughts. As such, there is a heightened risk of further stress on water and agricultural systems and increased urgency for targeted interventions to strengthen resilience in the most climate affected areas.

64. Socioeconomic conditions significantly amplify climate vulnerability. Extreme poverty affects one in four Syrians, while 67 percent live below the lower middle-income poverty line.[15] As such, over 75 percent of the population depends on humanitarian assistance.[16] Unemployment is estimated at 24 percent, with youth facing rates of 46 percent, and women disproportionately affected. Water scarcity directly undermines food security, particularly for smallholder farmers, rural communities, women-headed households, and internally displaced and returning populations. Reduced water availability for domestic use and agriculture has contributed to food insecurity affecting an estimated 14.5 million people nationwide.[17] Without targeted adaptation measures, rising temperatures and increased heat extremes are expected to further strain water systems, exacerbate poverty, and deepen dependence on humanitarian assistance.

65. The government's ability to address these adaptation challenges is limited by domestic fiscal space outlined in section C4., and competing recovery needs. Private and commercial financing for water security is currently unavailable at scale. Concessional GCF financing is therefore essential to enable climate-resilient water investments and to strengthen institutional and implementation capacity for sustainable water management and long-term resilience.

D.5. Country ownership (max. 500 words)

66. The proposed project is fully aligned with Syria's national climate priorities and international commitments under the UNFCCC, Paris Agreement, and UNCCD. Syria's Nationally Determined Contribution (2018) identifies efficient water resource management, combating land degradation and desertification, improving water-use efficiency, and institutional and community capacity-building for climate adaptation as key adaptation priorities. These priorities respond directly to the country's increasing exposure to droughts and heat extremes and their impact on water resources and agricultural production. The project operationalises these priorities through interventions that protect climate proof water resources, reduce water losses, improve water-use efficiency, promote non-traditional water sources, and support climate-adapted agricultural practices. In line with national strategies, the project emphasizes participatory, locally led approaches and strengthens institutional capacity at national, governorate, and community levels.

67. The project was developed through a co-creation process with the Government of Syria, ensuring strong country ownership. Key national institutions, including MoLAE, acting as the NDA, MoE hosting the GCWR and MoA, were actively engaged throughout project design. Between June 2025 and January 2026, structured consultations were conducted through bilateral technical meetings, national- and governorate-level workshops, field visits, and a formal, MoLAE-led validation workshop on November 27, 2025. At the community level, four focus group discussions were held with a diverse and inclusive group of participants, including farmers, youth, representatives of various local occupations, community leaders, and respected local notables. This broad representation ensured that multiple perspectives were captured, enriching the understanding of local needs, challenges, gender perspectives and opportunities for climate-resilient water

[15] World Bank, (2022), The Welfare of Syrian Households after a Decade of Conflict. Available here.
[16] United Nations Development Program, (2025), The Impact of the Conflict in Syria: A Devastated Economy, Pervasive Poverty and a Challenging Road Ahead to Social and Economic Recovery. Available here.
[17] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2025), Syria Humanitarian Response Plan. Available here.

management. Additional consultations were conducted with research institutions, a local financial institution, and international organizations to confirm synergies and assumptions. These combined engagements informed the selection of project locations, activity design, and capacity-building priorities. The funding proposal was shared with the NDA for final validation in January 2026, and the no-objection letter will be issued in accordance with national procedures (*see section 9 of Annex 2).*

68. The project also builds on Acted's (AE) extensive experience implementing climate-resilient water, agriculture, and ecosystem-based adaptation interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. It benefits from Acted Syria (EE)'s prior groundwater monitoring and modelling work in the country that has demonstrated the importance of basin-specific hydrogeological assessments, long-term abstraction modelling, and locally owned monitoring systems for sustainable groundwater management. These lessons inform the project's design through basin-level data systems, scenario-based modelling, and structured capacity transfer to public water authorities to ensure sustainability beyond the project lifecycle. Acted Syria's long-standing Area-Based Approach programming in the country also informs the project's participatory design. Experience shows that inclusive facilitation, well-designed community engagement, and closed feedback loops linking local inputs to institutional decision-making are critical for conflict sensitivity, and adaptive management. These principles are embedded through structured stakeholder engagement, coordination with water user associations, and mechanisms that ensure community feedback informs project governance and implementation.

69. Country ownership is embedded in the project's scope and implementation arrangements, with national and local authorities playing central roles in technical oversight, coordination, and long-term operation and maintenance to ensure sustainability beyond the project duration. MoLAE, as the EE and NDA to the GCF will lead institutional capacity-building, policy integration, knowledge management, and coordination with line ministries, while ensuring alignment with national climate priorities. Through its Climate Change Directorate and governorate-level structures, MoLAE will facilitate the integration of climate risk considerations into local water planning and climate investment processes, supporting sustained, nationally owned pathways toward climate-resilient water management.

D.6. Efficiency and effectiveness (D.6.1&2 are not applicable for this adaptation project)

D.6.3. Describe how the financial structure is adequate and reasonable in order to achieve the proposal's objective(s), including addressing existing bottlenecks and/or barriers; providing the minimum concessionality; and without crowding out private and other public investment. (max. 500 words)

70. The requested GCF grant is the minimum concessionality required to overcome the incremental costs and risk premiums associated with climate adaptation investments in post-conflict Syria. As outlined in Section C.4, Syria's fiscal and financial constraints are severe and significant portions of national infrastructure has been destroyed. At the same time, climate change is intensifying water scarcity through rising temperatures, declining precipitation, and increasing drought frequency, placing additional pressure on already over-exploited water resources. These conditions constrain the Government of Syria's ability to finance climate adaptation investments without concessional support.

71. The domestic financial sector remains underdeveloped and liquidity-constrained, characterised by limited intermediation capacity, reliance on cash transactions, and the absence of long-term capital markets. Although tentative reintegration into regional and international financial systems is underway, supported by sanctions relief, the sector is currently unable to mobilise the scale of financing required for climate-resilient water infrastructure. Other international donors and humanitarian actors active in Syria have been consulted during project development, however, available funding streams are predominantly short-term and humanitarian. In this context, a grant will greatly reduce financial risks associated with climate-informed water planning and piloting of key adaptation approaches in the context of Syria, thus developing an evidence base and a use case for securing future financing. The project does not crowd out private or other public investment, as such financing is currently unavailable at scale for climate adaptation in the water sector under prevailing risk conditions.

72. The project addresses barriers that currently prevent private investment from materialising. By improving credible data availability, governance transparency, abstraction regulation, operational performance and developing evidence-based business cases, the project reduces uncertainty and risk premiums, thereby lowering future transaction costs for potential investors including for future co-financing from bilateral donors, development banks, and, over the longer term, private sector actors through blended finance models once conditions allow.

73. The level of concessionality requested from GCF is the minimum necessary to make the investment viable. The grant avoids imposing unsustainable debt on the public sector and finances the high upfront costs of climate-proofing and system optimisation. This will create substantial public goods, including systemic changes to governance at national and local levels through generating evidence base for resource management. The integrated design of the project increases efficiency by addressing supply, demand, and governance constraints simultaneously, achieving higher adaptation impact per dollar than stand-alone infrastructure or emergency interventions. Grant financing allows these systems to be established without transferring costs to vulnerable users or exacerbating social tensions in a post-conflict context.

74. Compared to conventional emergency water interventions or stand-alone infrastructure rehabilitation, the integrated approach (described in B2.1) achieves higher adaptation impact per dollar by combining demand management, supply-side efficiency, and ecosystem-based solutions. The project also employs best available technologies and practices benchmarked from arid and post-conflict settings. Examples include:
    - O2.1: The solarisation of water pumps reduces long-term operational costs and emissions, whilst leak detection systems minimise non-revenue water.
    - O1.1: Establishing a climate-informed groundwater model and cloud-based data management system provides a public good that fosters the paradigm shift of water management planning from reactive to anticipatory.
    - O3.2: Ecosystem-based adaptations like infiltration trenches and revegetation are low-cost, sustainable methods to enhance aquifer recharge.

75. The project's effectiveness is evidenced by its direct targeting of the needs of 198,620 vulnerable people, its alignment with national climate priorities, and its focus on building long-term institutional capacity within Syrian authorities (MoLAE, MoE, MoA).

E. ANNEXES

E.1. Mandatory annexes

☒	Annex 1	NDA No-objection Letter(s) (Template)
☒	Annex 2	Pre-feasibility (or feasibility) study (Guidance)
☒	Annex 2a	Logical Framework (Template)
☒	Annex 2b	Timetable (Template)
☒	Annex 3	Budget plan that provides breakdown by type of expense including AE fees (Template)
☒	Annex 4	Gender assessment and action plan (Template)
☒	Annex 5	Co-financing commitment letter if applicable (Template)
☒	Annex 6	Term sheet including a detailed disbursement schedule and, if applicable, repayment schedule
☒	Annex 7	Risk assessment and management (Template)
☒	Annex 8	Procurement plan model (Template)
☒	Annex 9a	Legal Due Diligence (regulation, taxation and insurance) (Template)
☒	Annex 9b	Legal Opinion/Certificate of Internal Approvals (Template)

E.2. Other annexes to be submitted when applicable/requested

☐	Annex 10	Economic and/or financial analysis (Guidance) (mandatory for private-sector proposals)
☐	Annex 11	Appraisal, due diligence or evaluation report for proposals based on up-scaling or replicating a pilot project
☒	Annex 12	Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP) (Template)
☐	Annex 13	Operations manual for EDA projects (guidance)
☐	Annex 14	Assessment of GHG emission reductions and their monitoring and reporting (for mitigation and cross cutting-projects)[18]
☒	Annex 15	Revolving grant fund

***** Please note that a funding proposal will be considered complete only upon receipt of all the applicable supporting documents. *****

[18]Guidance on GHG emission reduction calculations for GCF projects/programmes is available on the GCF Programming Guidance (https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-programming-manual.pdf), Box 12 “How to estimate greenhouse gas emission reductions for GCF”. This annex is mandatory for Mitigation and Cross-cutting projects

No-objection letter issued by the national designated authority(ies) or focal point(s)

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of Local Administration and Environment

الجمهورية العربية السورية
وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة

وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة
Ministry of Local Administration and Environment

To: The Green Climate Fund ("GCF")

Damascus, February 02, 2026

Re: No-objection letter in respect of the funding proposal titled "WATER-RES - Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria" submitted by Acted

Dear Madam, Sir,

We refer to the funding proposal titled "**WATER-RES - Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria**" in Syrian Arab Republic submitted by Acted to us on January 18, 2026 (the "**Proposal**").

The undersigned is the duly authorized representative of Mr. Ahmad Bakaya, the national designated authority of Syrian Arab Republic.

Pursuant to GCF Decisions B.08/10, B.37/22, and B.41/02, the content of which we acknowledge to have reviewed, in my capacity as representative of the national designated authority, we hereby communicate our no-objection to the Proposal.

By communicating our no-objection, it is implied that:

(a) The government of Syrian Arab Republic has no-objection to the Proposal; and
(b) The Proposal is in conformity with the national priorities, strategies and plans of Syrian Arab Republic.

We also confirm that our national process for ascertaining no-objection to the Proposal has been duly followed.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, we expect Acted to take the necessary measures to ensure that the project as described in the Proposal is implemented in a manner consistent with applicable national laws.

We acknowledge that this letter will be made publicly available on the GCF website.

Kind regards,

_____

[Ahmad Walid Bakaya]
[National Focal point]
[Ministry of Local Administration and Environment]
[Syrian Arab Republic]

حرر في دمشق: 2026/02/02م الموافق لـ:14 / 8/ 1447هـ

صورة الى:
مدير مكتب معاون الوزير
مديرية مكتب السيد الوزير
مديرية التعاون الدولي
الديوان العام

Secretariat's assessment of SAP072

Proposal name:	WATER-RES – Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria
Accredited entity:	ACTED
Country/(ies):	Syrian Arab Republic
Project/programme size:	Small

1. The Secretariat has assessed this funding proposal against the GCF investment criteria and its consistency with GCF safeguards and policies. This proposal is recommended to the Board for approval. The Board may wish to consider approving this funding proposal in accordance with the term sheet agreed between the Secretariat and the accredited entity (AE), ACTED and, if considered appropriate, subject to the conditions set out in annex II to document GCF/B.45/02.

I. Secretariat's assessment of the funding proposal against the investment criteria

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
Impact potential	Yes	The WATER-RES project aims to strengthen climate-resilient water management and agricultural livelihoods in the Barada and Awaj basin, with a focus on Eastern Ghouta, one of the most water-stressed regions in the Syrian Arab Republic. The basin is critical for supplying fresh water to the Damascus metropolitan area while also supporting surrounding agricultural communities. However, rising temperatures, declining precipitation and prolonged drought periods are intensifying water scarcity. These pressures are compounded by decades of

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		groundwater overextraction, deterioration of infrastructure and weakened institutional capacity due to conflict. The project proposes an integrated climate adaptation approach combining institutional strengthening, climate-resilient infrastructure rehabilitation and improved water-efficient agricultural practices. Key interventions include strengthening basin-level water governance through improved groundwater monitoring and climate-informed planning systems, rehabilitating and climate-proofing community water infrastructure and promoting water-efficient irrigation and climate-resilient crop systems. The project is expected to directly strengthen the climate resilience of approximately 198,620 people in the project area, while indirectly benefiting more than 1.5 million people through improved basin-wide water management and strengthened institutional capacity. By improving water security, agricultural productivity and adaptive capacity, the project contributes to reducing climate vulnerability and strengthening long-term resilience in one of the Syrian Arab Republic's most water-stressed regions.
Paradigm shift potential	Yes	The proposal demonstrates paradigm shift potential by shifting water management in the Barada and Awaj basin from fragmented and reactive approaches towards integrated, climate-informed basin management. The project is comprehensive in its approach, addressing water security at multiple levels – institutional, infrastructure and agricultural – by not only rehabilitating systems, but also strengthening governance, reducing demand and supporting longer-term behavioural and financial change.

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		Currently, water management in the basin relies heavily on unsustainable coping mechanisms, including uncontrolled groundwater abstraction and inefficient irrigation practices, and limited hydrological data for decision-making. The project addresses these systemic challenges through the establishment of groundwater monitoring networks, digital water data systems and predictive groundwater modelling tools. These systems are intended to support evidence-based water allocation and long-term planning under increasing climate variability. The project also introduces new governance mechanisms to strengthen local participation in water management. These include support to Water User Associations, participatory monitoring systems, community feedback mechanisms and targeted support for local civil society organizations. Such measures aim to enhance transparency and accountability in water governance while strengthening local ownership of adaptation measures. The project's paradigm shift potential is further supported by its replication potential. By developing tools, institutional processes and governance models for climate-resilient basin management, the project aims to establish a framework that could be replicated in other water-stressed regions of the Syrian Arab Republic. Capacity-building activities led by national institutions will support knowledge transfer and enable the scaling of climate-resilient water management practices beyond the project area.
Sustainable development potential	Yes	The project is expected to generate significant sustainable development co-benefits by improving water security, strengthening agricultural livelihoods, supporting ecosystem restoration and enhancing institutional capacity.

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		Improved water efficiency and groundwater management are expected to increase the reliability of water supply for both domestic and agricultural use. In Eastern Ghouta, where agriculture remains a key source of income, climate-resilient irrigation practices and drought-resistant crops can contribute to stabilizing farm productivity while reducing pressure on groundwater resources. The proposal contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as follows: • SDG 2 (Zero hunger) through improved agricultural productivity and climate-resilient farming systems; • SDG 5 (Gender equality) through enhanced participation of women in water governance and agricultural activities; • SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) through improved water resource management and reduced water losses; • SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) through solarization of water pumps and improved energy efficiency; • SDG 13 (Climate action) through strengthened climate adaptation capacity and resilience; • SDG 15 (Life on land) through ecosystem restoration and improved watershed management; and • SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) through strengthened coordination between national institutions, communities and development partners. The project also incorporates gender-responsive measures. Improved reliability of community water systems and household water efficiency technologies can reduce

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		the time burden associated with water management, which disproportionately affects women. The proposal also includes participation targets for women in Water User Associations and farmer organisations, as well as targeted access to climate-resilient agricultural training and resources. In addition, ecosystem-based recharge interventions, including revegetation and infiltration structures, are expected to contribute to aquifer recharge and help to address land degradation in vulnerable areas.
Needs of the recipient	Yes	The Syrian Arab Republic faces severe climate vulnerability, particularly in relation to water scarcity. The country is already among the most water-stressed globally, and climate projections indicate worsening conditions in the coming decades. Projections for 2040–2059 indicate temperature increases of 1.7–2.3 °C, while precipitation is expected to decline by approximately 4–5 per cent. The number of extremely hot days exceeding 40 °C is projected to increase substantially, intensifying evaporation and reducing groundwater recharge. These climate risks are compounded by socioeconomic fragility. Conflict has significantly weakened infrastructure, governance systems and economic resilience. High levels of poverty, displacement and unemployment limit households' ability to adapt to climate shocks. Agriculture and domestic water supply systems remain highly sensitive to climate variability, particularly in groundwater-dependent regions such as Eastern Ghouta. In the project area, water infrastructure has deteriorated and water distribution systems suffer from high levels of inefficiency. Non-revenue water was estimated at approximately 33 per cent before the conflict, while unregulated groundwater

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		extraction has increased through the proliferation of informal wells. These conditions increase the vulnerability of both rural and peri-urban communities. The most vulnerable populations include smallholder farmers dependent on groundwater irrigation, internally displaced persons and returnees, female-headed households and low-income rural communities with limited access to alternative water sources. Given the constrained public finances and limited access to commercial financing for climate adaptation infrastructure, concessional financing is necessary to address systemic water management challenges and support long-term climate resilience.
Country ownership	Yes	The project demonstrates strong country ownership through alignment with national climate priorities and active engagement with national institutions during project preparation. The proposal aligns with the Syrian Arab Republic's commitments under the Paris Agreement and the country's nationally determined contribution, which identifies water resource management, climate-resilient agriculture and institutional capacity-building as key adaptation priorities. The project directly contributes to these priorities by strengthening water governance, improving water efficiency and supporting climate-resilient agricultural practices. Project preparation involved consultations with national authorities, technical institutions and local stakeholders. The Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE), acting as the national designated authority, played a central role in validating the project design. National- and governorate-level consultations,

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		workshops and field visits were conducted during 2025 and early 2026 to ensure alignment with national development priorities and local needs. Community consultations also informed the design of project activities. Focus group discussions with farmers, local leaders, youth groups and community representatives highlighted key challenges, including high water costs, unreliable supply and the need for improved water governance. These inputs helped to shape the project's focus on water system efficiency, climate-resilient irrigation and participatory water management. Implementation arrangements further reinforce country ownership. The project will be jointly implemented by ACTED Syria and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic through MoLAE, with national and local authorities responsible for coordination, institutional capacity-building and long-term operation and maintenance of project systems.
Efficiency and effectiveness	Yes	The proposal demonstrates reasonable efficiency and effectiveness through an integrated approach addressing governance, infrastructure and agricultural water use simultaneously. The project has a total estimated cost of USD 27.7 million, of which USD 25 million is requested from GCF as grant financing. The project will be implemented over a 60-month period, with an expected impact lifespan of approximately 10 years. The cost-effectiveness of the project is reflected in an estimated cost of approximately USD 125.86 per direct beneficiary – considered reasonable given the inclusion of infrastructure, institutional strengthening and basin-level interventions – and USD 16.17 per indirect beneficiary, indicating strong potential for system-level impact.

Investment criteria	Does the proposal meet the requirements of the GCF investment criteria?	Strengths/main points of caution (optional)
		The funding proposal provides a justification for the requested grant financing. The Syrian Arab Republic's financial sector remains underdeveloped, and access to long-term financing for climate adaptation infrastructure is limited. Public fiscal capacity is constrained owing to ongoing recovery needs, while existing donor funding is primarily focused on humanitarian assistance rather than long-term climate adaptation investments. The project design also incorporates cost-effective measures intended to maximise long-term adaptation benefits. These include: • Solarisation of water pumps, which can reduce operational costs and emissions; • Digital leak detection systems to reduce non-revenue water losses; • Climate-informed groundwater modelling tools to support long-term water planning; and • Ecosystem-based recharge interventions such as infiltration trenches and revegetation. By combining governance reforms, infrastructure improvements and demand-side water management, the project aims to generate sustained adaptation benefits beyond the immediate project period. The strengthening of data systems and institutional capacity may also reduce future investment risks and facilitate additional climate finance mobilisation in the water sector.

II. Secretariat's assessment of the funding proposal's consistency with GCF safeguards and policies

Consistency with GCF safeguards and policies	Secretariat's assessment of the proposal	Remarks (Strengths/Points of caution)
Environmental and social safeguards, including Indigenous Peoples Policy	Consistent	The project is classified as Category C (low risk), given that the activities of the project will have minimal or no adverse environmental and/or social (E&S) risks and/or impacts. The Secretariat concurs with the E&S risk category and is within the AE's accreditation level. Key environmental risks relate to resource efficiency and pollution prevention, particularly around the use and reuse of greywater and potential increases in water abstraction following infrastructure improvements. Improper handling of greywater may pose localized health and environmental risks, while increased availability of water could incentivize higher consumption and pressure on aquifers. These risks are mitigated through capacity building on greywater treatment and reuse, installation of low-cost treatment systems, water quality monitoring, and the use of flow meters and abstraction controls integrated into community-based water governance systems. Social risks include potential for inequitable access to resources, labour and supply chain risks (including child labour), and affordability concerns related to cost-recovery mechanisms for water services. Overall, risks are considered manageable through targeted mitigation measures embedded in project design and the measures provided in the Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP). Contextual risks associated with implementation in a post-conflict setting include potential social tensions over water access, weakened institutional capacity, and safety risks such as the potential presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in project areas. These are mitigated through conflict-sensitive, participatory approaches, continuous stakeholder engagement, adaptive implementation planning, and strict site selection protocols (including operation only in UXO-cleared areas). The project will apply the mitigation hierarchy across risk areas that will be supported by institutional strengthening,

		community participation, and establishment of grievance redress mechanisms to ensure that residual risks remain low and manageable throughout project implementation. **GCF Indigenous Peoples Policy & environmental and social safeguard 7 (Indigenous Peoples).** The AE has conducted a screening against the GCF Indigenous Peoples Policy and confirmed that the project area does not contain any Indigenous Peoples, nor will any Indigenous Peoples be affected by the project's activities. The AE will actively monitor changes in community composition throughout project implementation and apply the requirements of the GCF Indigenous Peoples Policy if the presence of Indigenous Peoples is assessed. **Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).** In accordance with the revised GCF Environmental and Social Policy, the AE has recognized SEAH as a relevant safeguard issue for this project, given the post-conflict operating context, gendered vulnerabilities, unequal power relations in local governance and service access, potential male dominance in project staffing and community-facing functions, and the project's engagement with women, female-headed households, vulnerable farmers and other at-risk groups. The AE has developed a robust SEAH risk management framework. Comprehensive mitigation measures are integrated through the ACTED internal Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) checklist and Safeguarding Action Plan, including screening during recruitment, gender-balanced panels, reference checks, SEAH clauses in contracts, mandatory induction and refresher training for staff, workers and partners, visible reporting materials in Arabic, community sensitization sessions, gender-segregated focus groups, secure case handling, survivor-centred referrals and internal compliance monitoring. It is indicated that ACTED Syria reported a 99 per cent overall compliance rate against its internal PSEAH checklist in 2025. SEAH complaints will be channelled through the ACTED Feedback Mechanism (AFM) for community members and the Transparency Line for staff, partners, contractors and third parties, with dedicated confidential routing to trained safeguarding staff. Both mechanisms are

		described as inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible to women, men, girls, boys and persons with disabilities. The AFM includes multiple community-level entry points, including complaint boxes, accountability focal points, trained monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) staff, local contact numbers, community awareness sessions and AFM committee meetings. Sensitive complaints are classified as level 5 and are immediately and confidentially redirected to the Transparency, Compliance and Investigation Unit at ACTED Headquarters (HQ). The Gender and Safeguarding Specialist will serve as the designated SEAH focal point at the field level for the project. The Country MEAL Manager will ensure that AFM channels remain functional and accessible. The Country Director will oversee case escalation, compliance and risk monitoring, while investigations are led by the ACTED HQ Transparency, Compliance and Investigation Unit. These roles and reporting pathways are to be communicated to communities through AFM sensitization activities and accessible outreach materials, alongside information on the GCF Independent Redress Mechanism. The approach to SEAH safeguarding is consistent with the provisions of the GCF SEAH framework and with good practice on survivor-centred complaint handling. Institutional roles are defined, mitigation measures are embedded across recruitment, contracting, implementation and community engagement, and the grievance redress mechanism architecture is visible and multilayered. The Secretariat supports the commitment of the AE to ensuring implementation quality and local accessibility of referral pathways during implementation to ensure effective operation of the SEAH framework.
Gender Policy	Consistent	The funding proposal demonstrates alignment with the requirements of the GCF Gender Policy through a project-specific gender assessment and an extensive gender action plan tailored to the climate-resilient water security, climate-smart agriculture and local water governance context in the Syrian Arab Republic, with a specific focus on Eastern Ghouta within the Barada and Awaj basin. Gender and inclusion considerations are integrated across household water-use efficiency, local

