وحدة المجالس المحلية
Local Administration Councils Unit

The Indicator of Needs for the Local Councils of Syria

Report of Public policies

LACU – Local Administration councils Union

In cooperation with

Norwegian People's Aid Organization (NPA)

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LOCAL ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL'S UNIT

The Local Administration Councils' Unit (LACU) is a Syrian civil society organization specialized in promoting the concept of local administration in Syria through providing local councils in Syria with all needed services, monitoring and developing their activities, building their capacity, and contributing to the enhancement of active civil participation in local governance.

NORWEGIAN PEOPLE'S AID

Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) is an international humanitarian partner organization, founded in 1939 to provide post-conflict reconstruction assistance and humanitarian relief during conflicts. NPA is a politically independent, but not politically neutral organization. NPA has civil society, governance, and humanitarian disarmament programs implanted in partnership with local actors in 39 countries around the world. NPA has been working in Syria since 2013.

NPA partners with local councils and civil society, including free media, to promote human rights, peacemaking, advocacy, and delivery of public and social services to marginalized groups.

Summary

LACU, in cooperation with NPA has carried out a statistic study to produce local councils' need indicators in Syria. The study includes 405 councils comprising nearly all councils in existence in all Syrian provinces except Raqqa and Sweidaa. The study covered four main aspects; services, governance, training, and public relations. The study findings show that the needs of local councils are mainly financial support, in-kind support, training, coordinating, and guidance. Training came on top of those needs especially in the fields of management, planning and public relations. In-kind support proved more important than financial support. As for coordination and guidance, indicators and clues assisting councils in communicating and coordinating with donors were the most important. The process of building local councils' need indicator emerged from a fact study of local councils, analyzing their reality with its causes and effects. The next stage was proposing solutions that concluded the needs of local councils. The latters are to be classified into priorities for the Syrian local councils.

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1 Intro

The experience of local administration in Syria has suffered many difficulties and obstacles as the state was run with a highly centralized manner, where security authorities had the upper hand in running all aspects of life across the country. The experience of local administration was almost absent before the Syrian revolution. Security vacuum soon dominated the areas that went out of the regime's grip. Here, the need to fill the gap of services was pushing, and local groups and active forces rushed towards forming local councils. This was the beginning of local administration experience in Syria.

This study was carried out to help activate local councils in Syria overcome their obstacles through publishing needs indicator for those councils , where this indicator would serve in channeling all efforts of donors and interested bodies in a way that improves the performance of local councils.

2 Importance of this Study

Syrian Local councils faced many obstacles and difficulties as local councils in Syria are new born. Many attempts to develop local governance in Syria were just reactions to fill in the gap of organization and services Syria. What burdened more the experience of local administration in Syria is commencing under harsh conditions, as the current crisis with all internal conflicts posed more obstacles in the way of its success. The need for services have multiplied under never stable security conditions as different militant groups may rule one area within one-year time.

All of above is a motive to perform a field study based on reality analysis to publish local councils' needs indicator, where this indicator can be a guide for both councils and interested bodies to increase their effectiveness, and consequently economizing resources and capacity of councils and donors for better support. This in turn increases the chances of local councils and local administration in general in making this experience a success.

3 Survey objectives

Survey objectives of "Local councils in Syria needs indicator" could be summarized as following:

1. Build a guide for the most important needs of local councils in order of priority.

2. Contribute to economizing resources provided by donors to local councils.
3. Help in directing local councils to better meet basic needs for areas and fill organizational gap in those areas.
4. Guiding local councils towards working mechanisms which convey strategic objectives of local administrations in Syria
5. Participating in stabilizing democracy concept in local governance.
6. Providing clear ways of applying governance in the local administration system in Syria.
7. Guiding bodies interested in training and developing local councils through presenting guide of training programs councils need.

4 Methodology of building indicators

It began with a statistical survey on local councils reality with a questionnaire distributed in 405 local councils, almost all active councils in Syria[1]. After reality analysis, several workshops were held with experts in projects management, legal Affairs, and training from the Local Administration Councils Unit (LACU) and ministry of local administration to analyze this reality with its causes and effects. After that, appropriate solutions were proposed to overcome councils' problems and help improve their performance. The latter was especially helpful in specifying the needs of local councils, which can be summarized in three main categories: In-kind and financial support, training, and coordination and guidance. Prioritizing these needs led to the local councils' need indicator.

