



► Rebuilding Syria: Social and economic recovery through green works and skills development

**13
million**

forcibly displaced
persons

**6.5
million**

internally displaced
persons¹

**10 times
the GPD**

in infrastructure
damage²

The fall of the Assad regime created a critical transitional moment in the Syrian Arab Republic, opening opportunities for rebuilding governance, infrastructure, and social cohesion. However, recovery is uneven and fragile. The country continues to grapple with the long-term consequences of over a decade of violent conflict, which has devastated infrastructure, fractured institutions, and displaced over 13 million people internally and externally. The reintegration of returnees presents a critical challenge, as the labour market has been severely impacted by the crisis. Formal employment opportunities have significantly contracted due to the collapse of public and private sector institutions, while informal economy activities have expanded. This has led to a surge in precarious employment, particularly among women, youth, and returnees, who face multiple barriers to decent work in the shape of discrimination, skill mismatches, and lack of access to formal markets. Social protection systems are weak, and regulatory enforcement of decent work standards is limited.

At the same time, **the reconstruction phase presents opportunities for decent work interventions to shape a more inclusive and resilient economy while seeking to strengthen social cohesion** in the Syrian society. Employment-intensive investments in infrastructure can generate immediate livelihoods while building the foundations for long-term productivity. Skills development is critical to address gaps in employability, especially in sectors with recovery potential such as textiles, construction, and services. The role of social partners is pivotal in this context. Trade unions and employers' organizations are gradually reasserting their influence and are key to ensuring that labour rights are upheld and that recovery strategies are inclusive. Initiatives to strengthen social partners' institutional capacities will enable them to engage effectively in crisis recovery processes.

1. [Syrian Arab Republic \(the\) | Rights Mapping and Analysis Platform](#)

2. World Bank. The Syrian Conflict : Physical Damage and Reconstruction Assessment (2011 - 2024) (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099102025095540101>

The project in a nutshell



ALEPPO AND GREATER
RURAL DAMASCUS,
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

PROJECT NAME

Rebuilding Syria through Decent Work: Putting Decent Work at the core of the HDPN for the social and economic recovery in Syria through Green Works and skills development

TIMEFRAME

June 2025 – March 2026

BUDGET

700,000 USD

PRIORITY GROUPS

Returnees, youth (18-35 years of age), women (minimum 20% of the total workforce), and people with disabilities (at least 3%), who face challenges in accessing the labor market.

POLICY AREAS

- Skills
- Social cohesion
- HDP Nexus

KEY PARTNERS

Employers' organizations

Employers' and Business Members' Organizations (EBMOs) including Damascus and Aleppo Chamber of Industries