		governance, farmer associations, climate-smart agriculture and locally driven financing mechanisms, including the revolving grant fund. The gender assessment, informed by secondary sources and primary data from four key informant interviews and four sex-segregated focus group discussions in Eastern Ghouta, identifies project-relevant gender barriers linked to climate vulnerability and access to benefits. These include women's limited influence in water governance and local planning; constrained access to land, productive resources, technical training and finance; heightened unpaid care and domestic labour burdens associated with water scarcity; affordability risks for female-headed and low-income households; and weaker access to trusted reporting and support systems. The assessment also recognizes intersectional vulnerabilities affecting female-headed households, displaced and returnee households, older persons, youth and persons with disabilities. It further notes that vulnerable group representative organizations, including women-led civil society organizations and disability-focused organizations, were not systematically engaged during project design, and confirms that targeted consultations with these actors will be undertaken during project inception and integrated into the gender action plan, logical framework and participatory monitoring arrangements. The gender action plan translates the findings of the gender assessment into targeted actions across project components, including minimum participation targets for women in water governance structures and farmer associations, gender-responsive consultations and community accountability mechanisms, prioritization of female-headed and vulnerable households for household water-efficiency and greywater interventions, adapted training modalities responsive to women's mobility and caregiving constraints, and support for women's access to cost-sharing grants and the revolving grant fund. The gender action plan includes measurable indicators, responsibilities, timelines and approximate budget estimates, including cross-cutting measures such as recruitment of a Gender and Safeguarding Specialist for the five-

		year project period, annual gender-responsive and PSEAH-related training, a gender-informed MEAL plan and a Year 1 gender and PSEAH baseline assessment. For the project's financing mechanisms, the cost-sharing grants will apply flexibility for low-liquidity households. Documentation requirements under the revolving grant fund will be kept simple and accessible, cases with documentation constraints will be assessed individually with support from ACTED, and gender, inclusion and PSEAH considerations will be embedded in the revolving grant fund operations manual and sub-grant agreement with the selected local financial institution, alongside a housing, land and property sensitive approach based on legitimate use and management rights rather than formal ownership alone. Overall, the Secretariat considers that the proposal applies a strong gender and inclusion integration into its design. At the same time, as local quantitative baseline data remain limited, several targets will need to be validated against the dedicated gender and PSEAH baseline assessment during inception. In addition, while engagement of women-led organizations and disability-focused organizations is embedded in implementation design, the effectiveness of this approach will depend on timely stakeholder mapping and activation of these relationships at the start of implementation. The Secretariat supports the commitment of the AE to: (a) Ensure that the Year 1 gender and PSEAH baseline assessment is completed early in implementation and is used to validate and, where necessary, refine gender action plan indicators and targets, particularly those relating to women's participation in governance, women's access to finance, workload and empowerment outcomes; (b) Use the Year 1 gender-informed MEAL plan to explicitly track women's influence in decision-making, control over resources, changes in workload and perceptions of safety and dignity; (c) Ensure that stakeholder mapping during inception confirms the women-led organizations, women-led civil society organizations and relevant disability-

		focused groups that will participate in implementation and monitoring arrangements; and (d) Maintain the visibility of gender-related expenditure and implementation responsibilities throughout delivery, including within household technology, financing and accountability activities, as feasible.
Risks	Consistent	The AE has assessed the inherent risk of money-laundering, terrorist financing , financial sanctions, or other prohibited practices such as fraud, corruption or conflict of interest as low owing to the current operational environment in the Syrian Arab Republic – including improved financial and regulatory conditions – alongside the nature of the proposed project activities, which do not involve large-scale cash distributions or complex financial intermediation mechanisms and which focus largely on technical capacity-building and small-scale maintenance interventions. The AE has indicated that the residual risks of money-laundering, financing terrorism or other prohibited practices are low due to its established anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism and fund diversion controls, which include systematic screening of all staff, partners, suppliers and third parties, enhanced due diligence as required, oversight by its Transparency, Compliance and Investigation Department at both the HQ and the project level, as well as regular internal and external audits, and mandatory training for staff and counterparties. Moreover, continuous risk monitoring will be conducted throughout the project lifecycle via a project-level risk register that will be reviewed biannually, as well as regular field visits conducted by the ACTED MEAL team. Oversight is further enhanced by the AE's presence in Syria, where it has been active since 2012. In addition, the AE's first-level due diligence and capacity assessment of its co-executing entity, MoLAE, identified no integrity risks. However, due to the complex and evolving conditions on the ground, residual compliance risk is determined to be medium to high.

Fiduciary	Consistent	ACTED will serve as the AE and assume full responsibility in accordance with the funded activity agreement and GCF standard conditions. As AE, ACTED will oversee project appraisal, administrative, financial and technical management, including reporting, fiduciary management, monitoring and evaluation, and project closure. The project will be implemented through the following executing entities: ACTED Syria and the Syrian Arab Republic, acting through MoLAE. MoLAE will execute activities related to institutional capacity-building, knowledge management and coordination with line ministries and public institutions, including Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Energy's General Commission for Water Resources. MoLAE will also contribute to monitoring and evaluation activities. Implementation will be led by the Climate Change Directorate. GCF funds will be disbursed to ACTED HQ in its capacity as AE and flow to the executing entities, following established fiduciary and reporting procedures. The flow of funds between ACTED HQ and ACTED Syria will follow normal ACTED financial procedures. The transfer of funds between ACTED HQ and MoLAE will be governed by a project-specific subsidiary agreement to be concluded for the purposes of the accreditation master agreement.
Results monitoring and reporting	Consistent	The AE submitted a robust set of monitoring and evaluation tools, including the project theory of change, logical framework and monitoring and evaluation plan with the associated budget. Together, they provide confidence that the AE will be able to comply with the GCF monitoring, reporting and evaluation requirements during implementation. The theory of change demonstrates the logical pathways to the GCF adaptation results areas 1 and 2 through locally led and data-informed adaptation activities and outputs

		to improve the resilience of infrastructure and institutions, which in turn will contribute to improved water security. Barriers and assumptions, including critical ones that relate to conflict and security conditions, were adequately specified. The logical framework incorporates core indicator 2, supplementary 2.3 and 2.5, core indicator 3 and core indicator 4. The means of verification for all the indicators combine primary and secondary sources. The MEAL plan deviates from the GCF template, but this does not present any issues in terms of the MEAL-related activities presented in the plan. Importantly, the plan noted that MEAL will be compliant with the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, which is important considering the context. The MEAL budget was itemized in the detailed budget and is deemed sufficient. In the event that security conditions do not hold, there is still a risk that MEAL activities either will not materialize or can be implemented but at a much higher cost.
Legal assessment	Consistent	The legal arrangements for the project will be based on the revised approach to legal arrangements adopted by the Board pursuant to decision B.42/13. Consequently, they will consist of a project-specific funded activity agreement which incorporates the Standard Conditions (Projects) dated 31 January 2026. The Accredited Entity has provided a legal opinion/certificate confirming that it has obtained all internal approvals and it has the capacity and authority to implement the project. The proposed project will be implemented in the Syrian Arab Republic (the "Host Country"), a country in which GCF is not provided with privileges and immunities. This means that, amongst other things, GCF is not protected against litigation or expropriation in this Host Country, which risks need to be further assessed. Moreover, the ability of GCF to undertake redress activities and/or investigations in

		the Host Country may be hindered due to the absence of privileges and immunities for relevant GCF personnel. Therefore, it is recommended that the Board considers whether disbursements of GCF proceeds should only be made after GCF has obtained satisfactory protection against litigation and expropriation in the Host Country or has been provided with appropriate privileges and immunities for GCF and its personnel. GCF does not hold industrial property protection for its combined logo (sphere with the words "Green Climate Fund") in the Host Country. This means that, while industrial property protection is pending, (i) GCF's combined logo could be used by other entities or individuals (including those seeking to impersonate GCF) and (ii) there could be legal claims by entities or individuals asserting their protected trademark, opposing GCF using its combined logo in the country. In both cases, this may lead to reputational risk. To facilitate prompt implementation of the project, it is recommended that any approval by the Board is made subject to the following conditions: (a) Signature of the funded activity agreement in a form and substance satisfactory to the GCF Secretariat within 180 days from the date of Board approval; and (b) Completion of the legal due diligence to the satisfaction of the GCF Secretariat prior to the signature of the funded activity agreement.

Independent Technical Advisory Panel's assessment of SAP072

Proposal name:	WATER-RES – Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria
Accredited entity:	ACTED
Country/(ies):	Syrian Arab Republic
Project/programme size:	Small

I. Assessment of the independent Technical Advisory Panel

1.1 Overview

1. The project WATER-RES – Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria – is a small adaptation project, in risk category C, applying through the simplified approval process. The project seeks to support a paradigm shift away from fragmented water management towards locally led, scalable climate-resilient water management in the Barada and Awaj basin, with a focus on eastern Ghouta. Ghouta is the rural 'garden' area east and south of the capital city of Damascus in the south-western part of the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. Increasingly frequent multi-year droughts and rising temperatures as the climate changes, combined with declining groundwater levels as a result of unsustainable management practices, are exacerbating water insecurity. This is compounded by more than a decade of conflict, which has increased the vulnerability of rural communities to external shocks and stresses, including to the impacts of climate change.

3. The project builds on existing efforts to establish groundwater monitoring, climate-informed planning and inclusive governance in the region. The work on capacity development, community water supplies and climate-resilient agriculture is structured into three components, with each containing a set of interrelated outputs:

(a) Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacities for climate-resilient water management (24 per cent of the total budget):

  (i) Output 1.1: Integrated data systems for measuring, monitoring and modelling groundwater resources;

  (ii) Output 1.2: Multi-stakeholder capacity strengthening for climate-informed water management; and

  (iii) Output 1.3: Knowledge-sharing and financing for sustained water resilience;

(b) Component 2: Improving community water infrastructure and reuse systems (38 per cent of the total budget):

  (i) Output 2.1: Existing boreholes and networks are climate-proofed and optimized; and

(ii) Output 2.2: Improved water-use efficiency and reuse in vulnerable communities; and

(c) Component 3: Supporting climate-resilient agriculture (30 per cent of the total budget):

(i) Output 3.1: Smallholder farmers are supported to improve water management; and

(ii) Output 3.2: Community-level ecosystem-based adaptations to improve aquifer recharge.

4. The total project budget (composed of a USD 25 million grant requested from GCF and USD 2.7 million as grant and in-kind co-financing from the accredited entity and the Syrian Government) also covers a management component: monitoring, evaluation and learning, project management and contingency, together accounting for 8 per cent of the total budget.

1.2 Impact potential *Scale: N/A*

5. The proposed project seeks to contribute to GCF adaptation result areas 1 (Most vulnerable people and communities) and 2 (Health and well-being, and food and water security).

6. The crisis of declining water availability and water poverty is felt in all parts of the Syrian Arab Republic.[1] The Barada and Awaj basin in particular has faced long-term risks of water depletion, with agriculture and rapid population growth straining the resources of this internal closed basin.[2] Observed trends over recent decades indicate rising temperatures (18.4 °C average in 2024, up from 17.6 °C in 1991–2020), declining precipitation (245 mm in 2024, with historic lows of 123 mm) and severe drops in groundwater and baseflow, with baseflow collapsing by up to 80 per cent in 2024–2025 compared to the previous decade. At the same time, climate projections for the basin indicate worsening conditions. By 2040–2059, mean annual temperatures are projected to rise by 1.7 °C to 2.3 °C, while precipitation is expected to decline by 4.1 to 5 per cent under medium (SSP2-4.5) and high-emission (SSP5-8.5) scenarios[3] respectively. Extreme events will intensify, with the number of hot days exceeding 40 °C projected to increase from 11 up to 21 days per year.[4] Longer dry spells will intensify evapotranspiration, reduce groundwater recharge and accelerate depletion of already stressed aquifers, increasing risks to domestic water supply, irrigation dependent agriculture and ecosystem stability across the basin (funding proposal, para. 7).

7. Working in one of the more populous and climate-affected regions of the country, the project seeks to benefit close to 200,000 people directly and 1.5 million people indirectly. The direct beneficiaries include government officials and those participating in water management activities, as well as households with improved access to more efficient and robust drinking water services and greywater reuse systems; along with participants in training and financing mechanisms for climate-resilient agriculture and ecosystem management. Indirectly, the 1.5 million people within the broader basin will benefit from improved water management and protection, and ecosystem integrity, buffering the effects of climate change.

8. The monitoring evaluation assessment and learning (MEAL) plan, outlined in annex 2C to the funding proposal, draws on Acted's own monitoring tools in line with the Core

[1] Isayed A et al. 2024. Water Poverty Index over the past two decades: a comprehensive review and future prospects – the Middle East as a case study. *Water*.16(16): 2250.
[2] Arraf F. 2019. Causes of decreasing water balances in the Barada and Awaj (Damascus) drainage basin until the uprising in Syria. *Open Journal of Modern Hydrology*. 9(4): pp.143–160.
[3] SSP = Shared Socioeconomic Pathway.
[4] Syrian Arab Republic - Climatology (CRU) | Climate Change Knowledge Portal. World Bank; available at https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/syrian-arab-republic/climate-data-historical.

Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and a MEAL Unit that will provide monitoring coverage of the programming during implementation. The project will apply project-specific monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements designed to track progress against the logical framework, assess climate results, monitor implementation quality and support adaptive management throughout the project cycle. It includes participatory monitoring, reflection and learning processes at the institutional, community and farmer level, along with gender-specific data capture and disaggregation to provide insight into potential gender biases in the uptake or effect of the intervention.

9. The iTAP assesses the impact potential of the project as high.

1.3 Paradigm shift potential *Scale: N/A*

10. The project seeks to move from uneven and reactive water management practices towards an informed, integrated and locally led approach. The theory of change reads: "IF vulnerable, water-scarce communities are empowered to lead locally driven climate adaptation using climate and groundwater data, inclusive governance, and sustainable water and agricultural practices AND are supported by resilient infrastructure and institutions THEN water security will improve, sustain agricultural productivity and reduce climate vulnerability BECAUSE locally led, data-informed decisions enable efficient, equitable, and anticipatory water and agricultural management" (funding proposal, para. 53). The slightly circular argument or theory reinforces the feedback loop of how participation and monitoring inform water management decisions.

11. Component 1, which builds institutional capacities, puts great weight on climate-informed data systems, with output 1.1 setting out to develop the monitoring and modelling of groundwater resources at the basin level. Output 1.2 develops local capacities for multi-stakeholder and climate-informed water management. Output 1.3 operates at the national level to build knowledge networks and develop insight on key gaps within existing regulatory frameworks, mobilize future investment and develop the business case for grey-green infrastructure. Forums led by the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE) are to share lessons learned and foster the systematic dissemination of insight and practices across governance levels.

12. The enabling environment is created by building long-term, climate-resilient water management capacities within authorities (ministries, directorates of the MoLAE and extension centres of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)) as well as community structures (Water User Associations (WUAs) and farmers associations). Inclusive WUAs and community-led mechanisms are to continue to inform planning beyond the project. MoLAE capacity and national forums will promote evidence-based decision-making, support national policy uptake and facilitate access to future climate finance.

13. Component 2 works with communities in eastern Ghouta to improve community water infrastructure and water reuse systems. Activities relate to the upgrade and climate-proofing of priority drinking water infrastructure. The project will also enhance the performance and cost-efficiency of the systems by establishing leak detection and response systems. By focusing on cost recovery mechanisms, including smart metering, the systems should be able to continuously maintain and ensure stable operations during normal operations and in times of crisis. The introduction of solar energy, water-efficient fixtures and early leak detection will further optimize energy use and system efficiency. Equity and cost recovery will be supported by efforts to increase network subscriptions. This should enhance lower-income households' access to publicly supplied water, which can be assumed to be more economical than alternative sources.

14. Water efficiency will be further enhanced by fostering household-level reuse. This involves changing community perspectives relating to water recycling. The funding proposal focuses on vulnerable communities, and not least women-headed households, but the independent Technical Advisory Panel (iTAP) observes that it would also be effective to focus on behavioural change among non-poor or less vulnerable communities.

15. The climate-proofed infrastructure, including boreholes, networks, leak detection systems and metering devices, will be handed over to local water departments of the Public Corporation for Drinking Water and Sanitation. Operation and maintenance protocols for leak detection, flow meters and small-scale greywater recycling units will be institutionalized within local authorities, ensuring sustained functionality.

16. Component 3 supports climate-resilient agricultural production. It supports local extension services and agricultural research centres and nurseries, as well as farmers, to apply efficient, climate-adapted irrigation practices, coupled with the use of drought-resistant crops and small-scale water harvesting. Ecosystem-based measures, such as soil management, infiltration trenches and revegetation, are to improve groundwater recharge.

17. The farmers' adoption of these practices will be supported by a system of cost-sharing grants or the establishment of a revolving grant fund to be financed by the project in cooperation with a local financial institution. Micro-farmers are to access cost-sharing grants, ensuring that the most vulnerable receive direct support without repayment obligations. The revolving grant fund targets small- and medium-scale farmers with greater capacity to engage with an on-granting mechanism (funding proposal, para. 21). Annex 13 to the funding proposal spells out the modalities for the revolving fund, but the financial institution has, according to the funding proposal package, not yet been identified.

18. Demonstration plots are to remain as permanent learning hubs managed by extension centres of MoA. The revolving fund is to be sustained by the local financial institution under the oversight of both MoA and the Ministry of Finance, aiming for continuous future financing for farmers who adopt resilient agricultural practices. Ecosystem-based adaptation assets, namely infiltration trenches and revegetated public land, will be maintained by the Directorate of Water Resources in Damascus and Rural Damascus and the -Badia Management and Development Authority in line with co-developed operation and maintenance plans.

19. The project has been co-developed with local and national authorities, and the plans for sustaining drinking water system operations and climate-resilient agriculture are deemed to be credible.

20. Based on the above, the paradigm shift potential of the project is assessed as high.

1.4 Sustainable development potential *Scale: N/A*

21. The establishment of climate-resilient water management provides a range of sustainable development co-benefits, and contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals. The funding proposal (para 58) highlights the project's contribution to Sustainable Development Goals 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 13 (Climate action), 2 (Zero hunger), 15 (Life on land), 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 5 (Gender equality) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

22. Environmental (co-)benefits include the improved water-use efficiency and more harmonious relationship between society and the ecosystem of the Barada and Awaj basin. Land management for improved groundwater recharge will help to protect the resource. Water and energy efficiency and optimization should also have a positive influence on the region's energy use and mix. This may have marginal climate change mitigation benefits, although the whole systemic realignment is aimed principally at climate change adaptation.

23. Economic co-benefits include the improved water system performance, principally by reducing water losses through leak detection, but also by way of metering and cost recovery. More efficient irrigation should improve the crop-per-drop efficiency and sustain cost-effective agricultural productivity. Support to low-income farmers to adopt climate-resilient practices, through locally driven finance models, should sustain livelihoods and enhance the robustness of the local economy. Greywater reuse systems for households may also support small-scale gardening and render both economic and social benefits.

24. Social co-benefits are principally derived from the expanded access to and improved reliability of community drinking water systems. This stands to ameliorate health impacts, time burdens and security issues related to water collection, burdens which disproportionately fall on women and girls.

25. Gender co-benefits are to be enhanced by actively involving women in technical training to become leaders and serve as representatives in governance structures. (The iTAP would also like to point out that technical training, which has strategically changed gender roles in neighbouring countries, relates to training of women as plumbers. This has not only been a game changer in terms of women taking on a traditionally masculine occupation like plumbing. It has also been of great practical value for the water service providers, which are able to repair leaks in homes as needed, without having to wait for male household members to be present.)[5]

26. The project's gender action plan (annex 4) provides measures to ensure the meaningful participation of women and the (very important) engagement with women-led organizations. Key actions include conducting a dedicated gender baseline assessment, including for the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, to be integrated into the overall project workplan. The project also sustains a minimum-level participation target for women in WUAs and farmer associations, at the level of 20–30 per cent, and prioritizes female-headed households for water-efficient fixtures and greywater systems (30 per cent of households) and ensures women's access to training and financing (30 per cent of trainees). Women's engagement will be facilitated through the active involvement of female project staff and technical oversight from a dedicated Gender and Safeguarding Specialist (funding proposal, paras. 61–62).

27. The sustainable development and gender considerations are well balanced and credible. The targets for women's participation are deemed to be realistic as to what is possible in a gender segregated society but, for the project to more boldly support gender transformation and equality, the targets could have been set higher.

28. The iTAP assesses the sustainable development potential of the project as high.

1.5 Needs of the recipient *Scale: N/A*

29. The Syrian Arab Republic faces extreme vulnerability shaped by severe climate hazards and socioeconomic fragility after years of conflict. The country ranks fourth – signalling "high alert" – in the Fragile State Index of the Fund for Peace[6] and ranks 168 out of 187 countries – signalling high climate exposure and extremely low adaptive capacity – in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Index.[7] Both conflict and climate change have exacerbated water insecurity, and heat extremes are expected to further strain water systems. This has repercussions on food security, particularly for smallholder farmers and rural communities, as well as internally displaced and returning populations. According to the World Bank "14 years

[5] See e.g. "Women Plumbers in Jordan Are Breaking Taboos"; available at https://reasonstobecheerful.world/women-plumbers-jordan/.
[6] See https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FSI-2024-Report-A-World-Adrift-2.pdf.
[7] See Rankings // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative // University of Notre Dame.

of conflict in Syria have displaced more than half of the pre-war population and caused GDP to contract by over 50 percent, with GNI per capita at just $830 in 2024—well below the international low-income countries' threshold".[8]

30. Institutions have been weakened, and the government's ability to address these adaptation challenges is limited by domestic fiscal space. The domestic financial sector remains underdeveloped, characterized by limited intermediation capacity, the absence of long-term capital markets and reliance on cash transactions. Although tentative reintegration into regional and international financial systems is under way, the sector is currently unable to mobilize the scale of financing required for climate-resilient water infrastructure. Available funding streams are predominantly short term and humanitarian.

31. The funding proposal (para. 71) asserts that the project does not crowd out private or other public investment, because such financing is currently unavailable for climate adaptation in the water sector under prevailing risk conditions. Nevertheless, authorities are prioritizing investment-friendly reforms, simplified business procedures and private sector development to support reconstruction in the future.[9]

32. Given the prolonged crises in Syria, concessional GCF financing is essential to enable climate-resilient water investments and to strengthen institutional capacity for sustainable water management.

33. Overall, based on the above, the needs of the recipients are considered to be high.

1.6 Country ownership *Scale: N/A*

34. The no-objection letter, signed by the national designated authority, the MoLAE, confirms that the WATER-RES proposal is in conformity with the national priorities, plans and strategies of the Syrian Arab Republic.

35. According to the funding proposal (para. 66), the Syrian Arab Republic's nationally determined contribution (from 2018) identifies the following as key adaptation priorities: efficient water resource management; combating land degradation and desertification; improving water-use efficiency; and institutional and community capacity-building for climate adaptation. These priorities respond directly to the country's increasing exposure to droughts and heat extremes and their impact on water resources and agricultural production. The project further operationalizes these priorities through interventions that protect water resources, climate-proof water supply systems – for example by reducing leakage and water losses – improve water-use efficiency in domestic and agricultural irrigation systems and more broadly support climate-resilient agricultural practices.

36. The project has been co-created with key national institutions and the design process included structured consultations and field visits. At the community level, four focus group discussions were held, including farmers, community leaders and respected local notables. Multiple perspectives were captured, enriching the understanding of local aspirations, needs and challenges. Additional consultations were reportedly held with research institutions, a local financial institution and international organizations to confirm synergies and assumptions. These combined engagements informed the selection of project locations, activity design and capacity-building priorities.

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[8] World Bank. 2025. *Syria Macro-Fiscal Assessment*: *June 2025*: p.vii; available at https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099844407042516353/pdf/IDU-6adac64c-c9b1-472e-8183-ae600f64fa78.pdf.

[9] See Reuters: "Syria's finance minister says foreign investors welcome after US sanctions move"; available at https://www.reuters.com/world/syrias-finance-minister-says-foreign-investors-welcome-after-us-sanctions-move-2025-05-14/.

37. The project also builds on the extensive experience of the accredited entity, Acted, in implementing climate-resilient water, agriculture and ecosystem-based adaptation interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Acted is a French charity headquartered in Paris, with 7,600 staff across 42 countries.[10] According to the funding proposal (para. 68) Acted Syria, the executing entity, has demonstrated the importance of basin-specific hydrogeological assessments, long-term abstraction modelling and locally owned monitoring systems for sustainable groundwater management in the Syrian Arab Republic. These insights have informed the project's design through basin-level data systems, scenario-based modelling and structured capacity transfer to public water authorities to ensure sustainability beyond the project lifecycle.

38. Country ownership is also embedded in the project's implementation arrangements, with national and local authorities playing central roles in technical oversight and coordination. Concrete plans are also to be made for the long-term operation and maintenance of water infrastructure, to ensure sustainability beyond the project duration.

39. Given the challenges from recent conflicts, the Syrian authorities' engagement in long-term climate-resilient planning is impressive. The partnership with Acted in the co-design of the presently proposed project appears to be based on strong commitment and active involvement.

40. Country ownership of the project is thus seen as high.

1.7 Efficiency and effectiveness *Scale: N/A*

41. Significant portions of the national infrastructure in the Syrian Arab Republic have been destroyed, and the country's financial constraints are severe. The requested GCF grant is hence the minimum concessionality required to overcome the incremental costs and risk premiums associated with the proposed climate adaptation investments in the post-conflict country.