[1] Active councils means the council with clear vision and specific staff running the council

5 Most Important findings

5.1 Nature and distribution of local councils:

- Local councils are distributed administratively in Syria, 7% of province councils, 16% of city councils, 28% town councils, 43% Municipal councils and only 6% of area councils.
- Local councils in Idleb form 27% of the total councils, Aleppo councils form 23%, Hama form 12%, Homs form 11%, Daraa councils form 6%, Hasakaa form 5% while it does not exceed 3% in the remaining provinces, which were all formed during the Syrian revolution.
- More than half of the run by the local councils in Syria are liberated, but they are exposed to bombardment, while one third of councils' areas are liberated and stable, 7% are conflict zones, and 6% non-liberated areas (under regime control).

5.2 Representation

- More than half of local councils are formed by consensus, and more than one third are formed by elections.
- The biggest two obstacles of holding local elections inclusive of all citizens are lack of common awareness of elections importance and security situation.
- Most local councils were formed for the first time in 2012 and 2013 and local councils were formed 3 times in average. By comparing this with the age of local councils, we find that local councils were restructured once a year.
- Obstacles for women's participation in local councils are in order: security issues, lack of women supportive bodies, and opposition from active forces in the area.

5.3 performance

- More than one-third of local councils have specialized finance officers while a fifth of local councils have one non-specialized finance officer (with high school degree or less).
- Half the local councils depend on receipts and bills in financial documentation, while one-third depend on accounts books, and around 10% depend on accounting software.
- Responsible bodies for crisis management in three quarters of liberated areas are the local councils.
- More than two-thirds of local councils depend on special administrative regulations, less than 15% depend on the regulations of the ministry of local administration in the Syrian Interim Government, and the rest do not have any regulations.
- More than one-third of local councils depend on voting for decision making.

- Most administrative challenges are :lack of office equipment, lack of vehicles, and lack of media office equipment.
- The majority of councils have only internal censorship, and around quarter of local councils are under people's censorship.

5.4 Needs and projects

- 85% of local councils depend on area needs to set their projects.
- Most popular projects for local councils are; water, power, education, health, then hygiene.
- Most projects offered from local councils did not receive any support.
- Of those projects supported by donors only 5% of them have been completed successfully, while more than half of them have stopped, 28% are in progress, and 20% work in low-productivity pace.
- 65% of projects were not implemented due to delays in fund, and a number of projects have been halted as a result of funding being stopped prior to completion..
- Reasons speculated for the lack of support for local councils' projects are weak management and financial management skills, and inadequate monitoring/documentation.
- 80% of projects implemented by local councils are internally monitored and evaluated.
- The most important needs in liberated areas in the health care sector are in order: Health equipment, medicines and vaccines, salaries for workers, and staff while the most important in Damascus countryside are medicines and vaccines, and the human resources for Deir ez-Zor.
- The most important needs in liberated regions in the education sector are in order: teachers' salaries, school equipment, operating expenses, schools rehabilitation, and there are no needs for staff, but the most urgent needs in Homs district are schools operational expenses, and equipment for Daraa.

5.5 Training

- The most important courses provided to local councils were in the following domains: Administration, media, planning and project management, and human resource development. Less than 10% of the councils claim to have received specialized courses related to local administration, while there is weakness in the support to councils on training in public relations, financial management, institutional organizational development and crisis management.
- Members of the councils face many difficulties to enroll in courses that are run in neighboring countries. Reasons for this include: need for passports and security concerns while travelling, and travelling costs.
- Most local councils dispatch their members on the basis of needs and specialization.

- More than half of the local councils reported that the training courses did not increase the efficiency of their work. Conversely, performance assessments reflect a 200% increase in efficiency in the aspects of administration and projects, which highlights in turn the need to raise councils' awareness towards the importance and impact of training.
- Councils that have had members attend management-related courses are twice as likely to report a higher level of satisfactory relations with the general public in the region as those councils that have not had access to such training.

5.6 Finance

- Important factors in funding councils are:
    1. Council training: increases the likelihood of resourcing by 23%
    2. Requesting support for civil defense projects: increases the chances of resourcing by 14%.
    3. Relationship with other councils negatively affects the chances by 12%.

5.7 Media and public relations

- About 60% of the councils rely on social media such as Facebook to communicate with people.
- When it comes to the locals articulating grievances to the council, only 5 councils of the total sample have a formal grievance acceptance/redresser mechanism in place.
- Elected councils do not necessarily entail good relations with other councils.
- The most important channels that connect the local councils with donors are in order of importance: personal connections, introductions made by other councils, or through the media office of the council.
- No direct or clear correlation between a council's performance in public relations and support given for projects.