Workers' organizations

Syndicate of Engineers
Trade unions

UN Partners

UNHCR, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UN Country Team

Project summary

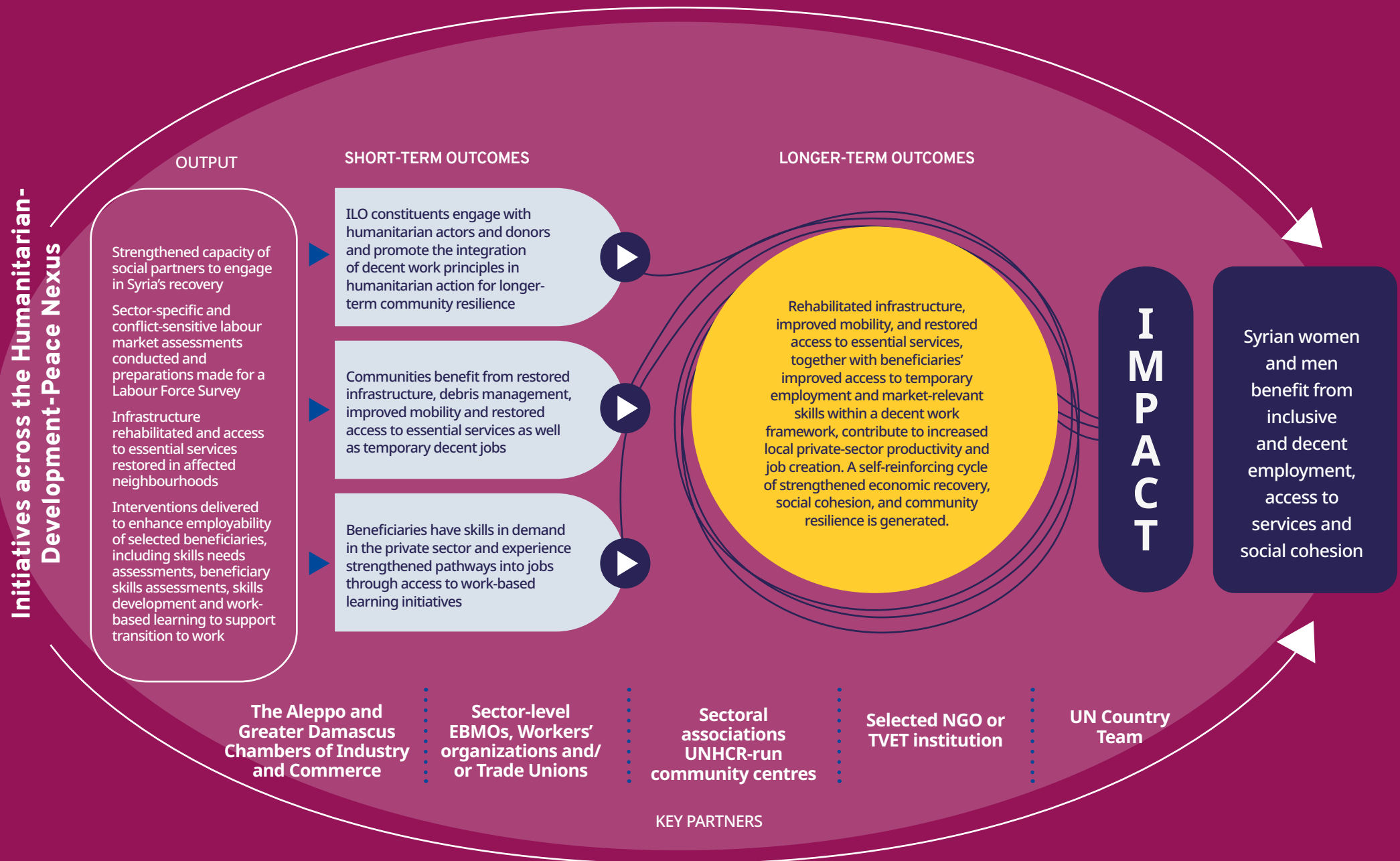
This project directly addresses unemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities, promoting self-reliance and social cohesion while reducing dependency on humanitarian aid. Sector-specific and conflict-sensitive labour market assessments have guided the identification of priority sectors for job creation, economic resilience, and social inclusion.

The project promotes inclusive recovery by integrating employment-intensive investments, skills development and decent work into crisis response.

It promotes decent work principles through [Employment Intensive Investment Programme approaches \(EIIP\)](#), combining infrastructure rehabilitation with immediate employment generation. Training on occupational safety and health and decent working conditions (including child labour) is delivered by the Occupational Safety and Health Training Centre of the Damascus Chamber of Industry and is offered to EIIP contractors and other implementing partners and open to humanitarian actors and their contractors. This both strengthens the project's overall framework of decent work standards and contributes to the project's ambition to demonstrate to such actors the feasibility and benefits of integrating decent work principles in livelihood interventions in contexts affected by crisis. In addition, the project promotes the role of social partners in reconstruction, providing both capacity development of social partners and a platform for engagement with humanitarian actors. Indeed, Decent Work principles are integrated across HDPN planning and delivery through the development of one ILO decent work programme of support for Syria and active engagement of ILO constituents, including strengthened capacities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL), employers' and workers' organizations to apply [ILO Recommendation 205](#) in crisis and transition contexts.

A parallel intervention developed in partnership with employers' organisations seeks to enhance employability of workers and job seekers through skills development and work-based learning in targeted sectors, thereby reinforcing the project's contribution to sustainable positive change in target communities. The use of local resource-based construction technologies and locally available resources are expected to promote local business and labour, while project-supported infrastructure improvements are expected to strengthen transportation and market access, thereby contributing to longer-term results for economic recovery, resilience and social cohesion.

The Theory of Change below sums up the approach:



Expected results

Decent Work principles are integrated across HDPN planning and delivery through the active participation of ILO constituents, including:

- Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL), employers' and workers' organizations have enhanced capacities of the to apply ILO Recommendation 205 in crisis and transition contexts
- A national Decent Work Strategy developed and embedded within the UNSDCF and HDPN frameworks.
- Strengthened engagement with the UNCT, RCO, and HDPN actors on the centrality of labour rights, social protection, and employment for peacebuilding and recovery.