42. As outlined in the funding proposal (para. 73), the grant avoids imposing unsustainable debt on the public sector and finances the high upfront costs of climate-proofing and system optimization. This contributes to the creation of public goods, such as improved water governance and a solidified set of data and information for climate-resilient resource management. Grant financing allows these systems to be established and fortified without transferring costs to vulnerable users or exacerbating social tensions in a post-conflict context.

43. The co-financing tranche is remarkably well detailed and specifically planned for in the proposed project budget (annex 3). The USD 2.7 million, compared with the USD 25 million requested from GCF, constitutes 9.75 per cent of the total project budget.

44. Overall, the iTAP considers that the proposed intervention constitutes efficient and effective use of GCF resources. It contributes to the creation of public goods in a highly climate-vulnerable and fragile context.

45. The project's efficiency and effectiveness is assessed as high.

II. Overall remarks from the independent Technical Advisory Panel

46. The proposed WATER-RES project takes a very promising approach, with great attention to efficiency gains and resource protection in the management of water use as a strategy for supporting vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change. It also has a credible exit/sustainability and knowledge management strategy. Above all, it acknowledges the

[10] See https://www.acted.org/en/about-us/governance/.

importance of working with people locally, without ignoring the massive security challenges that the project is up against.

47. The iTAP recommends that the Board approve this funding proposal.

Response from the accredited entity to the independent Technical Advisory Panel's assessment SAP072

Proposal name:	WATER-RES – Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria
Accredited entity:	ACTED
Country/(ies):	Syrian Arab Republic
Project/programme size:	Small

Impact potential
Thank you, no comment.
Paradigm shift potential
Acted welcomes the observation on water usage behavioral change. While the project prioritizes vulnerable households in line with its adaptation objectives, awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing activities under Component 1 will support wider dissemination of water-efficient practices across the basin. Acted further confirms that the financial institution supporting the revolving financing mechanism will be selected through a competitive and transparent process during project inception.
Sustainable development potential
Acted welcomes this recommendation and will explore opportunities during implementation to further promote women's participation in technical water-related professions and vocational skills development, building on the project's gender action plan and existing participation targets.
Needs of the recipient
Thank you, no comment.
Country ownership
Thank you, no comment.
Efficiency and effectiveness
Thank you, no comment.

Overall remarks from the independent Technical Advisory Panel:

Acted welcomes the Independent Technical Advisory Panel's positive assessment and constructive recommendations. We appreciate the recognition of the project's strong adaptation rationale, country ownership, and integrated approach to addressing water scarcity and climate resilience in Syria. Acted remains fully committed to incorporating the Panel's recommendations during implementation and looks forward to working closely with the Green Climate Fund, national stakeholders and project partners to deliver sustainable and climate-resilient outcomes for vulnerable communities.

Simplified Approval Process

Annex 04 Gender assessment and action plan

WATER_RES Enhancing the ability to address the risks of water scarcity in areas most affected by climate change and water shortage in Syria

Acted, Syria, April 6, 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Methodology

The objective of this gender needs assessment is to examine and understand the distinct roles, needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of women, men, and other vulnerable groups in relation to education, employment, climate change, protection, and gender-based violence in Syria. It seeks to ensure that the project adopts a gender-responsive approach by identifying existing inequalities, evaluating related risks and opportunities, and formulating recommendations in line with the GCF gender policy. The assessment methodology combined an extensive review of secondary sources with primary data collection and analysis.

Primary data was collected in December 2025, through four key informant interviews (KIIs) and four focus group discussions (FGDs) in Eastern Ghouta, specifically in two sub-districts of Douma district, Rural Damascus governorate - Douma and Haran Al'Awameed. The KIIs included the head of the local council (man), local council representative (woman), municipality staff responsible for engineering plans and technical matters related to the maintenance of

water, sewage and road lines (man) and a school supervisor, representative of the Association of Editors and Detainees in Rural Damascus governorate (woman).

The FGDs were held with a diverse and inclusive group of 25 community members (56 percent women), comprising of farmers, youth, representatives of various local occupations, community leaders, and respected local notables. In each location a separated woman and men group discussion was carried out by Acted MEAL team. This broad representation ensured that multiple perspectives were captured, enriching the understanding of local needs, challenges, and opportunities for climate-resilient water management in the area.

While no specific vulnerable-group representative organizations were formally targeted during the consultations, individual participants from a range of vulnerable and marginalized groups were included. In Douma, female FGDs included young women, returnees, and a local council representative. In Harran Al-Awameed, female FGDs included older persons, IDPs, returnees, former detainees (who represented the majority of participants), and a representative of the Syrian Detainees Association. Male FGDs in Harran Al-Awameed included youth, older persons and a representative of the Charity & Benevolence Association, while male FGDs in Douma included youth and older persons. At the national level, FP design workshops were held primarily with line ministries and public institutions, meaning women-led CSOs/WLOs, youth organizations and other civil society actors were not directly involved at that stage.

To address these gaps, Acted's MEAL Unit will undertake targeted stakeholder consultations during the project inception phase, specifically engaging disability-focused organizations, women-led CSOs/WLOs, and other intermediaries representing persons with disabilities and marginalized groups, alongside CBOs and CSOs. At the national level, targeted consultations with women-led CSOs/WLOs will complement the institutional inputs gathered through ministry-led workshops. Where direct engagement is constrained by contextual sensitivities, perspectives will be captured through trusted representative bodies or intermediaries.

Findings will be systematically integrated into project implementation, informing updates to the Gender Action Plan and Logframe indicators to ensure underrepresented groups are reflected in project planning and results frameworks.

1.2 Context

The Syrian Arab Republic (henceforward Syria) has established a constitutional and institutional framework that affirms the principle of equality before the law and recognizes the role of women in public life. Syria continues to face significant humanitarian and socioeconomic pressures resulting from years of conflict, economic decline, and infrastructure degradation. While national institutions are pursuing stabilization and recovery, many regions still experience challenges related to service delivery, displacement, and constrained economic opportunities.

The population is estimated at approximately 25.6 million in 2025, with a young demographic profile. Roughly a quarter of the population are aged 0–14.[1] However, due to the absence of recent census data, most demographic indicators rely on modelling and indirect estimation. Current estimates suggest a life expectancy of around 72 years, with women living slightly longer on average than men.[2] Maternal, infant, and under-five mortality rates have reportedly improved over time but remain influenced by gaps in service access and weakened health systems.[3,4] Decades of conflict and displacement have reshaped population distribution, with

[1] United Nations World Population Prospects, (2025), Population Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[2] World Health Organization, (2025), Syrian Arab Republic - WHO data overview. Available here
[3] World Bank, (2024), Maternal mortality ratio (modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births) – Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[4] World Health Organization, (2024), Syrian Arab Republic – Country health data overview. Available here

high levels of urbanization[5] and significant return movements since late 2024.[6] Approximately 30 percent of the population is estimated to live with some form of disability,[7] highlighting the importance of inclusive service provision. Literacy rates remain high, 97 percent for men and 92 percent for women,[8] reflecting strong educational foundations despite challenging circumstances.

Long-term economic stress, population movements, and damage to essential infrastructure have contributed to increased social and economic vulnerabilities for many households. After more than a decade of conflict, the country ranks among the lowest worldwide in human development: its Human Development Index (HDI) was estimated at 0.564 in 2023, placing Syria 155th out of 193 countries in 2023.[9] According to the 2025 Global Humanitarian Overview, an estimated 16.7 million people require some form of assistance. Female-headed households, people with disabilities, displaced families, and youth often face additional barriers to livelihood opportunities and access to services.[10,11]

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Syria ranked 152nd out of 156 countries assessed, indicating areas where progress can be strengthened in economic participation, education, health, and political representation.[12] UN Women's regional comparisons suggest that Syria is achieving around 57 percent relative gender parity across selected indicators compared with other Arab States.[13] The Economic Participation and Opportunity sub-index shows room for improvement, with women facing constraints in accessing employment, skills development, and leadership pathways. However, it is important to note that these challenges are common across many countries undergoing prolonged crisis and economic transition.

Agriculture continues to play a vital role for rural households, particularly for women involved in small-scale farming and home-based production. Climate-related shocks, especially drought, water scarcity, and declining irrigation infrastructure, have however reduced yields and impacted household food security. As such, recent assessments indicating that over 1.4 million people are severely food insecure while an estimated 5.4 million people face difficulty meeting basic nutritional needs. National data shows that many families, particularly in rural areas, have adopted coping strategies in response to rising food prices, reduced incomes, and the effects of recurrent drought.[14] These pressures can have particular implications for women, children, and persons with disabilities, who may be more vulnerable to nutritional stress.[15]

The project is located in the Barada and Awaj water basin, a critically important but highly stressed hydrological system in Syria, which supplies nearly all the freshwater for the Damascus metropolitan area and supports surrounding agricultural communities. This basin is home to approximately 30 percent of Syria's population, yet it faces severe water scarcity, with

[5] United Nations World Population Prospects, (2025), Population Syrian Arab Republic. Available here.
[6] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (2025), A million Syrians have returned home by September 2025. Available here.
[7] United Nations Development Program, (2025), The Impact of the Conflict in Syria: A Devastated Economy, Pervasive Poverty and a Challenging Road Ahead to Social and Economic Recovery. Available here.
[8] World Bank Gender Data Portal, (2021), Syrian Arab Republic – Adult literacy rate, female 15+. 91.8% in 2021. Available here
[9] The Global Economy, (2025), Syria: Human development data. Available here
[10] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2025), Global Humanitarian Overview. Available here
[11] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2024), Humanitarian needs overview: Syrian Arab Republic 2024. Available here
[12] World Economic Forum, (2021), Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Available here
[13] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (n.d.), Syrian Arab Republic - Gender data and SDG indicators. Available here
[14] World Food Programme, (2024), Nourishing Syria's Future: WFP nutrition and food security overview. Available here
[15] World Food Programme, (2025), Impact of cuts on WFP beneficiaries in Syria – April 2025 Monitoring Update. Available here

water availability representing less than 5 percent of the country's total renewable water resources. The area, particularly Eastern Ghouta, is further vulnerable due to its semi-arid climate, depleted groundwater, and high dependence on a limited number of water sources, making it highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures and reduced precipitation. Eastern Ghouta, a key agricultural hub for Damascus, now struggles with extensive water shortages, damaged infrastructure, and declining agricultural productivity, all of which have been exacerbated by years of conflict. The area is home to a mix of host populations, internally displaced and, since late 2024, also an increasing number of returnees from displacement camps and neighbouring countries. The area is also marked by a high number of female-headed households, largely linked to widowhood,[16] a consequence of the protracted conflict. This is making women in the area particularly vulnerable to the compounded stresses of water scarcity, limited economic opportunities, and damaged infrastructure. Given these challenges, the project focuses on strengthening local water management systems and promoting climate-resilient practices, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable populations, including women and displaced households.

1.3 Institutional framework for gender equality

Syria has established a constitutional and institutional framework that affirms the principle of equality before the law and recognizes the role of women in public life. The 2025 Interim Constitution reaffirmed equality for all citizens without discrimination and underscored Syria's commitment to enabling women's participation in political, social, cultural, and economic spheres.[17] At the same time, the Constitution does not provide an explicit definition of gender equality or a comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex across all areas of law, which has implications for the interpretation and application of related legislation.

Syria acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003, reflecting its engagement with international frameworks on women's rights. Reservations remain in place to selected articles, particularly those related to family relations, nationality, and legal capacity, which shape the way CEDAW provisions are applied domestically.[18] The country has not ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW or regional instruments such as the Maputo Protocol.[19]

At the institutional level, the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs (SCFPA), established in 2014 under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour,[20] has served as the primary national mechanism for coordination on family- and gender-related issues. A National Strategy for Women in Syria, addressing women's empowerment, gender equality, and the prevention of violence against women, has been developed, and past cooperation between SCFPA and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) contributed to the formulation of a national strategy on violence against women.[21]

In parallel, UN agencies operating in Syria, including United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), continue to work in coordination with national counterparts to support gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response and strengthen women's access to health and social

[16] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[17] The Constitutional Declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, (2025). Available here.
[18] United Nations Treaty Collection, (2024), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Syrian Arab Republic - Status and reservations. Available here
[19] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, (2024), Syria: Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Available here
[20] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (n.d.), Syria - National Women Machineries: Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs (SCFPA). Available here
[21] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2022), National strategy to combat violence against women in Syria - Workshop information. Available here

services.[22] Within the humanitarian coordination architecture, GBV Sub-Cluster platforms co-led by UNFPA and national partners support service delivery, referral mechanisms, and data collection.[23]

Notwithstanding these legal and institutional arrangements, prolonged conflict, economic pressures, displacement, and damage to infrastructure have significantly affected service delivery and institutional capacity across the country. Available humanitarian and UN reporting indicates that these conditions continue to constrain effective implementation of gender-related policies and GBV response mechanisms.[24,25] International monitoring bodies have previously noted challenges related to institutional capacity and implementation, with the most recent publicly available CEDAW concluding observations dating to 2014.[26]

At the governorate level, including in governorates Rural Damascus, differences in women's and men's participation and access to services can be observed in areas such as public engagement, justice mechanisms, and asset management. The stakeholder consultations revealed, participation is largely dependent of education level with highly educated women in Eastern Ghouta participating in sector-specific discussions. Final decisions are however typically taken by men.[27]. Persons with disabilities were consistently identified as facing challenges in participation in community decision-making processes. Communities often rely on informal or community-based dispute-resolution mechanisms, particularly for personal-status and property-related matters. This reliance reflects the practical challenges faced by households and institutions in contexts affected by prolonged crisis, including pressures on judicial capacity and limitations in access to formal public services.[28,29] In this context, local governance and dispute-resolution processes in Eastern Ghouta rely primarily on informal or customary mechanisms, including tripartite arrangements involving local councils, peace committees, and community notables. While these structures are generally perceived to operate on principles of fairness and merit, they do not have dedicated mandates, monitoring systems, or targeted measures to systematically address gender-specific barriers to participation and protection.[30]

2. Power and gender relations

2.1 Women's participation in politics

At the national level, Syria does not apply a formal electoral quota for women, and women's representation in the People's Assembly has historically remained modest in comparative terms. Women held approximately 10.4 percent of parliamentary seats in recent years, reflecting a combination of social, institutional, and contextual factors influencing political participation.[31] October 2025 parliamentary processes indicate that women's representation

[22] United Nations Population Fund, (n.d.), Country profile and mandate. Available here
[23] Global Protection Cluster, (2025), Syria Protection Sector Mid-Year Report. Available here
[24] United Nations Population Fund, (2025), Syria Situation Report #2. Available here
[25] United Nations Population Fund, (2024), An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria. Available here
[26] United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, (2014), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[27] Ibid.
[28] United Nations Resident Coordinator's Support Office, (2024), Violence Against Women and Girls in Syria: Legal, Policy and Humanitarian Gaps. Available here
[29] Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), (2025), Syria: Alternative Committees for Property and Personal-Status Disputes – response to power vacuum or judiciary marginalization? Available here
[30] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[31] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (2024), UN Women country fact sheet. Available here

continues to be limited, with final outcomes shaped by a mix of electoral, appointment, and administrative arrangements, as well as prevailing security and operational considerations. [32]

Syria's decentralisation framework formally provides a role for local councils in community-level governance, which can create entry points for broader participation. However, at governorate level, available analyses suggest that local governance structures remain predominantly male-represented, reflecting longstanding gender norms and limited institutional mechanisms to promote women's inclusion.[33] Women's engagement in local decision-making bodies is therefore more frequently observed in consultative or community-based capacties, rather than in formal leadership or resource-allocation roles.[34] Findings from humanitarian and gender-focused assessments suggest that factors such as restrictions on mobility, care responsibilities, and safety concerns affect women's opportunities to engage in decision-making beyond the household, including participation in community forums or local governance structures.[35]

Stakeholder consultations in Eastern Ghouta confirmed that women's participation in local councils, committees, and community leadership was shaped primarily by institutional capacity, economic conditions, and prevailing social norms, rather than by formal legal restrictions. Leadership and decision-making roles were described as open in principle to women and men on the basis of competence, education, and experience. In practice, however, men continue to occupy the majority of senior leadership and strategic decision-making positions, while women are more frequently represented in administrative, technical, supervisory, or service-oriented functions.[36] Leadership opportunities were commonly framed as merit-based and formally equal, shaped in practice by individual availability, education, economic circumstances, and household responsibilities, rather than by explicit exclusion. Customary norms, care burdens, mobility considerations, and limited access to public networks were frequently cited as factors influencing women's engagement, particularly in senior or public leadership roles. Economic pressures were also reported to affect the feasibility of women's participation in unpaid or voluntary governance activities. Where women do assume leadership positions, their responsibilities were described as comparable to those of men, although levels of acceptance and support vary by context and role.[37]

Within this context, civil society organisations and community-based women's groups have contributed to efforts to strengthen women's participation through awareness-raising, livelihood support, and local engagement initiatives. In some cases, women's collectives have supported income-generation or mutual-aid activities, which may indirectly enhance confidence and social participation. However, the stakeholder consultations consistently reported the absence of programmes, or structured initiatives at the local level aimed specifically at promoting women's participation in governance or leadership. Cooperation between local administrations and civil society was described mainly in relation to general needs assessments and project planning, rather than targeted measures to strengthen women's representation in decision-making bodies.[38] Overall, available evidence does not conclusively demonstrate that these initiatives systematically translate into increased women's

[32] Reuters, (2025), First results in Syria's new parliament show low share of minorities, women. Available here
[33] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2020), Women's political participation and leadership in the Arab region: Barriers and opportunities. Available here
[34] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2020), Women's political participation and leadership in the Arab region: Barriers and opportunities. Available here
[35] Unite Nations Population Fund's Arab States Regional Office, (2024), Voices from Syria 2024. Available here
[36] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

representation in formal political or decision-making bodies at scale.[39] A gender assessment therefore recognises both the potential contribution of civil society initiatives and the current limitations in available data regarding their long-term impact on women's political inclusion.

2.2 Social norms and cultural beliefs

The practical realization of institutionalized non-discrimination principles continues to be shaped by social norms, customary practices, and the broader effects of prolonged crisis. Traditional gender roles remain influential in many parts of the country, particularly in rural and more socially conservative communities, including areas of Rural Damascus governorate. In Eastern Ghouta, the stakeholders indicate that community norms continue to reflect differentiated roles across household, economic, and public life, shaped primarily by religion, customs, and social traditions and transmitted mainly through family and community structures, with limited influence attributed to formal education systems.[40] In such contexts, family structures and community expectations can affect women's mobility, educational pathways, and participation in paid employment.

Economic pressures, displacement, and return dynamics associated with the conflict have further shaped these patterns. The stakeholder in Eastern Ghouta indicated the attitude toward women's education and employment have evolved gradually, largely in response to economic hardship, drought, displacement, and livelihood losses, rather than as a result of a fundamental shift in underlying gender norms. Women's participation in administrative, professional, and service-sector employment aligned with educational attainment is more evident, alongside limited but increasing acceptance of women's engagement in community affairs.. However, in more rural areas of the project locations, roles were described as more traditionally structured, with men maintaining greater representation in public decision-making despite women's economic participation.[41] In parallel, practices such as early marriage have, in some cases, been used by households as coping or protection strategies during periods of heightened vulnerability.[42,43] National and UNFPA data indicate that 13 percent of women aged 20–24 were married before 18, with higher rates in rural and conflict-affected areas.[44]

At the same time, women and girls also continue to carry a significant share of care and domestic responsibilities, which limits the time and opportunities available for education, livelihood activities, and engagement in community or public life.[45,46] Stakeholders in Eastern Ghouta confirmed men's engagement in domestic tasks remains limited by prevailing social expectations.[47] Taken together, these social, economic, and care-related factors shape gender roles and opportunities, influencing women's ability to participate fully in household decision-making, economic activity, and civic processes.[48,49]

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[39] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2021), Gender Justice & Equality Before the Law: Arab States Regional Report. Available here
[40] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[41] Ibid.
[42] European Union Agency for Asylum, (2023), Country Guidance: Syria - 4.11.3 Forced and child marriage. Available here
[43] World Vision International, (2021), Stolen Future: War and Child Marriage in Northwest Syria. Available here
[44] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (2024), Syrian Arab Republic - country gender data profile. Available here
[45] United Nations Population Fund Arab States Regional Office, (2024), Voices from Syria 2024. Available here
[46] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024 – SDG 5 Chapter (Gender Equality). Available here
[47] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[48] Ibid.
[49] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2019), Rethinking Inequality in Arab Countries: Measurement, Perception and Policy Agenda. Available here

2.3 Decision-making within communities

Recent nationally representative data on women's participation in community decision-making in Syria remains limited, reflecting broader challenges related to data availability and access in a protracted crisis context. However, it is evident that women's representation in agricultural cooperatives, water-user associations, and farm-governance bodies remains limited across the Arab region, including Syria. In conflict-affected contexts such as Syria, qualitative assessments indicate that women's participation is shaped by limited control over productive assets, and constrained market access, factors that collectively weaken women's ability to assume leadership roles or secure sustained benefits from agricultural and water-related interventions.[50]

Water governance in Syria, encompassing both domestic water supply and agricultural irrigation, is characterised by a combination of centralised oversight and decentralised, community-level management mechanisms, including municipal authorities, farmer cooperatives, irrigation committees, and informal water-user arrangements.[51,52] These structures are primarily oriented toward technical management, infrastructure maintenance, and allocation efficiency, with limited institutional emphasis on inclusive participation. Publicly accessible information on their composition, decision-making processes, or accountability, particularly from a gender perspective, remains scarce.[53]

Regional and international evidence indicates that irrigation committees and water-user associations are typically dominated by registered landowners, a status overwhelmingly held by men. Where women participate, their roles are often confined to advisory, administrative, or socially oriented functions, with minimal influence over technical and strategic decisions such as water allocation, irrigation scheduling, infrastructure investment, or cost-recovery mechanisms.[54,55] Although Syria-specific empirical data are limited, the convergence between these well-documented regional patterns and Syria's structural gender inequalities in land ownership and rural governance strongly suggests similar constraints on women's participation in water governance, both for agriculture and domestic use.[56]

Findings from the stakeholder consultations in Eastern Ghouta are consistent with this broader evidence base. Community decision-making structures were generally described as inclusive in principle, through mechanisms such as resident-initiated project proposals, local council committees, or organisational needs assessments. However, effective participation was reported to remain predominantly male-led in practice. At the same time, women's engagement was more commonly described as taking place through individual consultations or separate sessions, rather than through regular involvement in core decision-making processes. Social norms, patterns of representation within local governance structures, and prevailing perceptions of authority were identified as factors influencing participation.

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[50] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here
[51] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024. Available here
[52] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2012), Gender and water: Securing water for improved rural livelihoods – The multiple-use system approach. Available here
[53] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024. Available here
[54] Meinzen-Dick, R., Zwarteveen, M., (1998), Gendered participation in water management: Issues and illustrations from water users' associations in South Asia. Agriculture and Human Values. Available here
[55] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2012), Gender and water: Securing water for improved rural livelihoods – The multiple-use system approach. Available here
[56] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here

The community-level water management and governance arrangements in the area of intervention were confirmed by the stakeholders to be limited in scope and capacity, reflecting the combined effects of prolonged drought, infrastructure degradation, and constrained institutional resources. Existing water-related structures, such as water units, agricultural associations, and local committees, are primarily informal or semi-formal in nature and are predominantly composed of men. While irrigation oversight is linked to agricultural associations in areas particularly affected by climate change, the collapse of irrigated agriculture has resulted in the absence of agricultural water committees, with remaining structures focused mainly on household water supply. Women are under-represented in formal water governance bodies, with limited participation attributed to practical constraints, including voluntary modalities, time and mobility requirements, land tenure patterns, and prevailing social norms, rather than to formal exclusion.

Decision-making related to water use and allocation, such as irrigation scheduling or distribution of water turns, remains predominantly men led. Decisions are typically managed through agricultural associations or water units, with participation largely limited to men, reflecting land ownership patterns and perceptions of technical expertise. In the absence of active irrigation, the frequency of formal decision-making forums reduced. Nevertheless, where water-related decisions occur, they are generally taken by male heads of households or male technical staff. Across Eastern Ghouta, women play a more significant role in household-level water management, particularly in regulating daily consumption, but have limited influence over collective or institutional decision-making processes.[57]

Similar dynamics shape women's access to the benefits of water and irrigation infrastructure investments. Although interventions such as borehole rehabilitation, canal repair, and irrigation upgrades are formally intended to serve entire communities, the absence of systematic gender-disaggregated monitoring limits assessment of equitable access and impact.[58] Regional studies consistently show that information flows and decision-making around water infrastructure are channelled through male-dominated governance structures, increasing the risk that women, particularly those without formal land titles, with limited mobility, or heading households, are less informed about projects and less able to access associated assets, services, and livelihood opportunities.[59,60] Given comparable institutional arrangements and gender norms, these risks are likely to be present across rural Syria.[61]

In Eastern Ghouta, the stakeholders confirmed water-related projects, including borehole rehabilitation, canal cleaning, and network extensions, are generally communicated through local councils, water units, farmers' associations, neighbourhood mechanisms, and social media platforms. All residents are informed of these initiatives and are formally eligible to benefit, and that project benefits are perceived as collective in nature. However, participation in meetings, technical consultations, and project oversight remains largely men-dominated, particularly where activities involve infrastructure works, irrigation systems, or land-related decisions. Women's engagement is more frequently reported at household level or in smaller-scale, neighbourhood-based interventions, rather than within formal planning or technical decision-making processes.[62]

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[57] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[58] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024. Available here
[59] Meinzen-Dick, R., Zwarteveen, M., (1998), Gendered participation in water management: Issues and illustrations from water users' associations in South Asia. Agriculture and Human Values. Available here
[60] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2012), Gender and water: Securing water for improved rural livelihoods – The multiple-use system approach. Available here
[61] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here
[62] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.