6 Councils' reality analysis

6.1 Services

Syrian local councils run many different administrative areas. The nature of their activities and working mechanisms rely heavily on the general situation of their territory. For example, part of these areas are completely liberated and stable, and therefore local councils' offices are located in the same areas executing projects that serve these areas. Other parts are also liberated but under bombardment or military conflict. Some areas are partially liberated, and hence local councils in these areas exist partially, and serve civilians there. However, it is hard to

establish and run projects in these areas. On the other hand, there are areas under the radical forces' control, which do not conform ideologically with the concept local council, therefore local councils cannot install their offices or run projects there. (regime territory, IS territory, and part of YPG territory). Where the councils activities are limited to relief and some other basic services.

In the following paragraph, we will discuss more about the projects that local councils aim to carry out starting from selecting the project, requesting fund until the implementation of projects. We will also include financial documentation mechanisms, and then conclude with crisis management and its responsibilities. Sections will also include a proposal of the most important needs and assistance which local councils could be given to be supportive in providing services and crisis management properly.

6.1.1 Choosing project

The method used by local councils in choosing the project that they aim to implemented reflects the weakness in its strategic vision and full knowledge of the area needs, about 85% of local councils depend on the area needs to choose their projects, and this mechanism is dominated by reactions and responses to the interim crisis.

choosing projects randomly affects their success and instant and future impacts. Many proposed projects to donors interested in local administration were left unsupported. Findings show that the rate of projects without support is over 85% of the total projects proposed to donors. The lack of support can be justified with the following:

1. Local councils' lack of experience in planning for projects and writing funding proposals.
2. Projects do not apply to the general situation of the area.
3. Projects are out of donors' interest.
4. Projects not delivered with the appropriate channels "Public relations problem".
5. Time interval: most projects are immediate responses for a need or current crisis, and until proposals are written and funded, it would be too late.
6. Requesting projects with high expenses, unaffordable by donors.
7. Lack of trust in local councils as project implementers, because of the lack of independent, specialized body in monitoring and evaluation, in addition to councils' weakness in this area. Together with some unsuccessful experience between donors and local councils.
8. Political reasons: many donors are working within the policies of their own countries.

The previous reasons can be overcome and their negative effect can be alleviated by training courses needs determination and the strategic, regional, and operational planning, priority management, models of projects writing proposals, in additon to public relations and effective communication courses. Also, coordinating with local councils

and guiding them through establishing a guide of the important bodies interested in supporting Syrian local councils. This guide main include donors' interests and trends of support whether financial or in-kind. Interested bodies might help in organizing local councils and supporting them in management and governance domains (as local councils administration unit, Ministry of Local Administration, Refugees affairs and Relief) in coordination between local councils and donors to increase mutual trust through projects' monitoring and evaluation.

6.1.2 Projects status

Projects crisis was not limited to funding request only, the low rate of funded projects forced different endings in the future. Almost half projects stopped, 25% are working in low production, where the most fortunate 5% were completed and implemented. Some projects are still in progress with a rate of 20% of all the supported projects.

According to previous numbers, the projects that reached their objectives are no more than 4% of all the projects that local councils of Syria requested fund for, and when pointing out to the low rate of funded projects, specialists from projects department in the ministry of local administration suggested the reasons behind this:

1. Partial project funding: partial funding for projects is either due to falling out of the donors' interests, or that local councils did not have a comprehensive vision for the needs that emerge during projects.
2. Support delay: projects councils suffer this problem, which revolves around the nature of the proposed project. Most projects are seasonal and are only responses to immediate crisis. This was accompanied with delay in fund due to the long time interval between requesting fund and delivering it.
3. Suspending support: due to reaching fund target allocated for the project or fund suspension by donors. Specialists attributed this for the following reason:
    - Poor strategic planning: specially with the continuous projects, where many local councils ask for projects funding with no regard to fund validity.
    - Documenting problem: having problems in the initial stages of the projects pushes donors to suspend fund.
    - Situational changes in the area: as security, power supply, blocked roads or any other emerging situation that could compromise the success of the project.
4. Executive failure of projects: because of the lack of the experience, and the required tools to continue carrying out the project.
5. Suspension of basic resources of the project: human and material resources, in addition to the difficulty of finding basic equipment for launching and continuing the project.

6. Change in political views: some donors are influenced with the international political attitudes or country political attitudes by which they abide.