This process has also culminated in the finalization of the ILO Programme of Support for Syria, and was catalyzed by the tripartite [workshop held in Damascus in May 2025](#)—marking a pivotal moment for launching inclusive social dialogue and aligning national recovery with international labour standards. A dedicated HDPN-ILO workshop is foreseen to consolidate these gains and ensure sustained integration of Decent Work across humanitarian, development, and peace interventions.

170

immediate decent jobs created
for the most vulnerable
(including women, youth,
persons with disabilities, and
returnees) through infrastructure
rehabilitation

85

persons across urban and rural
areas (with due consideration to
gender balance and inclusion)
benefit from Work-Based
Learning activities

7+

areas of skills development
relevant to rural and urban
labour markets, including
tailoring, hairdressing, aluminum
carpentry, interior design
(gypsum board, paints, wood and
marble alternatives), engineering
industries, chemical industries,
and construction

Through job creation and skills development activities, the project also contributes to improved urban infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and inclusive access to services, including:

- Rehabilitating 1,458 sanitation drainage points to improve infrastructure and resilience.
- Cleaning 213,000 square metres of green spaces, enhancing the local environment.
- Rehabilitating at least 2,000 square metres of sidewalks to improve access and mobility.
- Sorting at least 1,750 cubic metres of rubble for reuse and recycling.
- Recycling an estimated 20,000 construction blocks, including curb stones and pavement tiles.



An ILO EIIP worker restores a public park, contributing to the rehabilitation of 213,000 square meters of green spaces.

Translating the HDP Nexus into practice

DW4P: Operationalizing the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus through Decent Work

COORDINATION: The ILO and social partners work closely with national systems, UN actors, and other stakeholders to integrate decent work principles into crisis response, recovery, and reconstruction.

PROGRAMMING: Through local employment creation, enterprise and skills development, capacity building and social dialogue, DW4P initiatives deliver immediate livelihoods that contribute to long-term recovery, advancing inclusion, gender equality, and social cohesion in fragile settings. Community focus group discussions (separate groups for women and men) ensure the participation of community members in the planning and monitoring of the project.

FINANCING: DW4P entails seed funding for a demonstration project to inform, sustain and expand resource mobilization efforts. It is strategically used to achieve multi-year and flexible financing arrangements that strengthen nationally owned systems and resilient livelihoods, ensuring that recovery and peacebuilding efforts are grounded in decent work and sustainability.

The Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) Nexus refers to a collaborative and integrated approach that seeks to strengthen the complementarity between humanitarian response, long-term development, and peacebuilding efforts. It aims to reduce need, risk, and vulnerability over time by fostering coherence and comprehensiveness of support delivered by the UN, leveraging the comparative advantages of different agencies. The HDP Nexus approach is built on three mutually reinforcing principles: coordination, programming, and financing. These principles ensure that humanitarian, development, and peace actors work in a coherent way toward shared outcomes. They are used here to underline how the DW4P initiatives apply and reinforce the Nexus approach.



COORDINATION

Collective action for long-term recovery in Syria

This project builds on the results of the workshop organized by the ILO in Amman in September 2024, where the importance of embedding decent work principles across the HDPN in the overall UN programming through an early recovery lens even in a sensitive context such as Syria was underscored. The DW4P fund offered the ILO a concrete opportunity to demonstrate how immediate temporary employment can be delivered in a manner that is rights-based and, at the

same time, lays the groundwork for inclusive and sustainable development and peacebuilding in Syria. While the ILO is not a humanitarian organization, the project is delivered in close coordination with the UN Country Team and is approved and registered in the [Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\) Syria 2024](#). It contributes to jointly formulated goals under Pillar III “Increase the resilience of affected communities by improving access to livelihood opportunities and basic services, especially among the most vulnerable households and communities”, or the “Early Recovery Pillar”. Regular meetings with partners to the UN Joint Programme (UNJP) led by UNDP and involving FAO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, and WFP ensure close coordination and complementarity as well as consistency with ILO decent work standards on e.g., minimum wage for UNJP beneficiaries and the application of [ILO Standard Operating Procedures for Environmental and Social Safeguards](#).

In addition, the project is designed to strengthen collaboration between humanitarian actors and social partners, while clearly positioning the ILO’s comparative advantage as a development actor rather than a humanitarian agency. By leveraging a decent work approach, the project supports the transition from emergency response to longer-term economic recovery and sustainable development. This aligns with a priority area identified during the 2024 Nexus workshop in Amman, highlighting the potential to generate positive outcomes in terms of employment, livelihoods, and social cohesion. Accordingly, the project aims to strengthen the capacity of social partners to engage constructively with humanitarian actors operating in Syria, while providing a platform for knowledge exchange, coordination, and the gradual shift toward development-oriented interventions.