Women's access to water-management training and agricultural extension services further reflects these systemic barriers. While programmes supported partners provide training on irrigation efficiency, water-saving techniques, and climate-smart agriculture, women's participation in technical water-related training remains comparatively low. Mobility restrictions, domestic and care responsibilities, limited childcare options, and gender norms that restrict engagement in male-dominated technical spaces continue to impede access.[63] Evidence from Farmer Field Schools shows that women's participation improves when training is delivered locally, scheduled flexibly, or organised in women-only formats, with stronger engagement in modules related to household water use, livestock watering, and small-scale production than in irrigation engineering or large-scale water-resource management.[64]

The stakeholder in Eastern Ghouta confirmed opportunities for training and capacity-building related to irrigation, water-saving practices, or farm management are currently very limited or non-existent. This reflects ongoing water scarcity, inactive irrigation systems, and the broader disruption of agricultural livelihoods. Respondents consistently indicated that, in principle, any future training initiatives would be open to both women and men. In practice, however, participation is expected to vary by topic and practical considerations with men more likely to participate in irrigation- and farm-management-related activities, while women are more likely to engage in household-level water-use or water-saving sessions. Women's participation was confirmed to be shaped by caregiving responsibilities, scheduling, and accessibility of training venues.

Regarding greywater and wastewater reuse, stakeholders in Eastern Ghouta indicated that awareness and acceptance are primarily influenced by water scarcity and the functionality of treatment infrastructure, rather than by gender or displacement status. Both women and men reported increased acceptance of wastewater use for irrigation as a necessity-driven coping measure, recalling prior use of treated wastewater and noting current reliance on untreated sources due to non-operational facilities, alongside ongoing health concerns. In more rural areas of the project, perspectives are more differentiated: men described pragmatic acceptance linked to acute scarcity, while women expressed lower acceptance, citing perceived health risks and limited consumer demand for produce irrigated with wastewater. Overall, wastewater reuse is viewed as a conditional coping strategy, with continued concerns regarding safety, treatment standards, and public health implications.[65]

While information dissemination and access to water-related project benefits are generally inclusive at community level, women's participation in water governance, planning, technical functions, and collective decision-making remains limited. Engagement is strongest at household level and frailest within formal or collective structures, reflecting the interaction of environmental stressors, institutional constraints, and established gender roles, rather than explicit policy or regulatory barriers.

2.4 Decision making within households

In many settings, men continue to play a leading role in decisions related to household finances, mobility, property, and public engagement, while women's responsibilities are more frequently associated with domestic management and caregiving.[66,67] A 2021 Gender Equality

[63] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here
[64] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2021), FAO's farmer field schools improve animal husbandry practices for women in Syria. Available here
[65] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[66] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2020), Women's political participation and leadership in the Arab region: Barriers and opportunities. Available here
[67] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024 - SDG 5 Chapter. Available here

and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment reported that approximately 36–38 per cent of women had control over household assets, while women's involvement in decisions related to routine household consumption was more common, with around two-thirds reporting joint or partial participation. Women's engagement in higher-level financial decisions, such as investments, borrowing, asset acquisition, or property transfer, was reported to be more limited.[68] Regional analyses and qualitative studies further suggest that women's autonomy and public participation tend to increase with higher levels of education, improved economic status, and residence in urban areas.[69]

Stakeholder consultations in Eastern Ghouta broadly reflect these patterns. Household decision-making was commonly described as consultative, with men and women jointly discussing matters such as household spending, children's education, and healthcare. At the same time, roles were differentiated. Women were primarily associated with day-to-day household management, caregiving, and oversight of children's education, while men more often retained responsibility for income generation and decisions related to land, assets, or livelihood strategies. Stakeholders noted that joint decision-making tended to be more pronounced in households where both spouses had higher levels of education, and women were described as having a more visible role in education-related and, in some cases, economic activities. Female-headed households, particularly those headed by widows, were consistently described as assuming full responsibility for household decision-making, including financial management, caregiving, and livelihood-related choices, reflecting household composition rather than shifts in broader social norms.[70]

2.5 Access to and control over resources

Across the Arab region, including Syria, women's access to and control over economic and natural resources is influenced by a combination of legal frameworks, social norms, and socio-economic conditions. Regional analyses indicate that while statutory laws often recognise women's rights to own and inherit property, variations in enforcement, customary practices, and social expectations can affect women's effective control over land, housing, and productive resources.[71] UN ESCWA's 2024 Gender Snapshot highlights that women in the region typically undertake the majority of unpaid care work, which can limit the time and opportunities available to engage in income-generating activities or accumulate assets. Although Syria lacks recent nationally representative datasets, its legal framework, gender norms and socio-economic conditions closely mirror these regional patterns, making the broader Arab region evidence highly applicable to the Syrian context.[72]

Before the 2011 conflict, around 62 percent of land in Syria was publicly owned and 38 percent privately held, yet large areas remained unregistered or informally occupied. This created a land administration system shaped by overlapping statutory, customary and religious laws, with limited coordination between national and local institutions.[73] Rapid population growth, rural-to-urban migration, and climate pressures in the 1990s and 2000s contributed to informal settlements around major urban centres. Many households, particularly low income, displaced and minority households, settled on unregistered or state land without formal tenure, leaving

[68] Ibid.
[69] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here
[70] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[71] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here.
[72] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2021), Gender Justice & Equality Before the Law: Arab States Regional Report. Available here.
[73] United Nations Human Settlements Programme, (2022), Land governance, natural resources and climate change in the Arab region. Available here.

significant portions of the population vulnerable to exclusion from formal land-administration systems.[74] The protracted conflict has further affected land and housing systems through displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and loss of documentation, limiting formal proof of ownership or occupancy for many households.[75] These circumstances have particularly affected women, who may lack access to documentation or representation to act on their own behalf.[76] Evidence indicates that women often face practical challenges in accessing inheritance or marital assets, including reliance on customary or community-based dispute resolution processes, family mediation, or documentation requirements.[77]

In Rural Damascus governorate, the situation reflects these national and regional patterns. Stakeholders in Eastern Ghouta indicated that access to land, livestock, equipment, and natural resources is determined mainly by ownership status, financial capacity, household structure, and prevailing social norms, rather than formal gender-based restrictions. Prolonged drought, declining groundwater, reduced grazing areas, and rising input costs have contributed to a marked decline in agriculture and livestock production across both locations, with urban expansion further reducing available agricultural land. As a result, many households have reduced or abandoned farming, shifted to wage labour or public employment, or relied on informal coping strategies such as private well use, reduced production, or livestock sales.

Men were generally identified as the primary managers and final decision-makers over land, livestock, income, and agricultural assets, reflecting customary roles and perceptions of physical capacity and technical expertise. Women's involvement was typically described as consultative and concentrated at the household level, particularly in day-to-day resource management. Exceptions were noted in female-headed households, especially among widows or women landowners, where women manage assets directly or through hired labour. In these cases, consultation regarding resources with male family member was often highlighted as optional but common.

Access to loans, credit, savings mechanisms, or formal livelihood support was consistently reported as absent. Financial institutions, agricultural credit schemes, cooperatives, and farmer associations that existed prior to the conflict were described as no longer operational or limited. Where access was discussed in principle, it was described as dependent on employment status or guarantees, which may pose additional constraints for women. Overall, financial exclusion was attributed to institutional gaps and economic conditions rather than explicit gender-based barriers.[78]

Available evidence suggests that, in rural and conflict-affected areas, displacement, loss of civil documentation, drought, and asset depletion reduce livelihood options for women and influence their capacity to claim or inherit land.[79] Even when women contribute substantially to agricultural production or small livestock management, decision-making regarding land use, livestock sales, and household assets remains largely coordinated by male family members or local authorities, placing greater practical constraints on widows, displaced women, and women without stable income.[80] These considerations will be taken into account during the project to align with the local cultural norms while aiming to promote greater inclusion.

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[74] Norwegian Refugee Council, (2016), Housing, Land and Property in the Syrian Arab Republic. Available here.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Norwegian Refugee Council, (2024), Facing an impossible choice. Available here.
[78] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[79] Norwegian Refugee Council, (2024), Facing an impossible choice. Available here
[80] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here

3. Education

Syria's education system operates within a complex governance and socio-economic context, which has been shaped by over a decade of conflict. This has resulted in variations in education structures, standards, and access across different areas, particularly in regions with limited state administration.[81,82] Higher education and certification pathways have similarly experienced disruptions, contributing to differences in system coherence and regional disparities.[83]

Global SDG-4 indicators for Syria indicate persistent gendered disparities in educational outcomes. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) modelled estimates for 2024 show that completion rates of female students decline beyond primary education, with approximately 46.9 percent of students completing lower secondary and 30.9 percent completing upper secondary education.[84] Early childhood education remains underdeveloped, with only around 8 percent of children aged 36–59 months enrolled in pre-primary programmes, which are largely private and less accessible to low-income or displaced households.[85] Disparities are greatest in rural areas, where insecurity and limited secondary education access constrain women's educational attainment.

Prolonged conflict has further undermined public education financing and service delivery. Education spending, which accounted for around 5 percent of GDP prior to 2011, has declined in recent years, reflecting fiscal constraints and broader service delivery challenges.[86,87] Teacher shortages, limited instructional materials, and damaged or repurposed school infrastructure continue to affect the quality and continuity of learning.[88,89] Donor-supported initiatives such as school feeding, take-home rations, and community-based education programmes help to support attendance and retention, particularly for vulnerable children, but coverage remains limited due to funding and access constraints.[90,91]

Humanitarian actors have also expanded non-formal education, life-skills training, livelihood support (including TVET and small enterprise development), and emergency education interventions to help children and youth maintain or regain access to learning and skills development. While these initiatives have contributed to expanding opportunities for livelihoods and skills acquisition, coverage remains limited relative to the scale of need. Syria does not yet have a comprehensive system of accredited, labour-market-relevant vocational pathways to support smooth transitions into higher-value technical sectors.[92,93] Strengthening

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[81] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2025), Humanitarian Response Plan: Syrian Arab Republic 2025 - Education Sector. Available here
[82] United Nations Children's Fund, Whole of Syria Education Sector, (2024), Whole of Syria Education Sector Annual Report. Available here
[83] Milton, S., Barakat, S., (2019), Syria higher education post-2011: Immediate and future challenges. Available here
[84] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, (2025), UIS Data Browser - Education indicators for the Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[85] United Nations Children's Fund, (2025), Country profiles - Syrian Arab Republic: Early Childhood Education Indicator (36–59 months). Available here
[86] United Nations Children's Fund Institute for Statistics (UIS), (2025), Repository of Education Expenditure Reports. Available here
[87] World Bank, (2024), Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) – Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[88] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2024), Syrian Arab Republic: 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available here
[89] United Nations Children's Fund, (2024), Syria Humanitarian Situation Report – Year End 2024. Available here
[90] World Food Programme, (2025), The State of School Feeding Worldwide 2024. Available here
[91] United Nations Children's Fund, (2025), Syria: Humanitarian situation - country overview and education sector brief. Available here
[92] World Food Programme, (2024), Syrian Arab Republic - Annual Country Report 2024. Available here
[93] United Nations Development Programme, (2024), Gender Equality Strategy 2024–2026. Available here

a national, gender-responsive TVET framework would further enhance opportunities for women's skills development and economic participation.

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta broadly align with national trends and provide additional local context. Stakeholders reported that a significant proportion of boys and girls have returned to school; however, school dropout persists, primarily linked to household economic constraints and the need for some children to contribute to family income. Boys were more frequently reported to leave school for income-generating activities, particularly following the decline of agricultural livelihoods. Girls were described as showing strong interest in education and, in some cases, higher attendance rates; however, early marriage was identified as a factor limiting girls' ability to complete schooling, particularly in more rural areas of the project area.

Boys and girls are perceived to have equal formal access to education, while continuation is influenced by household financial capacity and social factors. Children from lower-income households were more likely to interrupt schooling to engage in paid work, especially in households without alternative income sources. Respondents also noted gender-specific constraints affecting girls' educational continuity, including early marriage, safety-related mobility concerns, as well as limited access to nearby secondary schools in more rural areas.

Differences between rural and urban education pathways were also reported. Economic hardship was identified as a key constraint in both settings. Urban areas were described as placing greater emphasis on formal schooling, while rural areas were described as having traditionally prioritised agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods. At the same time, respondents noted that the decline of agricultural employment has increased interest among rural boys and girls in continuing education as a pathway to alternative livelihoods.[94]

Similarly to formal education, access to TVET and skills-development opportunities for women and girls remains limited, particularly in rural or conflict-affected areas. National assessments indicate that training programmes are often concentrated in urban or conflict unaffected areas and focus predominantly on traditionally female-dominated trades such as handicrafts, sewing, and food processing, with limited pathways into higher-value technical sectors.[95] Context-specific findings from Acted's assessments reinforce these trends, showing that most female micro-entrepreneurs have not accessed formal training, and participation is constrained by mobility limitations, financial barriers, social norms, safety concerns, and limited access to start-up capital, tools, or professional networks.[96,97] The absence of flexible, accredited pathways into non-formal learning, digital literacy, or technical trades limits educational and economic mobility for women, particularly those from low-income, rural, or displaced households.[98,99,100]

[94] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[95] United Nations Development Programme, (2023), Gender equality and women's empowerment – Syria. Available here
[96] Acted, (2025), TVET Assessment – Maarat Masrin.
[97] REACH, (2025), Dana City Labour Market Assessment: Microenterprises. Available here
[98] United Nations Development Programme, (2023), Gender equality and women's empowerment - Syria. Available here
[99] Syrian Centre for Policy Research, (2022), Hope under siege: Voices of adolescents on education and ICT during the Syrian conflict. Available here
[100] Overseas Development Institute, (2022). Adolescent girls in protracted crises: Evidence from the GAGE programme. Available here

Household economic pressures, food insecurity, travel distances, and safety concerns are key factors influencing school or training course attendance and retention.[101,102] Girls face additional gender-specific challenges, including early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, mobility limitations, and exposure to protection risks, while boys are more frequently withdrawn from school to contribute to household income through agriculture or informal labour. [103,104,105] Gender-based violence within and around schools, including risks during travel, can also affect attendance and learning outcomes.[106]

Rural Damascus governorate reflects national trends, with structural and gendered barriers affecting educational access and progression. Adolescent girls, in particular, are at higher risk of educational exclusion due to domestic responsibilities, mobility limitations, and early marriage, while boys are more likely to leave school for income-generating activities. [107,108] Evidence indicates that secondary-level retention remains fragile, with girls disproportionately affected. Remedial and non-formal education initiatives, including accelerated learning and community-based classes, provide alternative pathways, but their coverage remains below needs due to limited funding.[109] In Rural Damascus, stakeholders underscored how these structural and gendered factors influence educational opportunities for rural children, highlighting the need for continued support to promote equitable access and reduce the risk of long-term educational exclusion.

4. Labour

4.1 Labour force participation, employment and poverty

The absence of recent nationally representative household income and expenditure surveys means that current socio-economic estimates rely primarily on model-based projections, which are subject to a degree of uncertainty in a protracted crisis context.[110] Data gaps related to conflict conditions affect the availability, precision, and comparability of labour-market indicators.[111] Within these limitations, International Labour Organization (ILO) models indicate that overall labour-force participation in formal economy declined from approximately 51–54 percent in 1990 to an estimated 37.4 percent in 2024, reflecting long-term economic pressures and conflict-related disruptions, alongside gender differences in participation pattern.[112]

Demographic changes associated with conflict and economic hardship have, in some areas, influenced women's engagement in economic activities, as women increasingly contribute to household livelihoods, including in situations where male household members are absent. World Bank estimates women labour market participation rising from an estimated 13 percent in 2010 to 31 percent in 2022,[113] while ILO's models estimate more modest increase to 13.3

[101] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2025), Humanitarian Response Plan: Syrian Arab Republic 2025 - Education Sector. Available here
[102] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2024), Syrian Arab Republic: 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available here
[103] Ibid.
[104] United Nations Children's Fund, (2024), Syria Humanitarian Situation Report - June 2024. Available here
[105] European Union Agency for Asylum, (2025), Country Guidance: Syria - Interim. Available here
[106] Ibid.
[107] United Nations Population Fund, (2024), Child marriage takes a brutal toll on Syrian girls. Available here
[108] Global Protection Cluster, (2025), Protection Landscape in Syria – March 2025. Available here
[109] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2025), Syrian Arab Republic - Humanitarian Response Priorities January to June 2025: Education Sector. Available here
[110] Redaelli, S., Guadarrama, I., M., Moreno Herrera, R., (2024), Assessing the extent of monetary poverty in the Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[111] United Nations Development Programme, (2025), The Impact of the Conflict in Syria. Available here
[112] International Labour Organization, (2025), Syria: Employment and environment factsheet v5. Available here
[113] World Bank, (2022), The Welfare of Syrian Households after a Decade of Conflict. Available here.

percent.[114] Women, however, continue to face high unemployment due to gender norms and legal barriers such as limited access to civil documentation. Unemployment rate of women has reached estimated 25 percent in 2025, in comparison to 11 percent of men.[115] Despite these dynamics, women continue to experience higher unemployment rates than men, influenced by a combination of labour-market conditions, social norms, and administrative or documentation-related constraints. Modelled estimates suggest that women's unemployment remains substantially higher than that of men.[116] These trends are consistent with UN Country Team analyses describing a labour market characterised by limited availability of decent work, declining real wages, high levels of informality, and ongoing challenges in expanding women's access to stable and productive employment, even in sectors experiencing labour shortages.

Stakeholder consultations in Eastern Ghouta reflect these broader trends at the local level. Since the conflict, women's participation in income-generating activities has reportedly increased, with women increasingly combining household responsibilities with paid work in education, health, services, factories, or informal activities. This is particularly true among widowed women and in other female-headed households. Increased labour participation of women is primarily described as an adaptive response to livelihood loss rather than a broader transformation of gender norms, with men continuing to hold primary responsibility for public roles and leadership.[117]

The World Bank's World Development Indicators report a Gini index of 26.6 for Syria in 2022, suggesting relatively moderate income inequality compared to many countries in the region.[118,119] This reflects widespread poverty with roughly one in four Syrians living in extreme poverty unable to meet their basic needs, while around 67 percent of the population live below the lower middle-income poverty line.[120] Sex-disaggregated poverty data are unavailable, but multiple assessments show that women, due to reduced access to income, productive assets and safe employment, are overrepresented in lower-paid, less secure segments of the labour market.[121]

Informality continues to dominate Syria's economic landscape. Even prior to the conflict, two-thirds of workers and nearly 90 percent of private-sector workers were informally employed.[122] Recent macro-fiscal analysis confirms that informality has expanded further, offering limited social protection and absorbing most labour supply.[123,124] In general, women across Syria tend to be predominantly engaged in low-paid activities such as agriculture, domestic work, tailoring, home-based enterprises, and small workshops, while men retain relatively greater access to formal public-sector employment and higher-return informal activities in construction, transport, and trade.[125,126]

In Eastern Ghouta, stakeholders reported that both women and men participate across similar income-generating sectors; however, patterns of engagement differ in practice. Skilled

[114] International Labour Organization, (2025), Syria: Employment and environment factsheet v5. Available here
[115] Ibid.
[116] United Nations in Syrian Arab Republic, (2025), Country Results Report – Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[117] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[118] World Bank, (2024a), Gini index – Syrian Arab Republic [Data]. World Development Indicators. Available here
[119] CEIC Data. (2024). Syria – Gini inequality index 1996-2022. Available here
[120] World Bank, (2022), The Welfare of Syrian Households after a Decade of Conflict. Available here.
[121] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Inequality in the Arab Region: Crisis upon crisis. Available here
[122] Arab NGO Network for Development, (2018), Informal labour in Syria. Available here
[123] United Nations Development Programme, (2025), The Impact of the Conflict in Syria. Available here
[124] International Labor Organization, (2024), ILO Brief – Syria 2012-2024. Available here
[125] North Press Agency, (2023), Syrian female workers face GBV, discrimination amid poor legal protection. Available here
[126] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (2024), Data Hub – Syrian Arab Republic. Country Snapshot. Available here

industrial work, particularly vehicle repair, mechanical maintenance, and heavy crafts, remains largely men dominated. Women's employment is more visible in education, health, services, factories, and small-scale or home-based activities such as food processing, sewing, handicrafts, cleaning services, photography, retail, and online marketing. Traditional home-based activities such as embroidery were reported to have declined, while a range of informal and service-oriented livelihoods have emerged over time. Home-based work undertaken by women was described as more socially acceptable due to limited hours and reduced public exposure, while men's informal work was more frequently associated with skilled and outward-facing trades. Men's employment patterns were described as broadly stable, though increasingly characterised by longer working hours or multiple jobs in response to declining real incomes. Overall employment patterns were reported to be primarily shaped by economic conditions, labour demand, household responsibilities, and prevailing social norms rather than by formal gender-based restrictions.[127]

With regard to remuneration and advancement, stakeholders indicated that pay and promotion for similar work are formally determined by qualifications, experience, productivity, and hours worked. Equality is more consistently reported in the public sector across both locations. In the private sector, however, respondents reported that men are more likely to be hired or to receive higher pay, particularly in more rural areas of the project location, reflecting labour-market conditions and work arrangements rather than explicit institutional rules.[128]

Intersectional factors further shape these dynamics. Displaced and returnee women are more likely to depend on informal, low-capital livelihoods, with reduced access to land, assets, finance, and social networks.[129] Age-related differences are also evident, with younger women, particularly those with exposure to displacement or urban environments, showing greater engagement in income-generation and skills development, while older women are more constrained by domestic and care responsibilities and traditional livelihood roles. Women from socially marginalised communities may face additional barriers related to land access, market participation, and dispute resolution.[130,131]

Gender disparities in working hours are significant, particularly in rural areas. Regional evidence indicates that women undertake a substantially higher share of domestic and care work, particularly in rural areas, which limits time available for paid employment, education, and skills development. ESCWA estimates that women in Arab States perform nearly five times more unpaid care work than men, a pattern that is especially pronounced among rural women responsibilities.[132] Urban women also experience disproportionate unpaid care burdens, though they have comparatively greater access to small services and home-based enterprises.

In Rural Damascus governorate, including in Eastern Ghouta, labour-market conditions reflect heightened vulnerability. Only about 26 percent of households report steady income, while roughly 60 percent rely on daily informal labour, indicating widespread dependence on casual

[127] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[128] Ibid.
[129] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (2024), Data Hub – Syrian Arab Republic. Country Snapshot. Available here
[130] United Nations Population Fund, (2024), An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria. Available here
[131] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2024), Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic 2024. Available here
[132] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here

work.[133] Household income is reportedly insufficient to meet basic needs, driving widespread reliance on negative coping strategies such as debt, reduced essential expenditures and asset depletion.[134]

4.2 Division of labour

As outlined above, roles and responsibilities within Syrian households continue to reflect established social norms and the prevailing personal status framework, with men generally assuming primary income-earning roles and women taking primary responsibility for domestic and care-related activities.[135] In practice, this often results in men being more engaged in paid employment across formal and informal sectors, including construction, transport, agriculture, and trade, while women devote substantial time to household and care work, alongside informal or home-based income-generating activities such as tailoring, food processing, livestock care, and small service provision.[136] These patterns are generally more pronounced in rural and peri-urban areas (see Section 4.3: Women in Agriculture).

Conflict and displacement have, in some contexts, contributed to increased economic participation by women, particularly in informal or NGO-supported activities, although these shifts have not fundamentally altered underlying social expectations regarding household roles. Gender analyses conducted by Acted across Syria suggest that return dynamics may, in certain settings, be associated with gradual and context-specific adjustments in attitudes. Qualitative findings indicate that some returnee women draw on skills and experiences gained during displacement to engage more actively in livelihood activities and, in some cases, household decision-making. These developments appear incremental and uneven and are often concentrated in socially accepted forms of work.[137,138] They nonetheless align with broader Syria-wide analyses indicating that displacement and return may create limited opportunities for the gradual adaptation of gender roles, without implying rapid or systemic change.

In Rural Damascus, gendered divisions of labour are particularly evident due to the predominantly agricultural economy, infrastructure damage, and prevailing social norms. Women carry nearly all domestic tasks, childcare, cooking, cleaning, and water and fuel collection, and simultaneously perform substantial agricultural labour. This combination often results in high overall workloads.[139] Men generally retain greater control over land and productive agricultural assets, which, together with structural constraints affecting women's access to resources, influences women's participation in higher-return agricultural and non-agricultural livelihood opportunities.[140] Limited access to mechanisation, childcare, and labour-saving services further affects women's economic participation.