To avoid obstacles in executing projects, a set of solutions needs to be applied. In the training section, we find that qualifying local councils in strategic planning, Scenarios, risk management, crisis management, projects management, and projects documenting with analyzing the effects is essential. In addition, local councils need equipment to help in proceeding the project and documentation. Important equipment are transporting vehicles, cameras, and wireless communication devices. Support delay problems can be decreased by reducing the time gap between ordering fund and delivering support by establishing communication between local councils and donors.

To avoid obstacles of partial support, we recommend donors to fund projects that achieve a quorum, which guarantees the success and continuation of the project. The aim of support is to provide services and build local councils' capacity. It was noted though, that this goal cannot be achieved when support is scarce.

6.1.3 Financial Documentation

Financial documentation is considered a top priority for donors, since the project documentation process and later stages revolve around the confirmation that the fund allocated for the project is spent wisely.

Documentation with bills and receipts were commonly used in financial documentation in the Syrian local councils. This method is characterized by ease and simplicity, but its disadvantages cannot be overlooked. They are unreliable and inadequate tools the financial documentation, as they do not give overview information on the expenses and the movement of accounts. In addition to the difficulty in transferring them and the possibility of easily losing them. Accounting notes are one of tools used in financial documentation in the local councils. They are more reliable and can be adopted as a tool for documentation. It has been found that one third of the councils of Syria use them in documentation. The most modern and professional tool is computer accounting software, but this does not apply to the Syrian situation. They proved to be ineffective, as they require equipment that burdens their users with the absence of power supply and difficulty of acquiring their equipment. Less than 15% of local councils use this method.

The used tools affect the credibility of the financial documentation, with varying documentation mechanisms with their pros and cons, an appropriate method would be using both bills and accounting books, where the first one provides documentation of each payment, and the second helps organize total accounts. We recommend using accounting software as a supportive tool for the previous dual method when possible.

By having a quick look at the financial officers' specialties in local councils, we find that the documentation gap is still there, since the financial officers are non-specialized. The study indicated that one-third of local councils only have

financial officers with economics or accounting backgrounds, while the rest have different majors or have high school degrees only. The reasons behind this is that most specialists have moved out. Another reason is the criteria used in selecting members of local councils, where members of the executive office are elected for positions regardless of their experience or knowledge in the positions they are filling.

Solving this problem starts from the mechanism of selecting office executives. Elections' regulations must be reconsidered and replaced with a method that guarantees right people in the right place. Then, financial officers can be trained on accounting books, accounting courses for non-majors, and financial documentation non-profit projects.

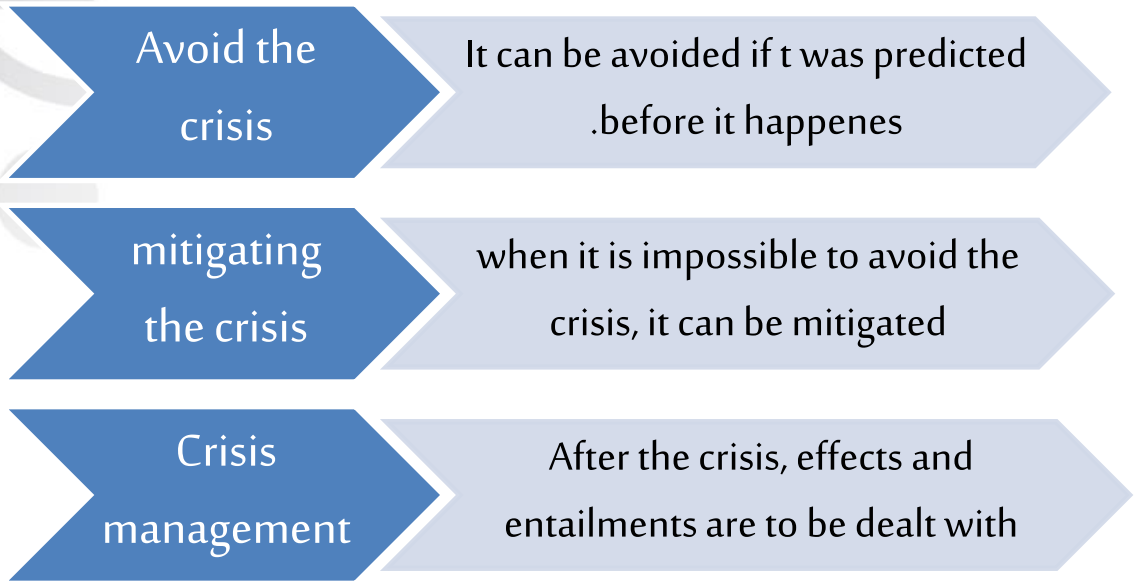
6.1.4 Crisis management

Due to the collapse of institutions in the liberated areas, and the burden of providing services placed entirely on local councils, crisis management was automatically assigned to local councils including civil defense when existed. However, indicators show that the majority of councils have no clear mechanism or capacity for crisis management.