PROGRAMMING

Localized and inclusive, with people at the centre

The project aims to promote sustainable practices for the creation of decent work opportunities and economic growth stimulation in Syria, focusing on strengthening the capacity of local contractors, their workers, local Employers’ and Business Members’ Organizations (EBMOs), trade unions, and MSMEs. Close collaboration is ensured with Damascus and Aleppo Chamber of Industries and the Syndicate of Engineers and underscores the importance of skills development for women and men for local economic development. A focus on the rehabilitation of irrigation canals and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices aligns with local ambitions to promote environmental sustainability in target communities.

The approach is people-centred: it departs from needs assessments informed by community focus group discussions (different groups for women and men) to ensure that rehabilitation of community infrastructure restores access to essential services and strengthen resilient local

systems also for the most vulnerable. A focus on empowering women in the workforce through skills training and employment opportunities contributes to promoting gender equality more broadly and inclusion of groups marginalized from the Syrian labour market more specifically. This ambition is translated into a EIIP workforce composition at 30 percent women and 3 percent persons with disabilities.

Localization is further ensured by extensive coordination with local authorities, with regular and frequent meetings and joint visits planned and conducted. This has allowed the project to include a large number of emergency sanitation interventions in programming.



HDP Nexus workshop bringing together tripartite partners in Damascus.

FINANCING

From seed funding to peace-responsive recovery at scale

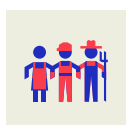
The project is implemented under the ILO Initiative on Decent Work for Peace, which leverages ILO internal resources as strategic seed funding for innovative interventions. This ILO-internal resource contribution is intended to attract additional investments from other donors. It aims to showcase the approach and inform new joint programmes aligned with priorities set by national authorities and the UNCT. To this end, the ILO is exploring joint UN projects to create immediate jobs for returnees while making a significant and lasting contribution to the recovery of industries with broader employment potential and contributing to the overall well-being of Syrian communities. A concrete outcome of ILO efforts is an agreement with UNDP on a forthcoming project scheduled to start in early 2026, which also entails employment opportunities for ILO beneficiaries previously equipped with relevant skills.

Zooming in on social cohesion and inclusivity

This project directly contributes to peacebuilding through a rights-based and inclusive approach to recovery. By generating employment for both host communities and returnees—particularly in conflict-affected areas—the project helps reduce tensions around economic exclusion and facilitates reintegration. Employment creation through public works, enterprise engagement and skills development offers tangible peace dividends, reinforcing trust in institutions and reducing the risks of renewed instability. In addition, the initiative empowers workers and employers to participate in dialogue on reconstruction priorities and decent work standards. This collaborative governance fosters a culture of peaceful negotiation, social justice, and equitable economic

recovery. The involvement of social partners in conflict-sensitive planning, labour rights advocacy, and local-level consultations positions the project as a cornerstone of efforts to rebuild not just Syria's infrastructure, but the fabric of its society.

A Peace and Conflict Analysis (PCA) will be conducted to identify potential risks, inform strategies for inclusive engagement, and ensure that reconstruction efforts contribute to lasting peace and social cohesion, in line with the [ILO's PCA guidelines](#) developed to help tailor programming in conflict and fragility affected contexts so that initiatives intentionally contribute to peace, avoid harm, and link decent work with conflict dynamics. To ensure conflict sensitivity and adherence to Do No Harm principles and contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion in Syria, the project is based on:



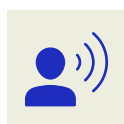
A thorough analysis of local dynamics: Identifying risks associated with the project and developing strategies to mitigate them.



Engagement with local communities and stakeholders: Ensuring meaningful participation and consultation throughout the project cycle, respecting diverse perspectives and addressing concerns.



Promotion of social cohesion: Fostering dialogue and cooperation among different groups, avoiding actions that could exacerbate tensions or divisions.



Prioritization of transparency and accountability: Maintaining open communication channels and ensuring clear and equitable distribution of benefits.

DW4P projects serve to demonstrate the importance of ILO contributions to post-crisis recovery and reconstruction. To support the strengthened position of the ILO in this context, DW4P in Syria places strong emphasis on monitoring and evidence generation. The project uses tools such as tracer studies to assess job retention among beneficiaries, to identify how many were offered employment or found other training-related livelihood opportunities.



International
Labour
Organization

ILO activities in Syria are coordinated by the ILO in the Arab States Office, based in Beirut.

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