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta confirmed that household and productive roles continue to follow established gender-based patterns, with adjustments primarily driven by economic constraints rather than shifts in social norms. Across both locations, men are generally more engaged in income-generating activities outside the home, while women retain

[133] Welthungerhilfe, SARD, (2025), Joint Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment: Rural Damascus, Homs and Hama. Available here
[134] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2024), Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024. Available here
[135] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here
[136] Ibid.
[137] Acted, (2025), Gender Profile: Maaret Masrin.
[138] Acted, (2025), Gender Profile: Deir Er Zor.
[139] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (n.d.). Mission report: Development of activities for women communities in Jordan and Syria. Available here
[140] Welthungerhilfe, SARD, (2025), Joint Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment: Rural Damascus, Homs and Hama. Available here

primary responsibility for household management and caregiving. Reduced livelihood opportunities have contributed to increased participation of women in paid work alongside domestic responsibilities, without a corresponding redistribution of household tasks. Women consistently devote more time to household chores and caregiving than men, in addition to any paid work undertaken. In urban areas women reported to work approximately eight hours per day outside the home and spend considerably more time on domestic activities. In more rural areas of the project area, the difference is more pronounced, with women spending the majority of the day on household and care responsibilities, while men dedicate comparatively less time to domestic tasks and remain primarily engaged in external employment.

With respect to paid employment, working hours are broadly similar for men and women in principle, with variations linked mainly to sector and occupation rather than gender or location. Across both communities, eight-hour working days are commonly reported for men and for women employed in public-sector, factory, or industrial roles, while women working in education, particularly in teaching positions, tend to have shorter working hours. In some cases, longer working days of up to 8-10 hours were reported, depending on the nature of employment. Rural women were occasionally described as working fewer paid hours due to limited employment opportunities rather than formal rural-urban distinctions.

Stakeholder noted that damage to water and sanitation infrastructure in Eastern Ghouta has increased the domestic workload associated with water management, as women and girls remain primarily responsible for water collection, food preparation, cleaning, and household hygiene. When piped supply is unreliable or groundwater levels decline, households adopt coping practices such as manual water storage, additional collection trips, rationing, or the reuse of lower-quality water, which are largely managed at household level and therefore increase the time and labour demands placed on women and girls.[141]

4.3 Women in agriculture

4.3.1 Women in crop production

In Syria, women and men participate in agriculture in complementary ways, shaped by social norms, asset ownership, and access to productive resources. Evidence from regional and Syria-specific assessments indicates that women's engagement is concentrated in labour-intensive, small-scale, and household-based activities, including planting, weeding, harvesting, small livestock care, and household-level food processing. Men more frequently participate in land ownership, mechanised operations, irrigation management, and higher-value segments of agricultural value chains, such as commercial farming and input supply.[142]

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta align with national-level trends, indicating that agricultural production relies on the contributions of women and men, with task allocation shaped by customary practice, physical requirements, and household labour needs rather than by formal gender-based restrictions. Across both communities, men are more commonly engaged in physically demanding and externally oriented activities, including land preparation, tillage, irrigation, and market engagement, while women are more frequently involved in routine farming tasks and household-proximate agricultural activities. In practice, women contribute labour across multiple stages of the production cycle and, in some households, undertake tasks similar to those performed by men in response to labour availability and economic pressures.[143]

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[141] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[142] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2023), Gendered economic inequalities and labour market dynamics in the Arab States. Available here
[143] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.

Assessments by REACH and Acted show that women's agricultural work is predominantly informal and localised, with limited access to mechanised equipment, certified inputs, agricultural credit, extension services, or formal training. Women also contribute substantially to household-level food processing, such as drying, pickling, and dairy preparation. However, these activities are often unpaid, informal, and constrained by limited equipment, storage, packaging, and quality-control facilities, which restricts profitability and scalability.[144,145,146] While these assessments are location-specific, the consistency of observed patterns across multiple governorates suggests strong relevance for rural Syria more broadly, including Rural Damascus, which shares similar smallholder farming systems, infrastructure constraints, and rural livelihood dynamics.

Female agri-entrepreneurs are less likely than men to access finance, tools, or formal training, relying instead on self-financing and informal knowledge transfer. Employers in agribusiness sectors tend to prioritise skills and labour modalities more accessible to men, reinforcing gendered segmentation along value chains.[147] Women's productive activities are further constrained by extensive domestic and care responsibilities, including childcare, cooking, cleaning, elder care, and collection of water and fuel, which limit their time for agricultural training, farmer cooperatives, or market engagement.[148,149] In some cases, women balance labour on male-controlled household land, cultivation of their own small plots, and domestic work, reducing opportunities to diversify production or increase yields.[150,151]

Gender disparities become more pronounced along the commercialisation chain. Women's market engagement is typically limited to small-scale, localised sales near the household, influenced by transportation constraints, safety considerations, and social expectations.[152,153] Men, in contrast, more often participate in district-level trade, wholesale marketing, transportation, and price-setting, enabling greater access to higher-return markets.[154] Women's limited market presence heightens their exposure to price fluctuations, particularly during periods of seasonal scarcity when intermediaries exercise greater control over pricing. Evidence from REACH and Acted's assessments indicates that women predominantly rely on informal, community-based, or digital sales channels, which provide flexibility but limit bargaining power and exposure to higher-value markets.[155,156,157]

Consistent with broader assessments, stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta indicated that women's participation in agricultural marketing is primarily informal and individual rather than institutionalised. Women engage in the processing and sale of food and agricultural products, often home-based, within local markets, contributing to household income,

[144] REACH, (2024), Labour market Assessment: Raqqa City. Available here
[145] REACH, (2024), Labour market Assessment: Tabqa City. Available here
[146] Acted, (2025), TVET Assessment: Marrat Masrin.
[147] Ibid.
[148] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2024), Humanitarian needs overview: Syrian Arab Republic 2024. Available here
[149] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2025), Women economic empowerment in the Arab region: Guidelines to advance care policies. Available here
[150] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024). Gender snapshot of the Arab region 2024. Available here
[151] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (2021), Enhancing resilience and women's empowerment in the Arab States: Regional report. Available here
[152] Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility, Unite Nations Population Fund, (2023), Voices from Syria 2023: Assessment findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available here
[153] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), A Gender Snapshot of the Arab Region 2024. Available here
[154] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2011), The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: Women in Agriculture. Available here
[155] REACH, (2024), Labour market Assessment: Raqqa City. Available here
[156] REACH, (2024), Labour market Assessment: Tabqa City. Available here
[157] Acted, (2025), TVET Assessment: Marrat Masrin.

particularly in female-headed households. However, no evidence was identified of women's systematic representation in agricultural cooperatives, producers' associations, or formal market governance structures, which limits their participation in collective decision-making and access to higher-value markets.[158]

4.3.2 Women and livestock

The livestock sector exhibits similar gendered patterns of participation. Women are primarily engaged in small-scale livestock keeping and household-level dairy production, including animal care, milking, and processing dairy products for home consumption and local sale. These roles are labour-intensive, largely informal, and often lack formal recognition or remuneration.[159,160] Men, in contrast, are more involved in activities requiring mobility, capital, and market integration, such as herd management, fodder procurement, veterinary decision-making, ownership of larger livestock, and the transport and sale of animals at district or inter-governorate markets.[161]

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta indicated that prolonged drought and water scarcity have significantly reduced cultivation and contributed to the sale of livestock in many households due to increased input costs. Among households that continue livestock rearing, women remain primarily responsible for day-to-day livestock management, including feeding, milking, and dairy processing, particularly where men are engaged in external employment. These patterns underscore women's central role in sustaining household livestock activities, while strategic decisions related to asset management and market engagement remain limited.[162]

Women's capacity to increase livestock productivity is constrained by structural barriers. Rural women have limited access to agricultural extension services, veterinary care, training, and inputs, which reduces productivity and income potential.[163] These constraints are reinforced by gendered patterns of market participation: women's engagement is generally limited to small-scale, local sales of dairy and poultry products, while men capture higher-value income through large-animal sales and integration into commercial livestock networks.[164,165]

In Rural Damascus, including Eastern Ghouta, these patterns are consistent with nationwide trends. Women contribute substantially to daily livestock care, poultry rearing, and dairy processing but face barriers to accessing land, agricultural assets, training, and market opportunities.[166,167,168] Men continue to dominate higher-value livestock activities and decision-making, limiting women's ability to benefit economically from the sector. Overall, livestock

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[158] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[159] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2021), FAO's farmer field schools improve animal husbandry practices for women in Syria. Available here
[160] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2023), Women lead dairy production in Deir Ez-Zor. Available here
[161] Elias, M., Zaremba, H., Tavenner, K., Ragasa, C., Paez Valencia, A. M., Choudhury, A., & de Haan, N., (2024), Towards gender equality in forestry, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture. Available here
[162] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[163] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (1995), Improving the relevance and effectiveness of agricultural extension activities for women farmers – An André Mayer research study: Women's role and access to agricultural extension services in the Near East. Available here
[164] International Fund for Agricultural Development, (2023), Gender and livestock. Available here
[165] Assessment Capacities Project, (2024), Syria: Livelihoods and market constraints - Thematic analysis. Available here
[166] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2021), FAO's farmer field schools improve animal husbandry practices for women in Syria. Available here
[167] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2024), Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024. Available here
[168] International Fund for Agricultural Development, (n.d.), Southern Regional Agricultural Development Project – Phase II. Available here

systems in the governorate rely heavily on women's labour while providing them limited access to assets, services, and income-generating opportunities.

5. Climate change

5.1 Vulnerabilities and differentiated impact

In Syria, climate change has differentiated impacts on women, men, girls, and boys due to entrenched gender inequalities. National and regional analyses recognise that women, particularly those in rural, conflict-affected, and agriculture-dependent areas, are among the groups most vulnerable to climate variability and environmental degradation.[169] Climate-induced stress on water resources affects both productive and domestic water systems, with growing scarcity forcing women to spend longer hours securing water for household consumption, hygiene and caregiving. This reduces time available for education and income-generation, increases health and protection risks, and reinforces harmful coping strategies.[170,171] Additionally, climate change heightens risk of exposure to gender-based violence, and domestic abuse due to displacement, resource scarcity, and deteriorating living conditions.[172,173] Climate-related vulnerabilities intersect with broader inequalities linked to displacement, age and poverty; internally displaced people, returnees, older persons, female-headed households experience higher levels of food insecurity, weaker social protection, and reduced access to services, including safe and reliable drinking water, which further constrains adaptive capacity.[174,175]

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta indicated that climate-related pressures, including prolonged drought, reduced rainfall, disruptions to water systems, and declining vegetation cover, have influenced livelihoods, access to resources, and daily living conditions. Across both locations, respondents reported a decline in agricultural and livestock activities, linked to water scarcity, reduced availability of wells, and increased irrigation and feed costs. In response, many households reported shifting from farming toward trade, industrial activities, day labour, or other non-agricultural income sources. Livestock ownership was described as decreasing in some households due to constraints related to pasture availability, animal health, and feed affordability, with reported implications for food availability and household expenditure.[176]

Despite institutional efforts in Syria, the effective integration of gender into climate change strategies remains limited, particularly in ensuring women's equal participation in decision-making and equitable access to climate-adaptation benefits, including water-service planning and management.

In agricultural areas of Rural Damascus, households depend heavily on irrigated agriculture while the Barada and Awaj basin faces water stress due to limited water governance and

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[169] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2022), Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region (Policy Brief No. 11). Available here
[170] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (2022), How drought is shifting gender dynamics in northeast Syria. Available here
[171] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2022), Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region (Policy Brief No. 11). Available here
[172] IMPACT Research, (2023), The overlooked crisis: The effects of climate change and environmental pollution on women and girls in Syria. Available here
[173] Unite Nations Population Fund, (2024), Taking stock: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in climate commitments in the Arab States. Available here
[174] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (2024), 2024 Syria needs overview. Available here
[175] Internation Organization for Migration, (2025), Syrian Arab Republic – Communities of Return Index, Round 1. Available here
[176] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.

climate change induced shocks. The outdated irrigation practices expose farmers to risks linked to soil degradation, poor water quality, and reduced ecosystem productivity, undermining agricultural yields and increasing reliance on costly coping strategies, particularly among smallholder farmers and labourers with limited assets.[177,178,179] At the same time, water scarcity and damaged infrastructure also undermine domestic water supply systems, affecting the quantity, quality and affordability of drinking water, especially in displacement-affected and informal neighbourhoods.

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta described a range of coping practices, including reliance on purchased tanker water, water rationing, and adjustments to household water use. Financial capacity was commonly identified as an important factor shaping households' ability to cope, with those able to afford tanker water, private wells, or alternative inputs reporting greater flexibility in managing shortages. Women were more frequently associated with responsibilities related to household water management, adaptation of daily routines, care activities, and food preparation under constrained conditions. Female respondents reported increased psychological, physical, and financial pressures, particularly in households previously reliant on agriculture, where agricultural activity has declined substantially due to limited access to water.[180]

These pressures are compounded by high levels of displacement and return, with households in damaged or informal neighbourhoods facing insecure tenure and unreliable water access that constrain their ability to adopt climate-resilient practices.[181] Climate variability is also intensifying competition over scarce water and grazing resources, heightening localised tensions between farmers, pastoralists, and newly returned families. Within this context, women and girls are disproportionately affected, as structural barriers limit their access to land, irrigation infrastructure, household water infrastructure, agricultural services, and decision-making spaces.[182,183,184]

Stakeholder consultation in Eastern Ghouta identified certain population groups as facing greater challenges in adapting to climate-related stressors. These groups included displaced households, widows, female-headed households, landless or smallholder farmers, and low-income families. Reported constraints included limited income, lack of access to land or productive assets, reliance on purchased water, and reduced access to social support networks. Widows and female-headed households were described as managing multiple responsibilities related to income generation, household management, and caregiving, which may affect their ability to recover from climate-related shocks.[185]

While women in Rural Damascus consistently prioritise drought-resilient seeds, small-scale irrigation solutions, and climate-smart agricultural training in assessments, their influence over

[177] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2024), The unjust climate: Measuring the impacts of climate change on rural poor, women and youth. Available here
[178] International Federation of Red Cross, (2025), Syria: Drought – Emergency appeal and situation update. Available here
[179] United Nations Human Settlements Programme, (2023), Syria country profile: Damage assessment and urban analysis for Duma and Rural Damascus. Available here
[180] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[181] Internation Organization for Migration, (2025), Syrian Arab Republic – Communities of Return Index, Round 1. Available here
[182] The Cairo Review, (2023), Climate change, conflict, and gender inequality in the MENA region. Available here
[183] Islamic Development Bank, (2025), Resilience Report 2025: Climate, Conflict and Resilience – Pathways to Sustainable and Inclusive Solutions. Available here
[184] IMPACT Research, (2023), The overlooked crisis: The effects of climate change and environmental pollution on women and girls in Syria. Available here
[185] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.

resource allocation, adaptation planning, and resource-related conflict-resolution mechanisms remains minimal, further weakening their adaptive capacity and resilience.[186,187]

Acted consultations further indicate that access to water, land, irrigation, and agricultural inputs is largely shaped by private arrangements and household-level resources. Households reported reliance on private wells (where affordable) and purchased tanker water, while irrigation, where still practiced, depends primarily on privately owned sources. External agricultural support was not widely reported. Although access was described as equal in principle across genders and population groups, affordability was identified as a key determinant of effective access. Decision-making over resource use was commonly described as led at household level, often by men, with some KIIs noting gradual shifts toward more consultative practices between spouses.[188]

5.2 Institutional response to climate change

Syria's institutional response to climate change comprises a mix of long-standing national frameworks and more recent commitments introduced by the new administration. Key national frameworks remain applicable, including the National Adaptation Action Plan (2010), which outlines priority actions across water, agriculture, health and infrastructure and emphasises awareness-raising and integration of climate risks into development planning.[189] Syria's First Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris Agreement) in 2018 continues to guide national commitments on drought management, climate-resilient agriculture, health-sector adaptation and disaster preparedness.[190] In parallel, Syria participates in the Uniced Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Land Degradation Neutrality Target-Setting Programme, which provides targets for restoring degraded land and enhancing ecosystem resilience.[191] Regional policy guidance from ESCWA highlights the importance of gender-responsive climate action, water-system rehabilitation and climate-smart agriculture, underscoring the need to prioritise vulnerable groups in adaptation efforts.[192]

The new administration has introduced revised political commitments signalling a shift toward green recovery and climate-resilient reconstruction: at COP30, the President reaffirmed Syria's climate commitments and called for investment in renewable energy and sustainable urban development as part of the country's recovery agenda.[193] At the 2025 Nouakchott Forum, the government further outlined a strategy centred on ecosystem restoration, renewable energy transition and circular-economy development, marking an expansion of the national climate framework beyond adaptation planning to broader environmental governance and green-economy priorities.[194] Together, these frameworks form Syria's current institutional architecture

[186] Mourad, A. K., (2012), Marginal and virtual water for sustainable water resources management in Syria (Doctoral dissertation, Lund University). Available here
[187] United Nations Development Programme, (2022), Women in Rural Damascus challenge gender stereotypes and take on climate action. United Nations Development Programme. Available here
[188] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[189] Ministry of State for Environment Affairs, United Nations Development Programme (2010), Initial National Communication of the Syrian Arab Republic to the UNFCCC. Available here
[190] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, (2022), First Nationally Determined Contribution: Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[191] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, (2018), Land Degradation Neutrality Target-Setting Programme: Syrian Arab Republic. Available here
[192] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (2022), Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region (Policy Brief No. 11). Available here
[193] Al Jazeera Staff & News Agencies, (2025), Syria's al-Sharaa pledges commitment to climate goals at COP30. Available here
[194] Levant24, (2025), Syria outlines climate change strategy at Nouakchott Forum. Available here

for addressing climate risks and strengthening resilience, with increasing attention to vulnerable populations including women, returnees and displacement-affected communities.

6. Protection and gender-based violence

6.1 Gender- based violence (GBV)

Gender-based risks continue to affect women and girls in Syria, yet available evidence indicates that help-seeking and formal reporting remain limited. While national wide statistics are unavailable, the 2025 Humanitarian Response Priorities document highlights high prevalence of GBV with 93 percent of those requiring assistance being women and girls.[195] Assessments highlight that women and girls experience various forms of violence, including intimate-partner violence, emotional and physical abuse, sexual harassment, and early and forced marriage.[196,197,198] Many survivors, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, face obstacles to disclosure such as concerns about safety, social stigma, and limited awareness of or confidence in available services. Social pressures, concerns about safety, and reliance on family-based dispute resolution can discourage formal reporting, while the limited availability of confidential, survivor-centred procedures may further constrain access to support.[199] Ensuring safe reporting pathways, referrals to legal aid and protection services, especially in rural areas, would help strengthen national efforts.[200]

In Rural Damascus, community-level consultations indicated that protection risks are perceived differently by women and men, with broadly similar. Women respondents consistently identified early marriage, harassment, exploitation, child labour, and school dropout as key protection concerns affecting women, girls, and boys, with domestic or verbal violence mentioned to a lesser extent. Men generally reported fewer perceived protection risks, occasionally referencing public harassment or theft, and often emphasised community awareness and prevailing social norms as protective factors.

Economic pressures and poverty were identified across both locations as important factors influencing household tensions and protection risks. Women frequently highlighted the role of social norms, family dynamics, and displacement-related factors in shaping vulnerabilities, while men tended to focus on low income, limited employment opportunities, and education gaps, particularly among boys. Overall, the consultations indicated that protection risks are influenced by structural socio-economic conditions, education gaps, and local gender norms, with women and girls experiencing heightened exposure.

Household tensions were commonly described as linked to economic hardship. Men highlighted low-income levels and lack of employment as the main sources of disputes, while women additionally pointed to family interference and role-related dynamics. Disputes were generally described as arising from economic pressures compounded by intra-family dynamics.

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[195] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2025), Syrian Arab Republic: 2025 Humanitarian Response Priorities. Available here.
[196] Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility, Unite Nations Population Fund, (2023), Voices from Syria 2023: Assessment findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available here
[197] Ibid.
[198]Unite Nations Population Fund, (2024), Voices from Syria and the region: GBV assessment 2024. Available here
[199] European Union Agency for Asylum, (2020), Syria: The situation of women. Available here
[200] Unite Nations Population Fund, (2024), Voices from Syria and the region: GBV assessment 2024. Available here

Help-seeking for violence or abuse was described as predominantly informal. Stakeholder reported reliance on family members and community-based reconciliation mechanisms as the primary means of resolving disputes, with formal reporting uncommon. Women consistently cited concerns related to privacy, social judgement, stigma, and potential family consequences as influencing decisions around disclosure. Access to services for survivors of violence was reported as limited and uneven. So stakeholders referred to limited advisory, awareness, or psychosocial support provided through local associations, including women-focused initiatives, though access was described as gender-differentiated, with women having relatively easier access than men. In more rural areas, stakeholders consistently reported the absence of specialised services, safe spaces, or formal support organisations, aside from community reconciliation committees. Overall, support systems were described as relying primarily on informal or community-based mechanisms, with no dedicated survivor support services identified for women or men.[201]

While national legal and strategic frameworks are in place, their full implementation can be affected by local institutional capacity and prevailing social norms.

6.2 Crisis-driven sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) risks

Prolonged conflict, economic pressures, and displacement have increased the overall vulnerability of communities across Syria, including exposure to risks of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), particularly in areas with high reliance on humanitarian assistance. Reduced service coverage, infrastructure damage, and limited resources have created conditions in which communities depend more heavily on external support for basic needs.[202,203] Individuals involved in facilitating access to assistance, services, documentation or employment may, in some cases, hold significant influence over affected households, including displaced families and women-headed households, underscoring the importance of strong oversight and safeguarding standards across all actors. The humanitarian workforce in many areas continues to be predominantly male, especially in roles involving aid distribution and community engagement.[204]

A national inter-agency architecture for SEAH prevention exists in Syria, anchored by the Syria PSEA Network, which includes UN agencies, INGOs, and national NGOs and provides coordination, standard-setting, and capacity-building.[205,206] Although inter-agency hotlines and email channels are referenced, there is no nationally harmonised hotline accessible across all regions, and reporting often relies on organisation-specific mechanisms. While many organisations have integrated SEAH messaging, trained staff, and developed internal complaint systems, implementation remains uneven.[207]

Available assessments indicate that under-reporting of SEAH remains common, influenced by social stigma, concerns about retaliation, and limited awareness of safe and confidential reporting mechanisms.[208] Social norms may make it difficult for women and girls to report concerns or seek support. This gender imbalance can inadvertently increase vulnerabilities.

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[201] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[202] Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility, Unite Nations Population Fund, (2023), Voices from Syria 2023: Assessment findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available here
[203] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (2023), Syria protection analysis update. Available here
[204] European Union Agency for Asylum, (2020), Syria: The situation of women. Available here
[205] Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility, Unite Nations Population Fund, (2023), Voices from Syria 2023: Assessment findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available here
[206] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (2023), Syria protection analysis update. Available here
[207] Unite Nations Population Fund, (2024), Voices from Syria and the region: GBV assessment 2024. Available here
[208] European Union Agency for Asylum, (2020), Syria: The situation of women. Available here

Ensuring gender-responsive staffing, clear codes of conduct, and accessible, confidential reporting mechanisms would help strengthen national and partner efforts to reduce SEAH risks and promote safe, equitable access to services.

In Rural Damascus, households headed by women face heightened vulnerability due to unemployment, poverty, and reliance on informal labour, housing, and service arrangements, which can increase exposure to SEAH.[209] Findings from stakeholder consultations indicate that SEAH-related risks are not always explicitly articulated, but are reflected in broader discussions around exploitation, harassment, economic dependency, and power imbalances, particularly affecting women and girls. [210] Male authority figures, including community leaders, landlords, and intermediaries involved in aid distribution, play a central role in determining access to assistance, while governance structures at institutional, customary, and community levels remain largely male-controlled, limiting women's influence over decision-making and complaint mechanisms. Although protection monitoring captures incidents of threats, violence, and GBV, many women report feeling generally safe, reflecting the normalization of insecurity and underreporting.[211] Women respondents described limited comfort with reporting, particularly where resolution mechanisms are informal or community-based and disclosure may carry social consequences. Although many women reported feeling generally safe, this was accompanied by indications of under-reporting and reliance on informal mediation, consistent with broader national trends.[212] Existing programmes can reduce risks when they embed gender-responsive safeguards, such as women-only groups, confidential referral pathways, and survivor-centred grievance systems.[213] Strengthening community-level outreach, harmonised complaint mechanisms, accurate service mapping, and gender-balanced staffing will support national efforts to enhance safeguarding, ensure equitable access to services, and mitigate SEAH risks in the governorate.

7.Gender-differentiated needs, priorities, and responses within the project

7.1 Differential needs and priorities of women and men

The gender analysis identifies differentiated roles, needs, and capacities of women and men in relation to climate change impacts and water scarcity, with implications for effective and inclusive water security, resource management and locally led adaptation climate adaptation outcomes. While both women and men are affected by increasing water stress, women often experience distinct constraints in accessing and influencing water and agriculture-related decision-making, information, and services, particularly at community levels. Women's participation in local governance and resource-management structures remains limited and strengthened or newly established community water and agricultural governance structures risk inadvertently reflecting existing social norms that influence participation patterns and access to information. At the same time, men generally continue to have greater access to land, productive assets, and formal decision-making structures, shaping patterns of resource use and management.