the current reality of Syria imposes many burdens on those who incur the issue of dealing with crises, because of immediate changes in aspects of life, including security, military and demographic. These changes require high preparation. Crises councils in Syria have come through in the previous three years may be summarized as follows:

1. Health crises: spread of many diseases over the past years.
2. Relief crisis: several aspects, such as food, clothing and hygiene.
3. Water crises :can be classified separately from the relief crises as water crises in Syria have different backgrounds. For example, scarce water supply, water contamination, or the collapse of water systems' infrastructure.
4. Shelling : many areas faced sudden and violent bombardment.
5. IDPs moving in: with several cases occurred, residential areas received many IDPs that outnumbered the original population.
6. Siege :regime followed the systematic policy of siege in the countryside of Damascus, Homs, in contrast we find that the part under the control of the regime in Deir Al-zor city suffering from Islamic State siege, therefore siege on the basic elements of life and an unprecedented rise in prices.

Prior preparation of dealing with crises and expecting what happens when they occur, reduces to a large extent the effects of these crises, in contrast, waiting for the crisis and dealing with it after they occur leads to significant losses, and this can summarize crisis management by three strategies:



To deal with the crises that occur on a daily basis in Syria, we must pass four main stages:

1. Education and awareness: campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for crises and the difference prior preparation can make.
2. Training and exchanging expertise : workshops and intensive training in all aspects of crisis management, as well as strategic and regional planning.
3. Organizing: the actual implementation begins at this stage and can be summarized in local councils' work on establishing specialized crisis management offices, and that all these offices form an integrated network that covers all areas in Syria. The performance of these offices would run better if linked to a central unit managed by one of the interested associations in local councils' empowerment.
4. Empowerment: enabling the central unit with diverse backup stock help respond rapidly to crises that occur in any area in Syria, in addition to the need to support crisis management offices with basic facilities for their work such as rapid communication devices and rapid evacuation facilities and others.

6.2 Governance

Due to the formation of local council as an attempt to fill the administrative gap, and the fact that its formation was initiated by the people in their areas, and its formation did not result from central management that strikes balance between the centralization and local administration, local councils have increasingly suffered legal loopholes. Local councils at their establishment were mainly focused on delivering services to citizens, but soon, many questions started by bodies interested local councils' affairs, whether by local people or members of the councils themselves. Hence, many local councils have sought bridging the gap and building the legal structure that maintains the continuation of these councils.

We discuss in the section of governance both the approved legal regulations and reasons of their adoption, and the formation of the Council, such as mechanisms for member selection and electoral cycle, in addition to obstacles of women's participation in the Syrian local councils. We will also look at other aspects of governance, such as censorship in local councils, the mechanisms used for decision-making, and the needs of local councils such as equipment and supplies that could be obstacles for councils when absent.

6.2.1 Approved legal regulations

Decentralization of local councils exceeded providing areas with services to the legal systems and internal governing regulations. Only 15% of the Syrian local councils implement legal regulations[2] of the Ministry of Local Administration in the Syrian interim government. 65% of councils took the initiative to build their own legal regulations, while the remaining 20% of the local councils did not adopt any legal regulations, and this reality can be explained by the following:

1. Legal gap: Most of the Syrian local councils were formed before the birth of the Syrian interim government, which forced local councils to form and adopt their own regulations.
2. Dominating interests: some councils suffer domination from certain bodies, which refuse to adopt legal regulations of the Ministry of Local Administration or seeking own regulations commensurate with their interests.
3. Weak relations between the provincial councils and sub-councils: Which increases the deviation of sub-councils from the central ones.
4. Weak relationship with the Syrian interim government: the weakness in achievement comparing to hopes placed by local councils on the interim government has increased the rift between them which led to difficulty in accepting regulations issued by the interim government.
5. Poor media and public relations in the interim government: to adopt legal regulations of the Ministry of Local Administration, there must be campaigns launched to bring these regulations to local councils and awareness of the strategic importance of following a unified legal system.
6. External influences: local councils getting support, funding and training from decentralized sources does not encourage local councils to adopt centralized and unified legal regulations.

