

## CASE STUDY – building an organisational structure

### Background

Syria Relief is a well-established organization, mainly considered as an education organization and renowned for its activities under the education sector but works in seven sectors including health, nutrition and shelter. At the time of the case study the organisation had a relationship with 12 INGOs and UN agencies, which have given them an opportunity to improve policies, procedures and systems and have therefore allowed it to grow and expose itself to numerous opportunities.

### The program

A grant from IKEA Foundation enabled Syria Relief to develop a strategy plan, identify its internal gaps and establish an internal development department that allowed the organization to build and expand its own profile in its own desired manner, improve its internal structure, train field staff and become a leading organization in supporting community-based organizations inside Syria.

### What happened?

The first grant Syria Relief received, which was less than \$10,000, allowed them to address a major gap within the organization, the absence of a strategy. They hired a consultant to develop a strategy plan, outlining a clear organizational structure that had been missing since the organization's establishment. The strategy defined aspects such as every department's jobs, tasks and expectations as well as the organization's goals and objectives as a whole. A director at the organisation say;

*'The second and latest grant Syria Relief received from IKEA Foundation has been the most successful and unique in our experience. We were able to further identify the gaps within the organizational structure as a result of putting the strategy plan we had developed in place. This grant was \$50,000 for a duration of seven months, which we used to establish an Organizational Development Department in order to implement our newly developed strategy. The idea of establishing this department stemmed from the fact that as Syria Relief is a well-established and connected organization, we decided to transfer the experiences we had gained and were exposed to onto local charities, community-based and grass root organizations, community institutes and so on inside Syria, that have not had the opportunity to work with INGOs as we did. The department's objectives are twofold; the first is assessing Syria Relief's internal structure and looking at what improvements should be made within the organization. The second is looking externally at how we can improve civil society organizations inside Syria.'*

*'Under the first objective, we targeted our staff inside Syria to develop their capacity by conducting trainings on managerial and reporting skills as well as the sphere standards. Under the second objective, we offered to look at developing the Idlib Health Directorate (IHD), among other grassroots organizations, by following Save the Children's method in conducting an organisational capacity assessment onto IHD in order to identify how we can transfer our knowledge and experience onto IHD and configure the gaps it is facing as an organization. Given that the amount was only \$50,000 and the duration of the grant was relatively short, we had to prioritize which gaps to tackle and that IHD was facing, and so chose to tackle its three biggest gaps; micro-financial systems, its registration issue as well as its supply chain policies, procedures and systems, while the other gaps was covered by other organizations such as the Syrian American Medical Society Foundation (SAMS).'*

*'To tackle the first gap, we helped IHD put financial policies and procedures in place, develop its master budgeting for 2019, put in place a scheme of delegation or authorization matrix, purchase accounting software and train IHD staff on the new policies and procedures in order to ensure that they are being implemented without challenges. To tackle the second gap, we helped IHD register in Turkey and open an official bank account to open up the opportunity for IHD to work directly with international organizations as an official partner and receive direct funding from them instead of continuing to receive funding indirectly through more established and bigger Syrian organizations such as SAMS. This would allow IHD to diversify its donors and sources of funding in order to avoid the consequences of funding suspensions from certain donors for example, such as the one they are facing now, which has affected IHD's implementation as it fully relied on it. Furthermore, we helped IHD tackle the third gap by putting in place supply chain policies, procedures and systems and developing already-existing ones.'*

### **Why is this important?**

*'The grant from IKEA Foundation managed to close many gaps Syria Relief was experiencing. We used to be more donor-driven but we now have our own strategy and profile and we are expanding in our own direction. This is an achievement for Save the Children itself as it supported us in implementing our new strategy by establishing such a department which targets community-based organizations inside Syria and helps them in enhancing their capacity, thereby allowing Syria Relief to feel and act as a partner for Save the Children rather than a contractor.'*

### **What difference does it make?**

*'These grants have had a huge impact on our day-to-day work as firstly, enhancing our policies and procedures and investing in them opened up opportunities for us to receive more grants from various INGOs and also from USAID (which is our strictest donor), which we wouldn't have been able to receive otherwise. Secondly, the trainings we provided to our field staff have been positively reflected in their work as the quality of supporting documents, their whole documentation process has improved and the challenges under remote management and communications between our field and Turkey offices have reduced given that we worked on raising the awareness of the field team regarding implementation in line with the new policies and procedures and the impact of that on our operations.'*

*'We never usually receive grants that are fully dedicated to capacity-building, so we definitely couldn't have achieved this much to this extent without these grants. These capacity-building grants give Save the Children's partners the chance to choose the consultant they prefer and suits them and allows the funding to contribute to the organization itself, rather than to a certain project, in order to ensure the sustainability of such partners. If we do not overcome the gaps the organization is facing as a whole, then we cannot implement the projects properly and to their fullest potential. Syria Relief is also trying to encourage more of these grants, as the Syrian civil society has reached its peak in funding without reaching its peak in capacity, so we need to invest in capacity so that if donor interest moves away from Syria, we need to ensure that these community-based organizations are sustainable enough to continue their work if and when big donors redirect their attention to other crises.'*

Syria Relief's web site in English; <https://syriarelief.org.uk/>