[209] CARE International, (2024), Rapid gender analysis brief: Türkiye and northwest Syria. Available here
[210] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[211] Unite Nations Population Fund, (2024), Voices from Syria and the region: GBV assessment 2024. Available here
[212] Acted, (2025), Stakeholder consultation – Eastern Ghouta.
[213] Unite Nations Population Fund, (2024), Voices from Syria and the region: GBV assessment 2024. Available here

Women, including female-headed households and displaced women, may face practical barriers in accessing community-level accountability mechanisms, technical training, climate-resilient technologies, and financing opportunities. These barriers are often linked to time constraints, mobility limitations, caregiving responsibilities, and service-delivery models or financing modalities that are not fully adapted to diverse household circumstances. In addition, women's priorities are not always systematically reflected in climate-resilient water planning and climate-smart service delivery. Without appropriate affordability and inclusion measures, cost-recovery approaches may place additional pressure on low-income and female-headed households. These constraints, together with gaps in access to safe and confidential support and reporting mechanisms, can limit women's ability to participate safely and meaningfully in climate, livelihood, and resource-management systems.

The project responds to these differentiated needs through integrated, context-appropriate measures that support inclusive, locally led adaptation, strengthen institutional effectiveness, and enhance equitable access to climate-resilient water systems (inclusive of water for livelihoods). Gender considerations are embedded across project components to ensure that women and men can participate in, benefit from, and contribute to sustainable water management and climate resilience. Specifically, the project:

1) Strengthens women's participation in water, agriculture, and climate-governance structures through minimum participation targets, dedicated empowerment sessions, adapted consultation modalities, capacity strengthening of technical skills and planning tools (Activities 1.2.2, 2.1.2, 3.1.1).

2) Improves women's and female-headed households' access to water-efficient and reuse systems combined with training to reduce household cost and time burdens associated with water access (Activities 2.2.1, 2.2.2).

3) Strengthens women's access to technical skills, climate-relevant knowledge, and locally driven financing mechanisms through adapted, gender-responsive training and financing models that support climate-resilient agriculture and water user efficiency (Activities 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.4).

4) Strengthens climate-planning and service-delivery systems to better integrate diverse user priorities, apply affordability considerations within cost-recovery frameworks, and ensure inclusive accountability pathways for female-headed and vulnerable households (Activities 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3).

5) Strengthens national and local capacities for climate finance development to **support more inclusive investment pipelines** over time, enabling future programmes to better address the adaptation needs of diverse users, including women and female-headed households while embedding inclusive approaches within institutional systems and regulatory recommendations. (Activities 1.2.1, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 2.1.3)

6) Ensures safe, confidential, and accessible reporting pathways for women and vulnerable groups through the Acted Feedback Mechanism (AFM), complemented by referral mechanisms and protection-actor mapping. These systems enable women, including female-headed and displaced households, to raise concerns, report sensitive issues, and access appropriate support safely across all project activities (see Section 7.2).

7.2 Gender sensitivity in Acted's grievance redress mechanism

Acted is committed to delivering the highest standards across its humanitarian and development interventions and to engaging affected communities in a transparent, respectful, and accountable manner that builds trust. Accountability is one of Acted's core organisational principles, and ensuring accountability to affected populations (AAP) is central to all

programming. Acted's approach aligns with the IASC's Five Commitments to AAP: leadership and governance, transparency, feedback and complaints, participation, and design, monitoring and evaluation, each operationalised across the project cycle.

Acted upholds the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality, and applies a strict "Do No Harm" approach. This includes proactive measures to prevent unintended negative effects, such as social tensions, exclusion, or conflict. Strong Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) systems and continuous engagement with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, community leaders, and authorities, support Acted in understanding how assistance interacts with local dynamics and in adapting programming accordingly.

To reduce tensions and foster trust, beneficiary selection criteria are communicated publicly and in advance. Acted coordinates closely with local authorities to mitigate security risks and aligns its vulnerability criteria with those widely used by humanitarian actors to minimise disputes arising from inconsistent methodologies.

Under the project, Acted will operate its established accountability framework, the Acted Feedback Mechanism (AFM): a safe, accessible, and reliable system through which community members, whether beneficiaries or not, can share comments, suggestions, compliments, concerns, or complaints. The AFM enables Acted to identify potential programme weaknesses, unintended negative effects, or misuse of resources, while strengthening meaningful community participation and trust.

To ensure accessibility for diverse groups, including women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and individuals with limited mobility, multiple reporting modalities are provided and adapted to the local context. These include WhatsApp channels, complaint boxes, complaint desks, email, direct engagement with MEAL staff (including Accountability Officers), and verbal reporting through field teams. Sensitisation at project start and throughout implementation ensures communities understand their rights and available channels. All project sites display AFM information using accessible, gender-responsive materials, including visuals on unacceptable staff behaviour and reporting pathways. M&E surveys routinely assess communication accessibility and preferred channels.

All complaints are confidentially recorded in Acted's global COMPFU register, with restricted access and categorisation by the organisation's five sensitivity levels. Appropriate response pathways are triggered immediately, including referral of Level 5 cases (fraud, corruption, SEAH, child ill-treatment) to Country Coordination and Acted HQ's Investigation Unit. Acted handles complaints related to its staff, contractors, or activities and refers non-Acted-related cases to relevant protection actors with the complainant's consent. The maximum response time is 15 working days. Complaints are considered closed only after the complainant is informed, investigations are concluded, corrective actions implemented where relevant, and satisfaction confirmed. Anonymous complaints or cases lacking contact details are still followed up internally.

The AFM is managed independently by the in-country MEAL unit, with technical support from Accountability staff at HQ. To ensure a gender-sensitive mechanism responsive to the needs of women, men, girls, and boys, Acted establishes tailored communication pathways, including female focal points, accountability staff based in the implementation location, and gender-sensitive complaints committees. A dedicated hotline is also available for confidential reporting. Communication and outreach tools are adapted to ensure inclusivity for women, children, persons with disabilities, and illiterate community members.

Acted's safeguarding procedures encompass internal investigations and external referral pathways. SEAH-related complaints received through the AFM are immediately escalated to Country Coordination and referred to Acted's Transparency, Compliance and Investigation

(TCI) Department at HQ, which conducts formal investigations through professional investigators and SEAH specialists. The TCI Department also operates an independent Transparency Hotline for allegations involving Acted staff or programmes. When violations of Acted's Policy Against SEAH are confirmed, appropriate disciplinary measures are applied. Consistent with Acted's survivor-centred approach, complainants may pause or stop investigations at any stage, as all steps require informed consent. SEAH cases unrelated to Acted's operations are referred, only with consent, to relevant protection actors and, where feasible, national reporting mechanisms.

Confidentiality is strictly upheld throughout all stages of complaint handling. Information is shared internally on a need-to-know basis, with access to Level 4 and 5 cases limited to the grievance collector, MEAL Manager, Country Coordination, Gender and Safeguarding Specialist, and, where relevant, the TCI Department. Breaches of confidentiality constitute violations of Acted's Code of Conduct and trigger disciplinary action. All AFM cases, including follow-up and corrective actions, are recorded in the global platform and reviewed monthly through a global cross-check to ensure proper processing and escalation of all sensitive grievances.

7.3 Recognition of distinct vulnerabilities and response strategies

Building on the differentiated needs identified in Section 7.1, the project applies targeted and inclusive response strategies to ensure that climate-resilient water and agricultural interventions are accessible, effective, and sustainable for all users. Design choices across components reflect that women and men may experience climate change and water scarcity in different ways due to variations in access to resources, roles in water and agricultural management, mobility, adaptive capacities and participation in decision-making processes.

Gender analysis and stakeholder consultations indicate that some vulnerable groups may face additional constraints in accessing finance, technical information, and local governance structures, as well as practical limitations related to time availability and mobility. At the same time, men, who often hold primary responsibility for agricultural production and water infrastructure operation and maintenance, face increasing pressures linked to declining water availability, productivity risks, and the sustainability of water systems.

In response to these differentiated needs, the project integrates context-appropriate and inclusive strategies across its design (*see Table 1: Gender Approaches to Differentiated Needs*), including:

- Integrating labour-saving, water-efficient, and climate-smart technologies into household-level interventions, with a targeted focus on women and female-headed households to improve water use efficiency, decrease costs and strengthen adaptive capacity (Activities 2.2.1, 2.2.2).

- Establishing minimum participation targets, adapted training modalities, and inclusive consultation mechanisms to support balanced representation and informed engagement in water and agricultural planning and decision-making (Activities 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 3.1.1, 3.1.2).

- Enhancing access to climate-resilient financing mechanisms through cost-sharing grants and revolving grant funds, supporting sustainable production, risk reduction, and investment in climate-smart practices, including for women-managed and smallholder activities (Activity 3.1.4).

- Reinforcing climate and water planning and service-delivery frameworks to better integrate diverse user priorities, apply affordability considerations within cost-recovery approaches, and strengthen accountability mechanisms, helping ensure that planning and implementation processes remain accessible to female-headed households, older persons, and persons with disabilities (Activities 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.1.4).

7.4 Anticipated roles of women and men

Women and men are anticipated to play complementary and active roles across governance, service delivery, and climate-resilient agricultural components of the project. Women are expected to participate in community and water-governance structures, farmer associations, consultations, and training on climate-smart agriculture, water-use efficiency, and locally driven financing mechanisms. These roles require time commitments alongside existing household and caregiving responsibilities; accordingly, women's participation will be supported through adapted schedules, decentralised and localised delivery, literacy-sensitive materials, and women-only sessions where appropriate to reduce mobility and workload constraints. Men are expected to continue engagement in agricultural production, infrastructure operation and maintenance, groundwater management, and institutional coordination, while increasingly supporting inclusive decision-making and shared governance through sensitisation and capacity-building activities. Participation may require periodic mobility for both women and men to attend trainings, forums, and meetings; however, mobility barriers will be mitigated through community-based venues, localised activities, and flexible delivery modalities. Women's engagement will be further facilitated through the active involvement of female project staff, and through continuous technical oversight from Gender and Safeguarding Specialist to ensure gender-responsive measures are consistently applied across locations and activities. Together, these roles support equitable contributions to climate-informed water management, resilient agricultural practices, and strengthened local institutions.

7.5 Challenging gender inequalities

The project identifies opportunities to strengthen inclusive participation, equitable access, and gender-responsive outcomes across water governance, service delivery, and climate-resilient agricultural activities. Gender analysis and stakeholder consultations indicate that participation in water and agricultural institutions is shaped by established gender roles, with women often carrying primary responsibility for household water management while remaining underrepresented in technical functions and decision-making related to water and land resources. These dynamics can increase women's time burdens, limit their influence over resource allocation, and constrain the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation measures.

The project responds by integrating gender-responsive measures across all components, combining inclusive governance, targeted capacity development, and gender-responsive infrastructure design, including:

- **Ensuring minimum quotas for women's participation in water-governance structures**, farmer associations, and multi-stakeholder forums, enabling women to engage alongside men in planning, and knowledge-exchange processes (Activities 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 3.1.1, 3.1.2).
- **Providing gender-responsive technical training in water management, climate-smart agriculture, and planning tools**, using adapted delivery modalities (e.g. women-only sessions, visual materials, flexible scheduling) to strengthen technical capacity, confidence, and leadership in technical areas (Activities 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 3.1.1, 3.1.2).

- **Promoting women's access to climate-resilient water infrastructure and financing mechanisms**, including water-efficient fixtures, greywater reuse systems, and revolving grant funds, to strengthen economic agency and support equitable participation in productive water use (Activities 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 3.1.4).
- **Applying gender-responsive design principles to water infrastructure and technologies**, to reduce women's workload, protect dignity and privacy, and ensure safe and practical use. This includes: 1) Consulting women and girls during the design and selection of water-efficient fixtures to ensure they do not increase labour (e.g. repeated filling, flushing, or maintenance) and meet functional needs while reducing water consumption; 2) Designing household-level greywater reuse systems to be located close to the home, use simple and low-maintenance technologies, and avoid additional water-carrying or cleaning burdens; 3) Ensuring that all household water and reuse facilities respect privacy, safety, and dignity considerations and are aligned with Sphere and WHO WASH minimum standards (Activities 2.2.1, 2.2.2).

These measures build on existing community capacities and support more inclusive engagement in local adaptation and resource-management processes. By combining inclusive decision-making platforms, targeted capacity development, and equitable access to climate-relevant services and financing, the project contributes to more effective, collaborative, and sustainable approaches to water, agriculture, and climate governance.

7.6 Equal access to information and opportunities

The project ensures that women and men from vulnerable communities have equitable access to information and opportunities necessary to participate in and benefit from project outcomes by:

- Integrating gender- and age-disaggregated data collection and analysis across climate, water, and agricultural assessments (Activities 1.1.1).
- Delivering tailored, gender-responsive training and information sessions adapted to women's and vulnerable groups' mobility, schedules, and literacy levels (Activities 1.2.2, 3.1.2).
- Establishing inclusive consultation and accountability platforms with minimum participation targets, accessible formats, and safe spaces to enable meaningful engagement (Activities 1.2.2, 1.3.2).

7.7 Needs of vulnerable sub-groups

The project systematically considers the needs of vulnerable sub-groups, including women and men with disabilities, the elderly, female-headed households, widows, and youth. Activities such as 1.2.2 (strengthening local community water-governance structures), 1.2.2 (building water-management accountability systems), 2.2.1–2.2.2 (installation of water-efficient fixtures and greywater recycling systems), and 3.1.1–3.1.4 (support to farmer associations, climate-smart training, and locally driven financing models) are designed to address differentiated vulnerabilities related to access, mobility, affordability, and decision-making. Consultations and monitoring data indicate that vulnerable groups, particularly women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, face disproportionate barriers to accessing water services, technical training, and climate-adapted livelihoods, which the project addresses through targeted quotas, adapted delivery modalities, prioritisation mechanisms, and inclusive accountability systems.

At the household and community infrastructure level, gender- and vulnerability-responsive design principles will be applied. For water-efficient fixtures and greywater recycling systems (Activities 2.2.1–2.2.2), women and vulnerable users will be consulted prior to final design and installation. This will ensure that fixtures reduce water use without increasing labour burdens,

such as repeated flushing, and manual refilling, system placement and design respect privacy, dignity, and safety, particularly for women, girls, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities, and systems are simple, low-maintenance, and appropriate for household capacities, avoiding designs that could increase economically burdensome care or maintenance responsibilities.

7.8 Use of women's and men's knowledge and skills

Women's and men's diverse knowledge, skills and professional expertise are systematically mobilised to inform project outcomes and locally appropriate, climate-resilient solutions. The project recognises that technical, operational, and contextual knowledge is distributed across genders and social groups, including within formal institutions, community structures, and households. Through structured consultation processes, data collection systems, and capacity strengthening, supported by formal coordination and decision-making structures, women and men contribute technical, analytical, and contextual expertise to groundwater assessment and modelling, climate-informed water management, infrastructure operation and optimisation, and climate-resilient agricultural planning. Particular attention is given to enabling the effective participation of individuals from vulnerable groups, including female-headed households, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities, by tailoring consultation processes and expanding access to technical training and pathways for decision making. This approach ensures that climate-informed water management, agricultural practices, and resource-governance solutions are informed by a broad spectrum of professional expertise and locally grounded knowledge.

Table 1: Gender approaches to differentiated needs

Differentiated Needs	Risks	Opportunities (Gender Approach / Mitigation)	Response (Activities and Relevance)
Women are underrepresented in community decision making bodies	Newly created or strengthened Water User Associations (WUAs), farmer associations, and consultation platforms may reflect existing social norms and informal power structures, limiting women's effective participation and influence.	**Gender responsive:** Set minimum participation targets for women and youth in WUAs, farmer associations, and forums; mentorship and confidence-building programs; ensure accessible timing and locations with safe participation spaces; ensure accessible meeting times and locations; use female facilitators and targeted consultation modalities where appropriate; allow for capacity-building for technical roles	Activities 1.2.2 (strengthen local water governance structures and build water management accountability systems); 1.3.2 (multistakeholder forums for knowledge exchange and coordination of investments); 3.1.1 (Capacity-building for farmer associations) These activities ensure women quotas in local governance and community committees and strengthened technical capacity for meaningful participation and plan developments.
Women have limited access to community-level accountability mechanisms related to land, water, and natural-resource management	Strengthened/created water governance and accountability mechanisms may replicate existing social norms, potentially constraining women's access to information, participation and reporting.	**Gender responsive:** introduce minimum participation targets for women; ensure safe spaces and accessible consultation spaces; provide female facilitators, schedule meetings at times suitable for women; establish structured consultation mechanisms	Activities 1.2.2 (strengthen local water governance structures and build water management accountability systems); 2.1.2 (Establish a robust leak detection and response system These activities include women in structures and systems that aim to monitor practices and promote transparency to promote shared roles. Inclusive design enables women to participate in oversight and use accessible channels to report issues related to resource use, service quality, and infrastructure performance, supporting equitable and effective water management.
Women have limited access to technical knowledge and training opportunities required to	Strengthening agricultural, water-management, extension, and climate-resilience systems may inadvertently limit women's access to project benefits, particularly for female-headed households, if service delivery and participation	**Gender responsive:** Minimum participation targets for women's participation in trainings; delivery of localized gender-responsive training	Activities 1.1.1 (integrated baseline assessments and establish groundwater monitoring network); 1.1.2 (Develop climate-informed groundwater flow models and decision-support tools)); 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 (technical capacity strengthening of WUA and local technical department personnel); 2.2.1 (installation of water

adopt climate resilient practices.	modalities are not designed with inclusivity in mind. Provider networks, training schedules, and technical services that are not adapted to women's mobility, time constraints, or caregiving responsibilities could reduce their opportunities to access, technical knowledge, and capacity-building support. This may affect women's ability to adopt water-efficient, climate-adapted practices and to effectively respond to water scarcity and climate-related challenges.	models, adapt timing and venues, ensure safe, accessible learning spaces for women; use female trainers and women only groups where appropriate; adaptation of training curricula and O&M guidance using visual, practical, and easy-to-follow materials suitable for lower literacy (e.g. diagrams, pictorial guides, demonstrations);strengthen women's technical ,adaptive skills and leadership skills in water management and climate-adapted agriculture; prioritise FHH access through tailored eligibility mechanisms; ensure safe, accessible and accountability channels	efficient fixtures); 2.2.2 (installation of small greywater recycling systems); 3.1.1 (Capacity-building for farmer associations); 3.1.2 (Training on climate adapted agricultural practices); Together, these activities expand women's and FHHs' access to financing, training, and climate-smart technologies, support adoption of water-efficient household solutions, and strengthen adaptive capacity to climate shocks in a safe, accessible, and accountable manner.
Women have limited access to financing required to adopt climate resilient practices.	Women, particularly female-headed households, often face structural barriers to accessing climate finance, productive assets, and cost-sharing mechanisms due to limited asset ownership, income constraints, and informal decision-making norms. Financing models or eligibility criteria that are not gender-responsive may unintentionally exclude women from accessing water-efficient technologies, greywater reuse systems, or climate-smart agricultural inputs, limiting equitable benefit-sharing and adaptive capacity.	Prioritization of female-headed and vulnerable households within grants, revolving grant funds; tailored eligibility and selection criteria to reduce barriers related to income, collateral, or asset ownership; integration of affordability safeguards within financing and O&M models to avoid disproportionate financial burdens; support to women's informed participation in financing decisions through targeted orientation and accompaniment; continuous	Activity 3.1.4 (establish locally driven financing models)

		monitoring of women's access to financed assets and services, disaggregated by gender and household type.	
Low integration of women's needs into climate resilient water planning and climate smart service delivery	Strengthening climate planning and service delivery systems may not fully reflect the distinct needs and roles of women if gender considerations are not systematically integrated, including within the development of climate adaptation Concept Notes and investment pipelines. Without appropriate affordability measures, cost-recovery mechanisms or user-fee structures may disproportionately affect female-headed and low-income households, potentially limiting equitable access to climate-smart water services and reducing the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of these investments. Other interventions, such as water-efficient fixtures and household greywater reuse systems, could inadvertently increase women's workloads, time demands, or impact dignity if designs require additional operation, maintenance, repeated water collection, or complex handling.	**Gender responsive:** provide advanced technical and climate related skills; establish structured consultation mechanisms integrating women's priorities; expand women's access to services and climate finance; apply gender-responsive infrastructure design across water-efficient fixtures, greywater systems, and water-supply rehabilitation, ensuring technologies reduce water use without increasing women's labour, are simple and low-maintenance, protect privacy and dignity; develop gender-responsive Concept Notes and investment pipelines; design cost-recovery and O&M systems with affordability measures; engage community structures to support outreach, feedback, and grievance mechanisms; promote transparent communication with communities	Activities 1.1.1 (baseline and groundwater monitoring); 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 (technical capacity strengthening of WUA and local technical department personnel); 1.3.2 (multistakeholder forums for knowledge exchange and coordination of investments); 1.3.3 (strengthening of the NDAs capacity to catalyse climate financing); 2.2.1 (installation of water efficient fixtures); 2.2.2 (installation of small greywater recycling systems); 2.1.3 (Strengthen water resource directorate capacities for O&M and cost recovery); 3.1.1 (Capacity-building for farmer associations ; 3.1.2 (Training on climate adapted agricultural practices); 3.1.4 (establish locally driven financing models service) These activities ensure women's needs are embedded in climate planning and that climate-smart services, and technologies are delivered in an inclusive and affordable manner, strengthening women's adaptive capacity, particularly for female-headed and low-income households.

Women have limited access to safe reporting mechanisms.	Strengthening systems without a gender-sensitive lens may not fully account for existing social norms, concerns about confidentiality, and limitations in the accessibility and coordination of reporting and referral mechanisms, which can discourage disclosure and constrain access to appropriate, confidential, and survivor-centred support services for women and girls.	**Gender sensitive:** ensure safe and confidential reporting channels; establish female focal points; strengthen basic GBV/SEAH safeguarding measures and establish clear referrals pathways; enhance visibility and accessibility of reporting mechanisms	Addressed across all project activities through the Acted Feedback Mechanism (AFM), establishment of referral systems, and protection-actor mapping. These mechanisms ensure that vulnerable individual, including women and girls, have safe, confidential, and trusted avenues to report concerns, seek support, and access specialised protection services through clear pathways and coordinated safeguarding structures.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The gender analysis confirms that the project is positioned as **gender-responsive**, with gender considerations systematically embedded across climate-resilient water management, agricultural adaptation, governance, infrastructure, and climate-finance pipeline development. The design reflects a clear understanding of women's and men's differentiated needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities in relation to water scarcity, climate change, and access to services, and integrates targeted measures to promote equitable participation, affordability, accountability, and sustainability.

Across core components, groundwater data systems, water governance, climate-smart service delivery, agricultural resilience, and locally driven financing, the project moves beyond gender-sensitive approaches by sustaining women's meaningful participation within governance and planning structures, strengthening access to technical skills and financing, and embedding affordability safeguards within cost-recovery frameworks. At the same time, accountability mechanisms, notably through the Acted Feedback Mechanism (AFM), ensure that gender-related risks and barriers to participation are addressed through safe, confidential, and accessible reporting pathways.

As such, recommendations for strengthening gender-responsiveness focus on consolidating existing gender-responsive measures, addressing women's workload and time constraints, reinforcing women's collective action and access to resources, expanding technical and agricultural skills, and sustaining women's participation in governance and planning processes. Together, these priorities will ensure the project remains sustainable and fully aligned with the GCF guidelines, while providing a robust foundation for inclusive and durable climate adaptation outcomes.

1. **Sustain women's meaningful participation in water, agriculture, and climate-governance structures:** Minimum participation targets for women in water-governance bodies, farmer associations, accountability mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder forums should be consistently applied and monitored. Continued capacity strengthening in technical skills and planning tools is required to support women's informed and sustained engagement in water planning, investment prioritisation, and resource-management processes, particularly at community level.
2. **Improve affordability and accessibility of household-level water services**: Water-efficient fixtures and small-scale greywater reuse systems should prioritise female-headed and low-income households, with affordability safeguards embedded within cost-recovery and operation and maintenance (O&M) arrangements. At the same time, affordability and efficiency gains must not increase women's unpaid workload, time burden, or compromise dignity and safety, particularly in contexts of intermittent municipal water supply. To mitigate this risk, the selection, placement, and functionality of household-level water technologies will apply gender-responsive design principles, including consultation with women users prior to installation. This will ensure fixtures and systems reduce consumption without addition time burden, and respect privacy, dignity and ease of use for women and vulnerable groups. Monitoring will assess not only changes in household water expenditure and consumption, but also impacts on women's time use, water-related labour, and household management responsibilities, ensuring that climate-adapted interventions deliver net benefits for women and do not generate unintended burdens.
3. **Strengthen women's access to technical and agricultural skills for climate adaptation:** Gender-responsive training across groundwater management, climate-smart agriculture, irrigation efficiency, and water-use practices should remain adapted to women's mobility and schedules.

4. **Expand women's access to locally driven financing mechanisms for climate adaptation:** Supporting women's participation in cost-sharing grants and revolving grant funds, applying tailored eligibility and support mechanisms for female-headed households, and strengthening women's engagement in the design and management of financing models.
5. **Embed women's priorities within climate planning and service-delivery systems:** Climate-resilient water planning, service delivery, and regulatory processes should continue to integrate women's priorities through structured consultations, gender-informed planning tools, and transparent communication service standards. This will help ensure that strengthened systems do not replicate existing social norms or exclusionary practices.
6. **Ensure consistent gender integration within climate-finance pipeline development:** The consultant-led gender checklist for Concept Notes (CNs) should be systematically applied and documented to ensure that all climate-finance proposals reflect women's needs, affordability considerations, and differentiated vulnerabilities. This will strengthen the inclusiveness, quality, and sustainability of investment pipelines beyond the project timeframe.
7. **Maintain accessible and trusted accountability pathways for women and vulnerable groups**: The Acted Feedback Mechanism (AFM), referral mechanisms, and protection-actor mapping should remain visible, accessible, and responsive throughout implementation. Continued sensitisation, female focal points, and adapted communication channels are essential to ensure that women, including female-headed and displaced households, can raise concerns and access support safely and without barriers.