[2] Syrian interim government is considered the representative of the Syrian opposition responsible for the liberated areas in Syria management.

6.2.2 Forming the council

Decentralization of legal systems and regulations affected all aspects related to the formation of local councils in Syria. Confusion dominated the method of choosing councils' members, and differences extended to involve determining councils' cycle and the participation of women.

Choosing council's members:

The general election[3] are the best method for selecting members of local councils, where people from all walks of life are represented. However, the extraordinary circumstances in Syria did not allow holding elections as a mechanism for the selection of councils' members. Local councils' members justified the difficulty of conducting general election involving all citizens as following:

A. Lack of awareness of the importance of the elections: Electoral experiences from time of the Syrian regime, and the experiences of electing local councils, were unsuccessful, and the intellectual division that dominates the Syrian affairs, all led to weakness in conviction about the general elections pros for the local councils.
B. Security obstacles: there are various security barriers that obstruct holding general elections; on top is the fear of shelling, and opposing principals of democracy by some Influential forces in the region.

As a result of the above, general elections can be replaced with different ways for the selection of members of local councils. It was found that consensus is the most used mechanism (50% of the local councils have been formed in line), by a negotiation between the Influential forces in the area (and may not include all the forces) so there might be a sharing of seats and powers in the Council.

On the other hand 30% of local councils are formed with made – up electoral mechanisms where a committee ensures communication with active associations of all parties in the region , and in return, these associations nominate their representatives. This mechanism was adopted by the Ministry of Local Administration as an official substitute for the general elections. The ministry has provided legal regulations that determine this mechanism with all its details, and the reasons of weakness in adopting this mechanism are same that led to weakness in adopting the Ministry of local Administration legal regulations

Council cycle:

[3] General elections are the elections that all people of the region participating

Analyses show that local councils' cycle in average is nearly one year, but this period was not implemented according to a fixed law in the regulations, but came as a reality imposed on local councils, where the local council dissolved after almost a year for the following considerations:

1. Tendency towards political and services participation by other powers in the area.
2. The inability of the Councils to provide concrete achievements, due to enormous needs and the limited resources available.
3. Some active forces in the area do not recognize the councils, and they quest to dissolve them.

Obstacles of women's participation:

Information obtained from the reality of local councils show that women are absent in the formation of local councils, and the cases involving women were very rare and can be described as a timid participation, as their role remained limited and undefined. Obstacles that prevent women's participation in the Syrian local councils are:

1. Security obstacles: Many members of local councils must travel and move, which imposes an increase in risk due to the insecurity in Syria within current crisis.
2. No supportive party to participation of women: Men dominate active bodies in Syria.
3. Social Obstacles: due to a tribal nature in many areas of Syria, which imposes a distorted vision of women's participation even among women themselves.
4. Opposition of some active forces: especially those with radical ideology.

6.2.3 Censorship

authorities to be in charge of controlling local councils and the regulatory process mechanisms are nominated by the central administration in the state, and usually with detailed responsibilities and oversight mechanisms in the legal regulations governing the work of local councils. The case of decentralization in legal regulations affected censorship, with information confirming that 61% of the Syrian local councils have self-censorship, and that nearly 25% of councils mention that there is people's censorship without any clear definition or mechanisms of this control, while the rest of the local councils are not subject to any type of censorship. Consultants found that the roots of the regulatory confusion in Syrian local councils are:

1. Decentralization in legal regulations.
2. Absence of judiciary.
3. Poor awareness of the importance of an independent regulatory body controlling the work of local councils.
4. Some active forces dominating the councils and being unwilling to undergo censorship.

5. No clear definition of the regulatory body and mechanisms that they follow in the regulatory process.

6.2.4 Decision making

Voting is the dominant way of decision making in the Syrian local councils, 65% of them depend on voting and neglect other mechanisms for decision making, such as relying on analyses, studies and research or delegating a specialized department to decide ... It has been found that the reason local councils depend on voting in decision-making refers to:

1. Absence of governing laws: no clear definitions of tasks, responsibilities and powers leads to confusion in mechanisms adopted to make the decision.
2. Lack of information: forcing local councils to resort to voting as a tool to avoid the uncertainty caused by the lack of information.
3. Balance of power: forming local councils while depending on the active forces agreement affects the area's decision-making mechanism, as it helps to satisfy all parties represented by local councils.
4. Fear of monopolizing the decision: many members of local councils fear individual decisions, because these decisions may be crucial in critical circumstances in Syria.

