

Shifting Power and Funding to Local Actors: Localising Humanitarian Pooled Funding in Syria

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains critical, compounded by new crises. The February 2023 earthquake, set against years of military offensives, global economic challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in 84 percent of civilians in northwest Syria (4.24 million) in need and reliant on UN and NGO monthly support received in cross-border assistance from Türkiye.

Yet humanitarian assistance has been fragmented due to complex governance structures and access restrictions. The uncertainty of cross-border operations, and the inability of UN agencies to enter Syria without government permission has undermined progress towards scaling support and long-term programming.

Progress towards localising humanitarian action has also been limited. In 2019, it was estimated that Syrian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) delivered an estimated 75 percent of assistance, despite receiving only 0.2-0.9 percent of direct funding.

The Aid Fund for Northern Syria (AFNS) is a new \$80M multi-donor pooled funding mechanism that channels more funding to local actors. The Share Trust has helped develop a Localisation Strategy for the AFNS to address localisation barriers.



Resulting Shifts: the AFNS will only fund interventions that provide full pass through of overheads to local partners.

Smaller, grassroots organisations are the primary focus of the Localisation Strategy. Local, primarily Syrian “anchor” organisations, already registered with the AFNS, will help to prioritise and channel funding to smaller, grassroots organisations not registered in Türkiye, making it possible for them to bypass eligibility criteria for direct AFNS funding. The AFNS will also support all partners with capacity strengthening.

Strategic Aim & Objectives:

The AFNS Localisation Strategy aims to shift power and funding to local actors so that assistance in northern Syria is locally led, people-centred, community-driven, flexible, sustainable, collaborative, and inclusive.



Locally led decision making and leadership



Strengthened knowledge and capacity sharing



Equitable partnerships and strengthened collaboration



Increased flow of funding to local actors



Enhanced quality of funding for local actors