Collectively, these recommendations provide a coherent framework for embedding gender-responsive approaches throughout implementation, ensuring consistency, institutional learning, and long-term sustainability. This strengthens the project's contribution to inclusive climate adaptation and aligns implementation with Green Climate Fund guidelines.

9. Gender action plan

Table 2: Gender action plan logframe

Activities	Gender Action Plan Activities	Indicators and Targets	Timeline	Responsibilities	Cost[214]
IF vulnerable, water-scarce communities in Syria are empowered to lead locally driven climate adaptation using climate and groundwater data, inclusive governance, and sustainable water and agricultural practices, **AND** are supported by resilient infrastructure and institutions, **THEN** water security will improve, sustain agricultural productivity and reduce climate vulnerability, **BECAUSE** locally led, data-informed decisions enable efficient, equitable, and anticipatory water and agricultural management.					
Crosscutting	Recruitment of technical specialist	1 Gender & Safeguarding Specialist recruited	Y1-5	Acted HR team	Staff position recruited for a 5-year period over project duration – 145,000 USD
	Annual gender-responsive trainings delivered to decision making bodies, stakeholders and project participants on gender inclusion and PSEAH. A gender informed MEAL plan is developed and	Annual sessions with the project decision making bodies on gender inclusion and PSEAH. Annual sessions with stakeholders participating in the project on gender inclusion and PSEAH.	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted MEAL Unit	Annual training for a 5-year period over project duration – 15,000 USD (3,000 USD per year) now included within budget category: Workshop/Training

[214] Gender-related costs are estimated through a two-step approach. First, costs are attributed based on the proportion of women targeted under each activity, providing a proxy for the share of resources directly supporting women's access, participation, and benefits. Second, where activity budgets include substantial non-beneficiary costs such as infrastructure, technical studies, equipment, or operational expenditures, this percentage is adjusted using a gender-approach coefficient derived from the Gender Action Plan classification (Table 1). Under this approach, gender-neutral activities receive 0–10% attribution, gender-sensitive activities 10–20%, gender-responsive activities 20–40%, and women-targeted activities up to 100%, ensuring that estimates remain conservative while still reflecting meaningful resource allocation toward gender-responsive outcomes.

	updated throughout implementation.[215] A dedicated Gender and PSEAH baseline assessment is conducted during the project inception phase[216]	Annual sessions with project participants (beneficiaries) on gender inclusion and PSEAH 100 percent of members within decision making bodies trained on gender inclusion and PSEAH 100 percent of stakeholder participants trained on gender inclusion and PSEAH. 100 percent of project participants trained on gender inclusion and PSEAH. 100 percent of project staff and workers trained on SEAH prevention, reporting and survivor centered response 1 MEAL plan developed			

[215] The Year 1 gender-informed MEAL plan will explicitly assess changes in women's influence in decision-making, control over resources and benefits, workload and time burden, and perceptions of safety and dignity, in addition to participation and representation. These dimensions will be measured through a combination of disaggregated surveys, perception questions, FGDs, KIIs, governance scorecards, PDM tools, accountability data, and qualitative review of planning records, and will be used to inform adaptive management throughout implementation. Perceptions of safety, privacy and dignity in accessing water services and participating in project activities will be monitored through anonymous feedback channels within the project's accountability mechanism, survivor-sensitive referral tracking (without collecting identifying information), and periodic qualitative safety-mapping exercises in selected communities. All outcome indicators will be disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and household type (including female-headed households). Findings will be reviewed during annual participatory learning sessions and used to inform adaptive management, ensuring that project activities strengthen women's influence, resource control, workload conditions and safety, not only their participation, in line with gender-responsive climate programming standards.

216 This assessment will establish disaggregated baselines on women's participation in governance and project activities, empowerment and workload indicators, perceptions of women's participation, and SEAH risks and referral pathways. Based on the findings, GAP indicators and targets will be validated and adjusted as needed. The exercise will be led by the Gender & Safeguarding Specialist in collaboration with the MEAL Unit and implemented under existing MEAL and safeguarding budget allocations, ensuring alignment with GCF requirements.

		1 Gender and PSEAH baseline assessment conducted and integrated into the project baseline. (Y1)			
	Gender budgeting and gender expenditure tracking by finance and MEAL teams. Cost per female beneficiary calculated using gender-disaggregated MEAL data.	Track budget shares for women targeted activities across the project.	Y1-5	Acted MEAL unit, Acted finance unit.	No additional costs
	Establishment of local accountability mechanisms, including women	1 accountability mechanism established. 30 percent of women participate in consultations	Y1-5	Acted MEAL unit	No additional costs
	SEAH cases referred to local service providers	100 percent of reported SEAH cases receiving a survivor-safe response within 48 hours and referred, with documented informed consent, to mapped local service providers.	Y1-5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist	No additional costs
Outcome 1: Institutionalization of knowledge management and strengthening of governmental capacities					
Crosscutting	Strengthen women's participation and leadership in agriculture, water, and climate governance by embedding their priorities into climate-smart planning and decision-making and strengthening national and sub-national water-management systems through capacity-building and	75 percent of targeted women report active participation in community decision making in agriculture and water governance. 75 percent of women and 60 percent of men approve of women representation and participation in local governance.	Y1-5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted MEAL Unit	Approximate Gender costs: 659,495 USD (15% of total component 1: 4,396,636 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

	accountability mechanisms.[217]	75 percent of women in community decision making bodies report knowledge on how to use planning tools. 80 percent of women and 70 percent of men agree that project activities integrate women's needs into climate planning and climate smart service delivery			
Output 1.1: Integrated data systems for measuring, monitoring, modelling groundwater resources (Barada and Awaj basin)					
Activity 1.1.2 Develop climate-informed groundwater flow models and decision-support tools	Inclusion of women in participatory data collection to ensure gender balance targeting Women have access to technical trainings on groundwater flow model	Indicator 1: of the respondents consulted during data collection at least 20 percent are women. Indicator 2: of the respondents consulted during data collection at least 2 percent are elderly. Indicator 3: of the respondents consulted during data collection at least 2 percent are PwD. Indicator 4: of the respondents consulted during data collection at least 10 percent are youth.	Y1-Y5	Acted programme team, Ministry of Energy, Gender & Safeguarding Specialist	Approximate Gender costs: 109,303 USD (15% of total 728,684 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

[217] Beyond measuring participation rates, the MEAL framework will assess whether women's participation translates into actual influence in governance processes. This will be measured through structured perception questions integrated into baseline, midline, and endline surveys; analysis of meeting minutes and planning documents to assess whether proposals raised by women are reflected in water and agricultural management decisions; governance self-assessment scorecards applied within water governance structures and farmer associations; and FGDs with female members to examine participation dynamics, negotiation space, and responsiveness of other stakeholders.

		Indicator 5: At least 30 percent of female staff are trained on groundwater flow models			
Output 1.2: Multi-stakeholder capacity strengthening for climate-informed water management in Eastern Ghouta					
Activity 1.2.2 Build local water management accountability systems	Water-governance structures are gender-inclusive, enabling women's meaningful participation in local water-management decisions. Women representatives, including those engaged through Women-Led Organizations (WLOs), are supported with technical skills and planning tools through gender-sensitive delivery approaches. Consultations ensure equitable participation of women to allow for women to voice their reflections on the project and local water management.	Indicator 1: 20 percent of the members in water governance structure are women, including women engaged through Women-Led Organizations (WLOs).[218] Indicator 3: 100 percent of female members are trained on climate resilient water management and planning tools Indicator 1: 30 percent of women participate in community consultations (e.g. focus group reflections), including women engaged through WLO networks. Indicator 2: 2 percent of elderly participate in community consultations. Indicator 3: 10 percent of youth participate in community consultations.	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Locally led Action Coordinator	Approximate Gender costs: 51,980 USD (20% of total 259,900 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

[218] Target to validate and adjust as necessary at the inception informed by the baseline assessment.

		Indicator 4: 2 percent of PwD) participate in community consultations			
Output 1.3: Knowledge sharing and financing for sustained water resilience					
Activity 1.3.1 Participatory review and recommendations to the local water use regulatory framework	Recommendations will include a review of existing legislation and consultations with women, women-led CSOs/WLOs and WUA representatives to reflect community-level impacts on needs of vulnerable groups, including women.	Indicator 1: # consultations conducted with women, including women engaged in women led CSOs/WLOs and WUA female representatives to inform the review of proposed regulations and their community-level impacts	Y3	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Consultant	Approximate Gender costs: 10,000 USD (10% of total 100,000 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**
Activity 1.3.2 Multi-stakeholder forums for knowledge exchange and coordination of investments	Participation in the forums is inclusive, and women's and other vulnerable groups needs are integrated into lessons learnt and business cases. Gender specific needs and gender content are systematically integrated within forums	Indicator 1: 40 percent of the participants in the multi-stakeholder forums are women, including women engaged through women led CSOs/WLOs. [219] Indicator 2: Dedicated consultation sessions with women are conducted when developing business case for green-grey infrastructure and lessons learnt document. Indicator 3: 100 percent of forums consider gender needs/ incorporate gender content	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Consultant, Acted MEAL team, Ministry of Local Administration and Environment	Approximate Gender costs: 143,660 USD (25% of total 574,640 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-responsive**

[219] Target to validate and adjust as necessary at the inception informed by the baseline assessment.

Activity 1.3.3 Strengthening of the NDAs capacity to catalyse climate financing	Climate adaptation frameworks and tools are reviewed to support the development of gender-inclusive projects within the project pipeline	Indicator 1: 100 percent of Projects developed are gender inclusive	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Consultant	Gender costs are embedded in the project activity costs (Activity 1.3.3: 403,650 USD)
Outcome 2: Improved community water infrastructure and re-use systems in Eastern Ghouta					
Crosscutting	Support female-headed households (FHHs) with water saving technology and capacity building, while strengthening municipal water management through climate-proofing of infrastructure, non-revenue water reduction, and cost-recovery systems for efficiency and climate resilience.	100 percent of water efficient fixtures and greywater recycling systems whose design specifications are informed by structured consultations with female household members. 60 percent of targeted women reporting increased knowledge on O&M of provided devices and safe greywater reuse by the end of the project	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted MEAL Unit	Approximate Gender costs: 1,146,841USD (15% of total component 2: 7,645,608 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**
Output 2.1: Existing boreholes and networks are climate-proofed and optimised to improve efficiency and sustainability					
Activity 2.1.2 Establish a robust leak detection and response system	Inclusion of women and other vulnerable groups in reporting mechanisms to identify needs and preferences across community members	Indicator 1: # of consultation processes conducted with women, including women engaged in women led CSOs/WLOs, to inform development of the community reporting system	Y2-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Rural Damascus and Countryside Water Resource Directorate	Approximate Gender costs: 57,287 USD (10% of total 572,870 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

Activity 2.1.3 Strengthen WRD capacities for O&M and cost recovery	Inclusion of women and other vulnerable groups' needs in cost-recovery structures for rehabilitated infrastructure	Indicator 1: # of consultation processes conducted with women, including women engaged in women led CSOs/WLOs to inform cost-recovery options for rehabilitated infrastructure	Y2-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Rural Damascus and Countryside Water Resource Directorate	Approximate Gender costs: 180,500 USD (10% of total 1,805,000 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**
Output 2.2 Improved water use efficiency and re-use in vulnerable communities					
Activity 2.2.1 Installation of water efficient fixtures	Prioritization of female-headed households and other vulnerable households in the allocation of water-efficient fixtures, using clear and transparent eligibility criteria aligned with the project's beneficiary selection framework Consult women and girls during the selection of water-efficient fixtures to ensure that chosen technologies reduce water consumption without increasing domestic labour, such as repeated flushing, frequent refilling of containers, or additional cleaning requirements Ensure fixtures are compatible with existing household water use practices and do not	Indicator 1: 30 percent of households targeted with water efficient fixtures are FHHs. Indicator 2: 100 percent of fixtures selected are consulted with women and girls.	Y2-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, acted programme team, Acted MEAL team	Approximate Gender costs: 167,715 USD (30% of total 559,050 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-responsive**

	compromise privacy or dignity, particularly for sanitation and hygiene related uses Provide user guidance tailored to women and caregivers on the correct use and maintenance of fixtures to maximise water savings while preserving functionality and comfort.				
Activity 2.2.2 Installation of small-greywater recycling systems for household reuse	Prioritization of female-headed and vulnerable households in the selection of beneficiaries for greywater recycling systems, using transparent eligibility and vulnerability criteria Install low-maintenance, passive or semi-passive greywater systems wherever feasible, to avoid increasing women's labour for routine O&M. Design choices will prioritise simplicity, safety, and compatibility with existing household practices Conduct pre-installation consultations with both women and men in beneficiary households to ensure shared understanding,	Indicator 1: 30 percent of households targeted with installed small greywater recycling systems are FHHs. Indicator 2: 100 percent of systems selected are consulted with women and girls. Indicator 3: 80 percent of targeted FHHs with greywater recycling systems are supported with establishment of home gardens or hydroponic systems.	Y2-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Acted MEAL team	Approximate Gender costs: 164,921 USD (30% of total 549,738 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-responsive**

	acceptance, and agreement on system use, responsibilities, and limitations, thereby reducing intra-household conflict and misuse Provide targeted training to women and caregivers on safe handling, operation, and reuse restrictions of greywater systems, including clear guidance that reuse is limited to non-food crops or approved uses only, in line with national standards and WHO guidance Develop visual, low-literacy-friendly O&M materials (e.g. pictorial guides) to ensure correct use and maintenance by all household members, including women with limited literacy				
Outcome 3: Support climate-resilient agriculture in Eastern Ghouta					
Crosscutting	Provide training to strengthen women's technical capacities and participation in agriculture and water-management planning, while enabling the adoption of climate-smart practices, efficient irrigation, water-saving techniques, and	50 percent of men and 50 percent of women beneficiaries reporting greater acceptance of women's participation farmer associations and local plans development by the end of the project. 60 percent of women reporting increased empowerment	Y1-Y5	Acted MEAL Unit, Trainers, Private sector partners	Approximate Gender costs: 1,015,577 USD (18% of total component 3: 5,642,095 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

	access to credit for sustained agricultural production.[220]	(voice/role/access) when participating in local plans development by the end of the project. 70 percent of targeted women reporting increased knowledge on climate smart agricultural techniques at the end of the project. 50 percent of targeted women report reduced product costs as a result of applying climate smart techniques by the end of the project			
Output 3.1 Smallholder farmers are supported to adopt efficient irrigation and water management practices					
Activity 3.1.1 Capacity-building for farmer associations	Farmer associations include women representatives, including members connected to Women-Led Organizations (WLOs), to secure female participation and decision-making power in community agriculture and water governance bodies. Female farmers participate and engagement in plan developments to ensure women's ability to share	Indicator 1: At least 20 percent of famers association members are women, including women engaged through Women-Led Organizations (WLOs).[221] Indicator 2: All female members of farmer associations participate in the development of O&M plans for equipment Indicator 3:100 percent of female farmer association	Y1-Y3	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team,	Approximate Gender costs: 57,555 USD (15% of total 383,700 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

[220] Household surveys and post-distribution monitoring tools will assess women's decision-making power over the use of water-efficient technologies, greywater systems, and productive assets supported by the project. Monitoring will also examine women's control over income generated through climate-smart agriculture activities, revolving funds, and cost-sharing grants, as well as patterns of joint versus individual financial decision-making within beneficiary households.

[221] Target to validate and adjust as necessary at the inception informed by the baseline assessment.

	climate resilient planning and resource allocation outcomes	members participate in developing water management plans. Indicator 4: 1 consultation process conducted with women, including WLO representatives, to inform water management plans. Indicator 5: 100 percent of water management plans including gender lens/content (i.e. including differentiated male and female needs)			
Activity 3.1.2 Training on climate adapted agricultural practices[222]	Women inclusion in climate smart techniques trainings ensuring trainings are adapted to women's mobility, schedules or caregiving responsibilities. Gender specific sessions are systematically integrated within the trainings	Indicator 1: 30 percent of selected beneficiaries are women.[223] Indicator 2: 5 percent of selected beneficiaries are elderly. Indicator 3: 5 percent of selected beneficiaries have a disability. Indicator 5:100 percent of trainings conducted include gender sensitive session to	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Acted MEAL team	Approximate Gender costs: 390,285 USD (30% of total 1,300,950 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-responsive**

[222] The MEAL framework will integrate time-use and workload perception questions within beneficiary surveys and training follow-ups to assess whether water-saving technologies and agricultural practices reduce or inadvertently increase women's labour demands. Qualitative interviews and FGDs will further examine changes in water collection time, system maintenance responsibilities, and household care workloads. Potential unintended workload increases will also be monitored through the project's accountability and feedback mechanisms.

[223] Target to validate and adjust as necessary at the inception informed by the baseline assessment.

		address women and men's differentiated needs. Indicator 8: 75 percent of targeted women who report that attending the training/sessions did not add to their workload			
Activity 3.1.4 Establish locally driven financing models[224]	Women's participation, including engagement through Women-Led Organizations (WLOs), in cost-sharing grants and revolving grant funds enables access to financial tools that support adaptation to climate shocks and climate-resilient livelihoods	Indicator 1: 30 percent of selected beneficiaries for cost sharing grants are women, including women supported through Women-Led Organizations (WLOs).[225] Indicator 2: 2 percent of selected beneficiaries for cost sharing grants are elderly. Indicator 3: 3 percent of selected beneficiaries for cost sharing grants have a disability. Indicator 4: 10 percent of women participating and managing a revolving grant fund, including women engaged through WLOs networks.[226]	Y2-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Acted MEAL team	Approximate Gender costs: 487,690 USD (20% of total 2,438,450 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

[224] Household surveys and post-distribution monitoring tools will assess women's decision-making power over the use of water-efficient technologies, greywater systems, and productive assets supported by the project. Monitoring will also examine women's control over income generated through climate-smart agriculture activities, revolving grant funds, and cost-sharing grants, as well as patterns of joint versus individual financial decision-making within beneficiary households.
[225] Target to validate and adjust as necessary at the inception informed by the baseline assessment.
[226] Target to validate and adjust as necessary at the inception informed by the baseline assessment.

		Indicator 5: All female beneficiaries will receive business management training and mentoring, including women engaged through WLO-supported outreach,			
Output 3.2 Community level ecosystem-based adaptations to improve aquifer recharge in Eastern Ghouta					
Activity 3.2.1 Enhance natural infiltration	Participation is made accessible to women through adapted schedules, local delivery, and literacy-sensitive materials	20 percent of contracted labourers are women	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Acted MEAL team	Approximate Gender costs: 24,360 USD (10% of total 243,595 USD) Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**
Activity 3.2.2 Restore degraded public land through revegetation with native plants	Participation is made accessible to women through adapted schedules, local delivery, and literacy-sensitive materials	20 percent of contracted labourers are women	Y1-Y5	Gender & Safeguarding Specialist, Acted programme team, Acted MEAL team	Approximate Gender costs: 81,235 USD (10% of total 812,350 USD)

					Cost linked to activity being **gender-sensitive**

10. SEAH risk mitigation plan

10.1 Risk screening and SEAH mitigation plan

The second stage of Acted's environmental and social risk assessment, linked to the project, focused specifically on assessing SEAH risks. To achieve this, Acted used the GCF SEAH risk assessment toolkit. This entails screening: i) basic risk mitigation measures; ii) contextual level risks; iii) project-level risks. Based on the results of this screening, and combined with the ESS tool (see Annex 12[227]), specific SEAH project risks were then identified linked to the project activities. These risks were assessed for likelihood and potential impact, with a resulting mitigation plan elaborated.

The results of these varying layers of risk analysis are presented below:

Table 3: SEAH risk screening

Ensuring basic risk mitigation measures are in place ahead of stakeholder engagement	Responsibility	Comments
Does the AE have a SEAH Policy (or SEAH provisions in another policy)?	AE	Yes, Acted has a dedicated Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment, aligned with international standard.
Does the AE have an employee Code of Conduct?	AE	Yes, Acted has an organisation-wide Code of Conduct defining expected behaviours, prohibited conduct, reporting obligations and disciplinary measures, which is binding on all employees and associated personnel.
If the AE has contracted out stakeholder consultations, does that entity have a SEAH Policy (or are they contractually bound to apply the AE's)?	AE / Consultant	Yes. All Acted partners and subcontracted entities involved in stakeholder consultations are required either to have an internal SEAH / Safeguarding policy aligned with international standards or to formally commit, through contractual clauses, to applying Acted's SEAH Policy and Code of Conduct. Acted Syria's assesses the PSEAH capacities of all partners and supports them, where needed, in developing or

[227] As Outlined in Annex 12, SEAH-related risks were discussed during consultations with government ministry stakeholders. These discussions included exchange on existing SEAH prevention and response mechanisms in place with relevant ministries and shared recognition of the importance of having function SEAH prevention and follow-up mechanisms in place at institutional level.

		strengthening a tailored SEAH Improvement Action Plan. Suppliers are contractually required to comply with Acted's ethical standards, including PSEAH requirements, and those with direct contact with local communities receive targeted PSEAH briefings as operationally relevant.
If the AE has contracted out stakeholder consultations, does that entity have an employee Code of Conduct (or are they contractually bound to apply the AE's)?	AE / Consultant	Yes, all associated entities and their personnel engaged in stakeholder consultations must sign and comply with Acted's Code of Conduct , which sets out clear behavioural standards, prohibited conduct, reporting obligations and sanctions in case of breaches. Compliance is reinforced through contractual obligations, induction briefings, and targeted PSEAH awareness sessions. Acted Syria monitors adherence during implementation and may apply corrective measures, including suspension or termination of contracts, in case of non-compliance.
Have AE employees and consultants conducting stakeholder consultations been trained on preventing SEAH and the Code of Conduct?	AE / Consultant	Yes. All Acted Syria staff receive mandatory Code of Conduct and PSEAH training at least once a year. All new staff undergo safeguarding and PSEA induction. MEAL and program teams receive enhanced training on complaint handling and survivor-centred approaches. Prior to each field mission, PSEAH briefing are delivered. Daily workers and enumerators are trained prior to deployment. Suppliers also accept Acted's ethical standards including PSEAH standards in the signature of their contracts. Suppliers accept Acted's ethical and PSEAH standards through contractual commitments, and targeted briefings are provided to those with direct community interaction.