6.2.5 Equipment and Supplies

Challenges that Syrian local councils' activities are facing, and the possibility of organizing and activating the legal regulations do not actually stop at the intellectual and organizational barriers , but go beyond to reach local councils' suffering from a lack of equipment and supplies supporting regulatory and administrative process.

The most important equipment local councils need whose absence affected the performance of their administrative tasks just as required, are related to office equipment in general, and vehicles to transport, in addition to the media office equipment. And these equipment could be specified as:

1. Office furniture: tables, chairs, closet, panels...
2. Stationery: pens, books, papers, geometric draw tools...
3. Transport vehicles: In addition to fuel costs and spare parts.
4. professional cameras.
5. Special design and montage Computers.
6. Cyber internet devices.

6.2.6 Governance Solutions

Proposing separate solutions to the problems of governance in the Syrian local councils is superficial; this kind of problems needs a holistic proposition because of its high complexity. Problems mentioned earlier could be overcome to access a reality, in which legal regulations are implemented by the Syrian local councils to achieve main standards:

1. Standardized regulations in most local councils.
2. Containing a mechanism for council formation taking into consideration the Syrian reality and the differences among areas.
3. Showing the percentage of women's representation in the council and defining their role according to the current situation.
4. Describes the parties authorized to practice censorship on Councils, evaluation mechanisms and applicable control.
5. Proposing Clear mechanisms for decision making with permissions.

The process of adopting legal regulations begins with a conference or several conferences involving all stakeholders such as local councils, organizing official bodies and funders, discussing the legal regulations and the formation of a committee entrusted with the task of setting regulations, achieving the conditions mentioned above and is acceptable to the majority, options that can be discussed are:

1. Adoption of legal regulations templates.
2. Adoption of legal regulations templates after adjustment according to the Syrian reality.
3. Issuing new legal regulations .

Before circulating regulations and being officially adopted, they must be **accepted**, which begins with awareness campaigns focusing on the importance of adopting these regulations through media campaigns, workshops and introductory seminars, accompanied by a study on how local councils accept these regulations, and end with the proclamation of adopting regulations by the official and local councils supportive authorities.

By the end, comes circulating regulations and adopting them in local councils by delivering a copy to each local council, and then seeking confirmation to be adopted. It is preferred to track applying regulations on local councils permanently, so that feedback on the rate of application is considered with the points that were difficult to adopt, and so achieving frequent improvement in the regulations to be better applicable.

Project of adopting legal regulations can be supported by courses on local administration and courses in teamwork and effective communication skills, in addition to courses in management and leadership.

6.3 Training and Development

Local councils indicated that the training did not help them develop their work, which contradicts the analysis that showed that local councils with training were more effective than those without training. Specialists have pointed out that this paradox does not mean training contributes to the development of councils, but the vague impact of training can be attributed to the following:

1. Random selection of training programs, as there is no such analysis of training needs.
2. Poor coordination among those interested in training local councils.
3. Neglecting awareness of programs importance in developing councils performance.
4. End of Council cycle and changing its members, which means losing people who have been trained.
5. Training people who are not suitable, because there are flaws in the nomination process for training programs.
6. Training may not be the most appropriate solution in many cases, it may be better to find People who have a suitable platform of experiences to build upon it by training.

The above obstacles have led to poor training effects compared to the huge funds spent on it, and this case might continue this way as long as there is no building of training process on a well-defined methodology. This methodology begins with a study to analyze local council training needs, and then circulating its findings among all those interested in training local councils. With coordination between these parties, there will be no redundancy in training programs for the same councils. It is necessary to accompany the training process with awareness of training importance and the extent of its assistance to members of the councils to get their work done.

To Access the integrated operation in the project of developing Syrian local councils, there could be a launching of training needs indicator of local councils, so it can be periodically issued. The indicators also contain an assessment of the impact of training in the previous phase, and the reasons of training failure to increase the effectiveness of local councils. This way, the training process can be directed, and guided towards the optimal solutions.

It is difficult to overcome the problem of changing the board members by the end of board cycle and its impact on weakening training, but we can decrease the impact by focusing the vast proportion of training on permanent council staff and reduce the share of council members and direct their own training programs towards rapid effect training. And so, can be utilized from the training provided to the members of the councils directly. While training with the

strategic objectives focuses on the permanent staff in the council, it maintains the skills that have been given through training and builds on them in the long term.

