

Local Initiatives under TAKAMUL IV

A. Introduction

Under TAKAMUL IV, social cohesion is defined as the capacity of individuals and groups within a community to maintain constructive relationships, build trust and mutual respect, cooperate around shared concerns, and engage peacefully across social, ethnic, religious, or other differences. This definition shapes the Local Initiatives within TAKAMUL, clearly separating targeted social cohesion efforts from general community development projects.

Local Initiatives are small-scale, community-driven interventions implemented inside Syria by local NGOs. They aim to strengthen social cohesion at the community level across social, ethnic, and religious differences by promoting inclusive participation, engagement, non-violent communication, and cooperation across different community groups, while empowering marginalized groups, particularly women and youth. By fostering these processes, Local Initiatives seek to rebuild trust, strengthen social ties, and promote resilience.

B. Target groups

Local Initiatives will engage a broad and diverse cross-section of the community, including residents, returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), persons with disabilities, different generations, and social groups within the target area, particularly those facing barriers to participation.

Women and youth (ages 18–27) will remain important participants in the design and implementation of the initiatives, with particular attention to ensuring their meaningful participation and empowerment. Their engagement, however, will form part of a broader social cohesion approach that promotes interaction, cooperation, and trust across different community groups.

C. Objectives and purpose of Local Initiatives under TAKAMUL IV

Under TAKAMUL IV, Local Initiatives adopt a participatory, conflict-sensitive, and context-driven approaches designed to:

- Strengthen social cohesion and inclusion among diverse community groups, including residents, returnees, IDPs, minorities, and different generations.
- Empower marginalized groups particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities to engage actively in community life.
- Enhance youth leadership, dialogue skills, and youth-led community engagement.
- Promote community ownership and inclusive participation in local development processes particularly focusing on women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

- Build the institutional and technical capacity of local NGOs to design, implement, and monitor innovative, scalable, and sustainable initiatives.
- Foster constructive dialogue and cooperation between communities and local public authorities while building youth facilitation and moderation skills.
- Link social cohesion efforts with local economic participation where relevant to strengthen long-term community resilience.

D. The Theory of Change

Each local initiative must clearly state its intended community impact and demonstrate how its proposed activities will drive that change. Applicants should outline the specific local challenge, the expected outcomes, and the operational path to achieving them. Furthermore, all initiatives must directly align with the core project goals as outlined in the project proposal: fostering social cohesion, promoting inclusion, and encouraging active community participation.

E. Proposed Local Initiatives

Local Initiatives are community-led initiatives proposed by project beneficiaries to promote social cohesion, inclusion, and community participation. The meaningful engagement of women and youth is a cross-cutting priority across all Local Initiatives. Initiatives should provide opportunities for women and youth to actively contribute to community processes, including, where relevant, the identification of needs, design and implementation of solutions, and decision-making, while ensuring that each initiative contributes to strengthening social cohesion within the community. Depending on the identified local needs and social cohesion challenges, Local Initiatives may include, but are not limited to:

- Community dialogue and facilitated exchange to strengthen communication, understanding, and constructive interaction among different community groups.
- Community cooperation and joint problem-solving around shared local challenges, creating opportunities for different groups to work together towards common objectives.
- Inclusive participation and representation that strengthen the meaningful involvement of diverse community members in local decision-making and collective processes.
- Community–institution engagement that strengthens constructive interaction, communication, accountability, and trust between communities and relevant local institutions or service providers.
- Trust- and relationship-building activities that help reduce social divisions, address misconceptions, and strengthen positive interaction and collaboration among different groups.

This list is indicative and not exhaustive. Other types of initiatives may be supported where they respond to an identified local challenge and demonstrate a clear and credible contribution to strengthening social cohesion.

F. Implementation strategies

To ensure effective and conflict-sensitive implementation, the following strategies will guide the design and execution of Local Initiatives:

- **Context Analysis:** Analyze the local context, including relevant political, social, cultural, educational, and economic dynamics, as well as key tensions and risks, to ensure that initiatives are relevant and inclusive.
- **Do-No-Harm and Conflict Sensitivity:** Apply a conflict-sensitive approach to prevent exacerbating local tensions.
- **Adaptability:** Regularly consider changes in the local context and adapt activities accordingly, particularly in light of the transitional environment and rapidly changing local dynamics, while maintaining the intended objectives and outcomes.
- **Community Needs Assessment:** Identify priority needs, gaps, and target groups to ensure relevance.
- **Planning:** Ensure proper planning and set achievable targets and outputs, avoiding unnecessary burdens on NGOs or implementing teams.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide training and essential tools to NGOs and community groups on designing, implementing, and monitoring Local Initiatives.
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** Strengthen cooperation with local councils, community leaders, student unions, and other local actors.
- **Inclusion and Participation:** Ensure meaningful participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in all stages of the initiative.
- **Monitoring and Learning:** Establish simple and practical monitoring tools to track progress, assess results, and capture lessons learned.

G. Duration of Local Initiatives

Each Local Initiative should have an implementation period between **2 (min.) to 8 (max.) weeks**, including all preparatory activities.

H. Financial implementation:

The budget for each local initiative will be **up to 3,000 EUR** to support small-scale, community-driven activities. The main grant recipient will oversee and manage all financial aspects of these initiatives to ensure proper accountability and full compliance with project guidelines.

I. Expected outcomes and alignment with the main proposal

The implementation of the above initiatives is expected to result in:

- Strengthened social cohesion and increased trust within communities.

- Improved capacities of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups to participate in local development.
- Greater community participation and ownership over identifying and addressing local needs.
- Enhanced institutional capacity of local NGOs.
- Improved access to social services as a result of sustained engagement and advocacy with local authorities.

J. Sustainability

To ensure long-term impact beyond the project period:

- Strengthen the capacity of local NGOs to independently manage and replicate activities.
- Ensure community ownership by involving key stakeholders including target groups from the planning stage onward.
- Utilize local resources such as community centers, schools, and volunteers to reduce costs and increase sustainability.
- Initiatives should focus on creating informal, low-cost channels; such as shared mobile messaging groups, neighborhood committees, or ongoing volunteer networks, that require no ongoing funding to maintain open communication between targeted groups.

K. Conclusion

Local Initiatives in social cohesion provide opportunities to rebuild communities, strengthen resilience, and promote inclusive participation. By enhancing reinforcing social ties and empowering vulnerable groups, these initiatives support community-driven, sustainable development and contribute to the long-term recovery of Syrian communities.