Does the AE have a grievance mechanism in place in case of early SEAH complaints from stakeholder engagement?	AE	Yes. Acted has multiple safe and confidential reporting channels: (1) internal Transparency Line and confidential email (transparency@acted.org) for staff, suppliers and partners; (2) community feedback mechanism (the Acted Feedback Mechanism – AFM) with multiple entry points (toll-free hotline, community accountability focal points, MEAL staff on site). Communities are informed before every activity about expected humanitarian staff behaviour and available reporting channels. PSEAH visibility materials are systematically displayed (Acted Syria developed key messages using the Interaction Toolkit, PSEAH Frontline Toolkit, Syria PSEA Network key messages, and IASC Six Core Principles.). The Country MEAL Manager oversees the AFM, through which SEAH reports can be submitted, ensuring that community feedback channels remain functional, accessible and appropriately monitored. These reporting channels, including how to access the AFM and Transparency Line, available protections for reporters and survivors, and field-level contact points, will be communicated to communities through AFM sensitisation activities at project inception and throughout implementation. Outreach will be delivered in accessible formats adapted to the local context, with dedicated engagement with women and vulnerable groups to ensure equitable awareness.
Does the AE have a specialist on staff who can undertake the more advanced assessment in Stage 4 and deal with SEAH complaints?	AE	Yes. The mission has both national safeguarding / PSEAH focal point and international Transparency, Compliance and Investigation staff. Acted HQ also provides

		dedicated PSEAH expertise. Budget is required to fund Gender and Safeguarding Specialist (designated SEAH focal point at field level) over the full project duration.
Contextual Level (and Baseline Conditions)	**Responsibility**	**Comments**
Does the country have laws prohibiting sexual harassment / stalking generally?	National/State law (Gender Assessment)	Yes. Syrian panel code, Decree 148/1949
Do labour laws prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace?	National/State law (Gender Assessment)	No explicit provision in the current labour law addressing workplace sexual harassment.
Does the country have laws prohibiting intimate partner violence (IPV)?	National/State law (Gender Assessment)	No explicit provision in the current law about IPV.
What is the prevalence of GBV in the country?	National statistics (Gender Assessment)	While national wide statistics are unavailable, the 2025 Humanitarian Response Priorities document highlights high prevalence of GBV with 93 percent of those requiring assistance being women and girls.
What is the legal age a person can marry?	National law	The legal age for marriage is governed by Personal Status Law No. 59 of 1953. 18 years for Men, and 17 for Women.
Despite any laws, what is the prevalence of child marriage in the country?	National statistics	There are no up-to-date data on prevalence of child marriages. However, it is estimated that over 24 percent of women in Syria were married before age 18.[228]
What is the income level of the country?	World Bank ranking (H, HM, M, LM, L)	24.8 percent of Syrians consume below the low-income country poverty line (2.15$ per capita per day) and 67 percent of the population live below the lower middle-income poverty line (3.65$ per capita per day). Syria ranks within the low-income economies (under 1,135USD/capita) according to World Bank.
Where does the country rank on global gender indices?	World Bank Reports / Other	Syria is not included in the Global Gender Gap Report 2025 of the Word Economic Forum due to lack

[228] United Nations, (2025), Syria common country analysis: 2024 update. Available here.

		of available data. In 2021 (last report Syria appeared in), Syria ranked 152nd out of 156 countries assessed.
Is there a national action plan on GBV and/or sexual harassment?	National government	No. There is no specific strategy or national action plan addressing GBV yet.
Does the country have specialized services for survivors of GBV (at both the national and local level)?	Local gov / NGOs	There are limited specialised services in Rural Damascus provided by humanitarian NGOs and the UN identified in the national GBV service-mapping.. Accessibility remains very limited especially outside major cities.
Is the country currently experiencing war, internal conflict or humanitarian disaster?	National / Media	Syria is exposed to multiple humanitarian crises including internal displacements, sporadic flare up of armed conflict, climate disasters and epidemic outbreaks.
Project level risk	**Responsibility**	**Comments**
Are women concentrated in lower paid roles and mostly line-managed and supervised by men?	AE	Based on existing gender dynamics in Syria and Acted's existing HR trends, women are likely to be concentrated in lower paid positions and to be managed by men. The limited educational opportunities for women and higher burden of domestic work means that women are less likely to be on the formal workforce market nor to have medium-high technical expertise.
Are piece-rate systems or other performance-related pay structures used where individuals are in control of how much other workers get paid?	AE	No. The payment of workers is based on Acted's internal salary grid or daily worker wage memo. The value amounts are decided at Country Coordination level and approved in coordination with Acted HQ.
Will project workers have control over life-changing resources such as compensation or access to basic or highly sought-after resources?	AE	No.
Will security personnel be used? Will they be armed?	AE	Acted contracts security guards to ensure the guarding services of Acted office premises in Syria. The security guards are unarmed, in

		line with humanitarian principles and Acted's internal policies.
Will there be an influx of male workers into the project area?	AE	This is probable, as individuals often relocate to areas where work opportunities are available. Knowing that the majority of the country's formal workforce is composed of men, it is possible that many employment posts related to the project will be taken by men.
Are local communities poor and lacking basic resources?	AE	Yes. The project targets the Rural Damascus governorate which includes many communities that continue to be characterised by poverty, destruction of infrastructure, fragile livelihoods, food insecurity, and high returns of internally displaced people and refuges.
Will migrant workers be employed by the project?	AE	While employment opportunities will not discriminate based on migration status, it is unlikely that migrant workers will be hired on the project.
Will project workers all have formal contracts?	AE	Yes, all people that will receive a remuneration linked to project work will sign a formal contract with Acted, either through employee contracts or through daily work conventions.
Will goods frequently be transported over long distances, especially through poor and/or remote communities?	AE	Some project procurement will take place in urban centres with adapted markets, with goods then transported to the project locations – which are pre-urban and rural areas. The governorate is however, situated close to the capital city and therefore the distances are not expected to be long.
Are worksites or project activities based in remote locations?	AE	No.
Will project workers live in the community or in worker housing?	AE	Acted only provides housing for its international staff (guesthouse usually located within, or near the office premises). National staff are

		free to find housing wherever they wish.
Will workers be required to travel long and potentially unsafe distances?	AE	Depending on the role, some Acted staff will be required to travel to undertake field missions, travelling between various bases of the project. Security and road conditions vary depending on the location.
Will the project operate in highly pressurised work environments, with tight deadlines?	AE	The project is a long-term, implemented over a 5-year period. Hence, it is not expected that the work environment will be particularly pressurised, unlike for emergency/pure humanitarian projects (which Acted Syria has extensive experience in implementing).
Is the project located within a male-dominated sector where female workers will be employed?	AE	The formal workforce in general in Syria is dominated by men. The project will focus on the water and agricultural sectors. While the water sector is heavily male dominated, the agricultural sector has high concentration of women in certain positions related for example to irrigation. Women provide much of the labour force during harvest, yet women's involvement often remains informal, artisanal, and under-recognised. In the livestock sector, women's role is concentrated in less profitable activities with limited market access, while men retain control over assets, sales, and decision-making.
Have communities voluntarily raised concerns in relation to SEAH/GBV during consultations?	AE	No. However, according to Acted's gender assessment (Annex 4), there is a major trend in underreporting and normalisation of insecurity. As such, a lack of concerns being voluntarily raised does not equate an absence of concern.

Table 4: SEAH risk mitigation plan

Activities	Summary of SEAH/ Harassment Risks	Mitigation Measures	Likelihood (score)	Impact (score)	Responsible party/ person
CROSSCUTTING Internal workforce (EEs) – recruitment, induction, daily operations)	A gender-imbalanced workforce (approximately 80% men) may reinforce power imbalances, increasing the risk of sexual harassment or abuse between staff, quid pro quo dynamics in recruitment or performance management, boundary violations in closed office settings, and bullying or retaliation against complainants.	Mandatory PSEAH induction and annual refresher training for all staff; signed Code of Conduct; gender-balanced, two-person recruitment and selection panels; trained and accessible PSEAH focal points in each field base to receive, document, and escalate complaints confidentially; survivor-centred investigation procedures led by trained and independent personnel; annual staff discussion sessions (women-only, and men-only) to reassess risks and reinforce accountability; confidential and multi-channel reporting mechanisms.	Low	High	HR Manager, Gender and Safeguarding Specialist
CROSSCUTTING Field missions & travel (mixed teams)	Sexual harassment or abuse may occur during travel, transport, or accommodation arrangements, particularly in mixed-gender teams.	Gender-sensitive safe travel and accommodation SOPs; approved transport and lodging only; confidential and anonymous reporting channels available during missions; clear escalation and response procedures.	Low	High	Area Manager, Country Coordination

CROSSCUTTING Contractor management (consultants, enumerators, guards, drivers)	Contractor-to-staff or staff-to-contractor sexual harassment or abuse, and sexual exploitation and abuse of community members by contractors engaged by the project.	All contracts include binding PSEAH clauses aligned with the Acted Code of Conduct; mandatory PSEAH training for contractors prior to deployment; designation of trained PSEAH focal points by contractor firms; routine spot-checks and supervision; immediate suspension of alleged perpetrators pending investigation; confidential reporting mechanisms accessible to communities and staff; survivor-centred referral pathways to health, psychosocial, and legal services.	Low	High	Logistics Manager, Gender and Safeguarding Specialist
CROSSCUTTING M&E	Enumerator or MEAL staff may engage in sexual harassment, coercive data collection practices, or SEAH toward community members; misuse of sensitive data may expose survivors; male-dominated teams may increase risks during FGDs or consultations.	Mandatory PSEAH training for enumerators and MEAL staff; gender-balanced; prohibition of one-on-one interviews in isolated settings; safe, public venues and daytime data collection; informed consent procedures including PSEAH information and reporting options; data minimisation and survivor data protection SOPs; secure data storage; debriefings and safeguarding follow-up after field activities; clearly communicated and accessible reporting channels.	Low	High	Gender and Safeguarding Specialist, MEAL Manager
Activities 1.2.2, 3.1.1 related to support to communal governance structures,	Male-dominated institutional environments may marginalise women and youth, creating power imbalances that increase the risk of sexual	Display of safeguarding rules and confidential and multi-channel reporting mechanisms in meeting rooms; mixed-team facilitation where appropriate.	Low	High	Program Manager, Gender and Safeguarding Specialist

accountability mechanisms and forums	harassment during travel, meetings, or professional networking, and may discourage reporting or undermine survivor-centred responses in public or mixed-gender settings.				
Activities 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 3.1.2 related to household level installations and training of farmers, extension and environmental workers	Sexual harassment or abuse by trainers, technicians, or extension staff (male-dominated teams); unsafe travel to training or household-level service delivery; quid pro quo for participation, targeting, or access to household installations or maintenance; pressure on female participants or household members by male staff; SEAH risks in isolated demonstration plots or private household settings.	Transparent and publicly communicated participant selection criteria; prioritisation of female trainers and programme staff; training conducted in visible, public locations; prohibition of one-on-one interactions in isolated settings; clear protocols for household-level visits and service delivery, including advance scheduling, paired visits , and explanation of purpose; PSEAH key messages and reporting options explained at the start of each session and prior to household-level works; trained PSEAH focal points on-call during activities; consultation with women on safe locations and session timing; group travel arrangements where needed; community-accessible reporting channels.	Low	High	Project Manager, Gender and Safeguarding Specialist, MEAL Manager
Activities 3.1.4, 3.2.1, 3.2.2 related to locally driven financing mechanisms and	Quid pro quo demands in grant or on-granting approval processes, and selection for paid communal works; favouritism or exclusion; retaliation	Independent multi-person panel scoring and verification processes; separation of assessment and verification functions; post hoc published selection criteria and feedback to applicants; accessible	Medium	High	Project Manager; MEAL Manager

paid communal works	against un/successful applicants or complainants.	grievance and appeals mechanisms; MEAL audits and spot-checks; sanctions for misconduct.			

The SEAH risks identified in the risk analysis table above may affect women, men, girls, and boys, though in the same way and the same extent**.**

- Women and girls are disproportionately exposed to SEAH risks, particularly in rural communities targeted by the project where:
    - Social norms may limit women and girls' decision-making power and mobility.
    - Women and girls interact frequently with project staff (training, household level water saving and reuse, community governance structures).
    - Women and girls may rely on male staff for access to resources (e.g access to financial assistance), creating power imbalances that can lead to SEAH

Girls, especially adolescent girls, face additional vulnerabilities notably when participating in mixed-gender youth or farmer training activities, where age, gender and authority differentials may further increase exposure to SEAH risks. Men and boys may also be affected, although generally to a lesser extent. Identified risks include sexual harassment in male-dominated work environments and social or cultural pressures that discourage disclosure or reporting due to stigma. Additionally, SEA and sexual harassment risks may arise among project staff themselves. Given that the technical workforce in Syria remains predominantly male, risks include misuse of authority, harassment between staff members and the normalisation of inappropriate or discriminatory behaviours if not adequately addressed. This differential risk analysis directly informs the mitigation measures outlined above, which are designed to address gender- and age-specific vulnerabilities, reduce power imbalances, and ensure safe, accessible and survivor-centred reporting and response mechanisms across all project activities.

10.2 Overview and key principles

Acted applies a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). The project enforces Acted's Code of Conduct, Policy on Protection from SEAH and Child Protection Policy, which are binding on all staff, implementing partners, suppliers and contractors. These are aligned with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Six Core Principles, UN Secretary-General Bulletins ST/SGB/2003/13 and ST/SGB/2019/8, and the CHS Alliance guidelines.

Implementation is guided by the following principles drawn from Acted's PSEAH Policy (2025):

- Neutrality and impartiality: safeguarding measures apply uniformly to all stakeholders.
- Confidentiality: information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Managerial responsibility: each line manager is accountable for prevention, reporting and follow-up.
- Survivor-centred and do-no-harm approach: survivor safety, dignity and informed consent are prioritised.
- Accountability and non-retaliation: any report made in good faith is protected from reprisal.

These commitments are implemented through Acted's internal PSEAH Checklist and Safeguarding Action Plan, which provide verifiable standards across all missions.

10.3 Comprehensive mitigation measures

The project applies comprehensive mitigation measures to address SEAH risks across all operations. These measures are defined through Acted's PSEAH Checklist, which ensures consistency in safeguarding implementation. The checklist covers forty-three standards organised under four operational pillars: Deterrence, Prevention, Identification and Response.

Under the deterrence pillar, recruitment integrates SEAH screening, including behavioural interviews, gender-balanced panels, reference checks and participation in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme. All contracts include mandatory SEAH clauses, and confirmed breaches result in disciplinary action up to dismissal.

Prevention measures include mandatory induction and annual refresher training for all staff, daily workers and partners. E-learning modules and investigation workshops complement field sessions. Acted Syria also participates in the national PSEA Network and Protection Sector.

Identification mechanisms ensure visibility of acceptable conduct and complaint channels. Posters in Arabic display hotlines and reporting options. Community sensitisation sessions and gender-segregated focus groups provide safe spaces for disclosure. Response measures prioritise confidentiality, consent and timely survivor referral. Each allegation triggers a risk assessment and activation of immediate support, while all data are stored securely on password-protected systems with restricted access. Based on Acted's internal PSEAH Checklist self-assessment, validated by country management and HQ oversight, Acted Syria reached an overall compliance rate of ninety-nine percent in 2025:

Pillar	Achievement 2025
Deterrence	100 percent
Prevention	98 percent
Identification	100 percent
Response	100 percent
Overall	99 percent

The 2025 results show that safeguarding standards are strongly embedded across all project bases.

10.4 Reporting protocols and complaints mechanisms

Acted applies an integrated, survivor-centred and gender-responsive grievance redress and feedback system, specifically adapted to SEAH reporting. This mechanism is embedded within Acted's broader Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) framework and ensures accessible, confidential and ethical reporting across all project locations.

Acted considers that SEAH complaints should not be collected through a standalone mechanism, as duplicating systems can confuse affected communities and increase reporting barriers. Instead, SEAH alerts are channelled through existing accountability and feedback systems, with dedicated confidential routing to staff trained in handling SEAH-related complaints. The system combines:

- the Acted Feedback Mechanism (AFM) for community members and project participants; and
- the Transparency Line for staff, partners, contractors, and all third parties – which may also be used by community members and project participants who wish to report directly to Acted HQ.

Both mechanisms are inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible to women, men, girls, boys and persons with disabilities.

The AFM provides multiple safe entry points for SEAH-sensitive and other complaints, ensuring accessibility at community level. Entry points include:

- Complaint boxes installed in accessible community spaces.
- Accountability focal points and trained MEAL staff.
- Local contact numbers displayed in all offices.
- Community awareness sessions and AFM committee meetings.

Visibility and accessibility are reinforced through posters, banners, laminated cards and leaflets in English, and Arabic. All AFM complaints are categorised into five levels; Level 5 (sensitive complaints such as SEAH or Child Safeguarding) are immediately and confidentially redirected to the Acted's HQ Transparency, Compliance and Investigation (TCI) Unit for assessment and follow-up. The Country MEAL Manager oversees the AFM, ensuring that community feedback channels remain functional, accessible and responsive, including for the safe submission of SEAH-related concerns.

All complaints are acknowledged within five working days. Follow-up actions are initiated within fifteen days, depending on the severity and confidentiality requirements. This integrated system avoids duplication and confusion by using a single-entry point for all feedback while ensuring that SEAH alerts are automatically channelled to trained safeguarding staff.

The Transparency Line (for SEAH, child safeguarding, misconduct and fraud) is a secure and confidential whistleblowing platform managed by Acted's HQ TCI Unit. It can be accessed online at https://transparency.acted.org or by email at transparency@acted.org. Information on the Transparency Line is widely disseminated to ensure awareness and accessibility:

- Posters are displayed in all Acted offices, bases and guesthouses, showing the contact email address and online platform link. The mechanism is systematically presented during all PSEAH staff trainings, partner capacity-building sessions and supplier onboarding briefings. Laminated quick-reference cards listing the hotline and email contacts are distributed to Programme, MEAL and field staff.

Reports are acknowledged within five working days by the HQ TCI Unit, which conducts a preliminary assessment and coordinates follow-up in accordance with Acted's PSEAH procedures. All information is treated with the highest level of confidentiality and shared only on a need-to-know basis.

Visibility and awareness: Information about both the Transparency Line and the AFM, including contact details and confidentiality commitments, is permanently displayed in Acted's offices, bases and project sites, and presented systematically during staff inductions, community meetings and partner orientations to ensure awareness of safe reporting options. These roles and reporting channels will also be communicated to communities through AFM sensitisation activities conducted at project inception and throughout implementation, including information on how to access the Transparency Line and AFM, what protections are in place for reporters and survivors, and who to contact at field level. Outreach will be provided in accessible formats appropriate to the local context, with dedicated engagement with women and vulnerable groups to ensure equitable awareness.

Capacity and survivor-centred handling: Accountability staff, PSEAH focal points and programme teams are trained on safe disclosure reception, informed consent, confidentiality and the do-no-harm principle. Upon receiving or witnessing a SEAH-related concern, staff must immediately notify the Country Director or use the Transparency Line. Field staff also receive laminated "SEAH Reporting Cards" reminding them of this procedure and listing key contacts – the Country Director, the Transparency Line and the inter-agency hotline. For this project, the Gender and Safeguarding Specialist serves as the designated SEAH focal point at field level and is responsible for monitoring preventive actions, awareness sessions and grievance channels, and for reporting monthly to the Country Director for trend analysis and risk identification. Protection against retaliation for anyone reporting misconduct or cooperating with authorised investigations is ensured through Acted's internal whistle-blowing policy, in line with the UN Secretary-General Bulletin (2017) on protection against retaliation.

External reporting option (GCF IRM): In addition to Acted's internal and community mechanisms, stakeholders may submit SEAH-related or other complaints directly to the GCF

Independent Redress Mechanism (IRM), which receives and addresses grievances related to GCF-financed projects. Complaints can be filed through the IRM's secure online form at https://irm.greenclimate.fund/case-register/file-complaint or by email to irm@gcfund.org. Acted will ensure these IRM contacts are advertised on local communication materials (office/site posters, banners, laminated cards and community leaflets) alongside Acted and inter-agency hotlines.

10.5 Procedures for SEAH cases

Procedures for SEAH cases are defined in Acted's Policy on Protection from SEAH (2025) and Investigation Memo v2.0 (2023). They ensure that each case is managed through a structured, survivor-centred and transparent process consistent with humanitarian best practice.

Upon receipt of an alert through the Transparency Line (https://transparency.acted.org) or the Accountability and Feedback Mechanism (AFM), the Country Director and the HQ Transparency, Compliance and Investigation (TCI) Unit conduct an immediate risk assessment to determine protection needs and potential health or security risks. Medical, psychosocial or legal referrals are initiated based on the survivor's informed consent, and the case is formally coded and secured within Acted's encrypted database. At field level, any allegation received by the Gender and Safeguarding Specialist or through AFM channels is systematically referred to the HQ TCI Unit in line with Acted procedures. The Country MEAL Manager ensures that AFM channels used for receipt of complaints remain functional and accessible, while the Country Director oversees case escalation, compliance and risk monitoring.

Investigations are led by the HQ TCI Unit in coordination with the Country Director and Safeguarding Coordinator. Evidence collection includes document review and structured interviews with reporters, survivors, witnesses and subjects of concern, using trauma-informed techniques. Investigators apply the balance of probabilities standard of proof, in line with international administrative investigation practice and all participants sign confidentiality agreements. Throughout the investigation, risk assessments are regularly updated, and protective measures, such as administrative leave or temporary relocation, may be applied. Findings are consolidated in a formal investigation report. Disciplinary decisions are made by HR management and the Country Director (for national staff) or HQ HR (for international staff). Donor notifications are handled by HQ in line with applicable contractual and regulatory requirements. All external communications are anonymised and validated by HQ. Lessons learnt feed directly into the mission's Safeguarding Action Plan to strengthen prevention and accountability. All investigation materials are stored electronically on encrypted servers with limited access. Personal identifiers related to SEAH cases are strictly segregated, access-restricted, and do not appear in external reports or non-authorized HR documentation. If an allegation involves a third party, referrals are made through the national PSEA Network or Protection Sector.

10.6 Survivor support modalities

Acted Syria guarantees timely, appropriate and survivor-centred assistance for any person affected by sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. Support is provided strictly on the basis of informed consent, with full respect for confidentiality and dignity. Survivors may withdraw or modify their consent at any time.

Referrals follow the Standard Operating Procedures for Medical and MHPSS Referrals (SEAH-05.1), including for gender-based violence (GBV), and use the Consent Form (SEAH-05.2.1) and Comprehensive Referral Form (SEAH-05.2.2) to ensure safe data handling. All forms are stored securely and shared only with authorised service providers. Survivors are informed of available options and can choose whether to engage with any or all of the services listed below.

Type of support	Modalities and partners
Medical care	Survivors have immediate access to healthcare facilities capable of providing Clinical Management of Rape (CMR) GBV, and post-exposure prophylaxis. Medical services are available through the Ministry of Public Health, UNFPA-supported clinics and NGO medical partners. Survivors are accompanied to health facilities when needed to reduce safety or transport barriers. Costs of treatment are fully covered through Acted's emergency support procedures.
Psychosocial and MHPSS support	Psychological First Aid (PFA) is provided immediately after disclosure by trained safeguarding staff. Survivors are then referred to specialised mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) actors identified in the national GBV service-mapping. When in-person counselling is not feasible, confidential remote sessions are arranged. Psychosocial support aims to stabilise the survivor, reduce trauma symptoms and promote recovery at their own pace.
Legal assistance	Survivors are informed of their right to pursue justice and offered a referral to specialised legal aid actors identified in the national GBV service-mapping. All legal procedures proceed only with the survivor's explicit consent and Acted may facilitate transportation or accompaniment where needed.
Community-based protection	Acted engages local protection committees, traditional and religious leaders, and women's groups to create safe spaces and prevent retaliation. Where security risks are identified, the Gender and Safeguarding Specialist may request temporary relocation, safety escorts or confidential changes in work assignment. Community awareness sessions also emphasise confidentiality and non-stigmatisation of survivors.

Follow-up occurs within seventy-two hours of referral to confirm safe access and identify additional needs. The Gender and Safeguarding Specialist maintains a confidential log of referrals and outcomes, reviewed quarterly to enhance response quality. The mission's SGBV Service Mapping (SEAH-05.3) is updated annually to ensure availability of qualified medical, psychosocial, legal and protection providers across all regions.

10.7 Oversight, monitoring and continuous improvement

The Country Director ensures overall compliance with Acted's PSEAH Policy, supervises reporting, coordinates donor notifications, oversees focal points, ensures training coverage and updates the PSEAH risk matrix. For this project, the Country Director holds overall responsibility for PSEAH compliance, supervises focal points, and oversees training coverage and risk monitoring. At headquarters level, the Transparency, Compliance and Investigation (TCI) Unit manages investigations, validates findings and consolidates global learning across missions. The HQ TCI Unit also manages all formal investigations related to SEAH allegations, with field-level focal points systematically referring all allegations in line with Acted procedures.

Monitoring framework for preventive and mitigative SEAH measures: Acted Syria maintains a structured monitoring framework to ensure that preventive and mitigative SEAH measures are effectively implemented and continuously improved under the supervision of the Country Director and with technical support from the Gender and Safeguarding Specialist and HQ TCI Unit. At field level, Gender and Safeguarding Specialist serves as a PSEAH focal point in the

project area and will monitor preventive actions, awareness sessions and grievance channels, and report monthly to the Country Director for trend analysis and risk identification. PSEAH focal points do not conduct investigations and systematically refer all allegations to the HQ TCI Unit, in line with Acted procedures. The Country MEAL Manager oversees the Accountability and Feedback Mechanism (AFM), through which SEAH reports can be submitted, and is responsible for ensuring that community feedback channels remain functional, accessible and responsive throughout implementation.

The Specialist maintains a country SEAH risk register, updated regularly to reflect contextual and programmatic risks. This register feeds into the annual PSEAH Action Plan, jointly developed with the Country Director. The plan translates Acted's four operational pillars, deterrence, prevention, identification and response, into concrete, measurable actions. For each activity, it specifies the process, expected result, performance indicator, responsible person, deadline and implementation status. At the same time, the Specialist ensures that the relevant Syrian legal frameworks (under the scope of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour) are likewise incorporated in gender and PSEAH action planning.

The Action Plan is a digital, living tool, updated in real time by focal points and accessible to management and HQ. This ensures ownership, accountability and transparency in progress tracking. Monitoring combines quantitative indicators and qualitative assessments to evaluate implementation and effectiveness. Roles, reporting pathways and safe complaint options will be communicated to communities through AFM sensitisation activities from project inception and throughout implementation, including how to access the AFM and Transparency Line, what protections are in place for reporters and survivors, and who to contact at field level. Communication will be provided in accessible formats suited to the local context, with targeted outreach to women and vulnerable groups to support equitable awareness and access.

Key indicators include:

- implementation rate of the PSEAH checklist per pillar (target at least eighty-five percent);
- percentage of project staff and partners trained on PSEAH (target one hundred percent);
- percentage of Acted field bases with functional and accessible grievance mechanisms (AFM and Transparency Line) (target one hundred percent of operational bases); percentage of survivors, where safely and ethically feasible, expressing satisfaction with referral services through anonymised and voluntary feedback mechanisms (target at least seventy percent); and
- number of SEAH-sensitive complaints received, investigated and closed.

Progress against these indicators is reviewed quarterly at mission level by the Gender and Safeguarding Specialist under the supervision of the Country Director and annually by the HQ TCI Unit as part of Acted's global safeguarding reporting. At national level, Acted Syria contributes to the inter-agency PSEA Network, under the leadership of the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator, sharing progress, good practices and lessons learnt to strengthen collective accountability.

This integrated monitoring and governance framework ensures continuous oversight, timely adaptation of mitigation measures and evidence-based learning, embedding safeguarding commitments across all phases of programme design, implementation and review in line with Acted's PSEAH Policy, GCF ESAP standards, and Syrian law.

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