In the end and as findings suggested, training may not be the most appropriate solution in many cases, since the construction on fragile background may not give any results, as statistical study demonstrated that 75% of financial officers in local councils are non-specialists and 20 % of them have high school degree or less. In such cases, training may be ineffective and it is more useful to set mechanisms to select members and employees of the councils in a way that helps them get the best expertise in the area. This leads to questioning about human resources affairs in the local councils and its consequences of the need for rehabilitating specialists to human resources in all councils in Syria.

6.4 Media and Public Relations

Many surveys[4] and specialists expressed low satisfaction of local people with local councils, accompanied by poor relations between sub-local councils and province councils. In addition to poor mechanisms adopted by local councils in communication and networking with external parties and donors. All of that gives a clear vision about general flaw in the local councils' public relations.

6.4.1 Viewing the Council achievements

Most local councils presented their achievements on Facebook page only, despite the fact that statistics show the weakness of this tool to access the public as it indicates the rate of Syrians who have Internet connection, which does not exceed 15%, and this means the inadequacy this tool in the delivery of achievements of councils to the public.

Due to the decline in materials and technical support of both people and local councils, the perfect solution to deliver achievements of councils to the largest number of people is to rely on a variety of media means, and the most important means to be used in Syria are:

1. Social networking pages.
2. local magazines and newspapers.
3. Seminars and public Conferences.
4. publications and print paper.

This confirms the need of local councils for training in media and public relations so that they can form a mix of media tools In accordance with the resources available in the region and achieve possibly better media performance, in addition to the need to equip the media office with computers, cameras, printers and projectors.

[4] survey conducted by AKES Al-Seer website about public opinion of local councils site in 12 month of the year 2014

6.4.2 People's opinions, complaints, and feedback

Most Syrian local councils do not open channels of communication with the people in the region, in the case people have any complaints or even they want to give their opinions in the Council, they have to go to its office.

Based on the concept of the local administration, the councils have to seek to open communication channels with people in the region and to search for the best and easiest ways to listen to them and to receive their opinions and complaints, so each council must have a public relations office to incur communicating with the public and put all means of communication and dialogue such as e-mail, social media pages, box of complaints and open conferences...

Needs that will enable local councils to activate communication with public are limited with training programs on media, public relations, effective communication and negotiation skills, councils also need some equipment for the Media Office[5].

6.4.3 Communication with donors:

Personal relationships are the basic tool which local councils depend on to reach donors, in addition to that, some of the local councils reach them through personal relationships. Previous results disclose about the limitation in the local councils communication with donors However, personal relationships will not be expanded up to all donors. Depending on other councils also does not open the way of communication with donors to the degree that will help the Council to get sufficient support.

For the Council to get support that helps it improve the region's services, it has to extend its relations network with donors, and that would absolutely increase the support it gets and contribute to the diversification due to the different interests of the supportive parties. The major responsibility in this aspect is on regulators of local councils' affairs, as it can play an effective role by:

1. Playing the role of a link between the local councils and donors.
2. Issuing the donors' guide that contains their addresses and contacts, in addition to areas of interest and financial limits of projects they support.

The first option is considered the optimal to help establish the concept of state, centralization in legal regulations when local councils are linked to central administration in all aspects, it would be easy to unify the legal regulations.

We emphasize also the need of local councils for courses in public relations and courses in how to get fund for non-profit projects.

[5] Previously listed in the equipment required for media offices section.

7 Needs Indicator of local councils

Counting all the needs mentioned in the previous paragraphs (services, governance, training, public relations) we can classify the needs of the local councils into three main groups as:

First: Support: either financial or material.

Second: Training and experience delivery.

Third: Coordination and Guidance.

The table below presents the most important needs of the local councils, classified within the domains of needs such as training or support or coordination and guidance, and column of weight points to the importance of needs as it has been calculated by counting times that this type of need emerged.

Results showed that the greatest needs of local councils go around training, but the training type most needed is the administration followed by Information, Public Relations and Planning, also the needs of training in financial affairs and projects emerged, after training comes the need for support material or financial, it has been noticed that the need to material support more significantly than the need to financial support, and the need for coordination and guidance is mentioned at the end after training and support. The most important aspects of it are evidences and indicators of which their benefits is to help guide efforts optimally, then the need for coordination and follow-up that will guide the local councils, then governance and most in important part of it is legal regulations and all its relations from the building legal regulations, adopting them, to reviewing them periodically and developing them.

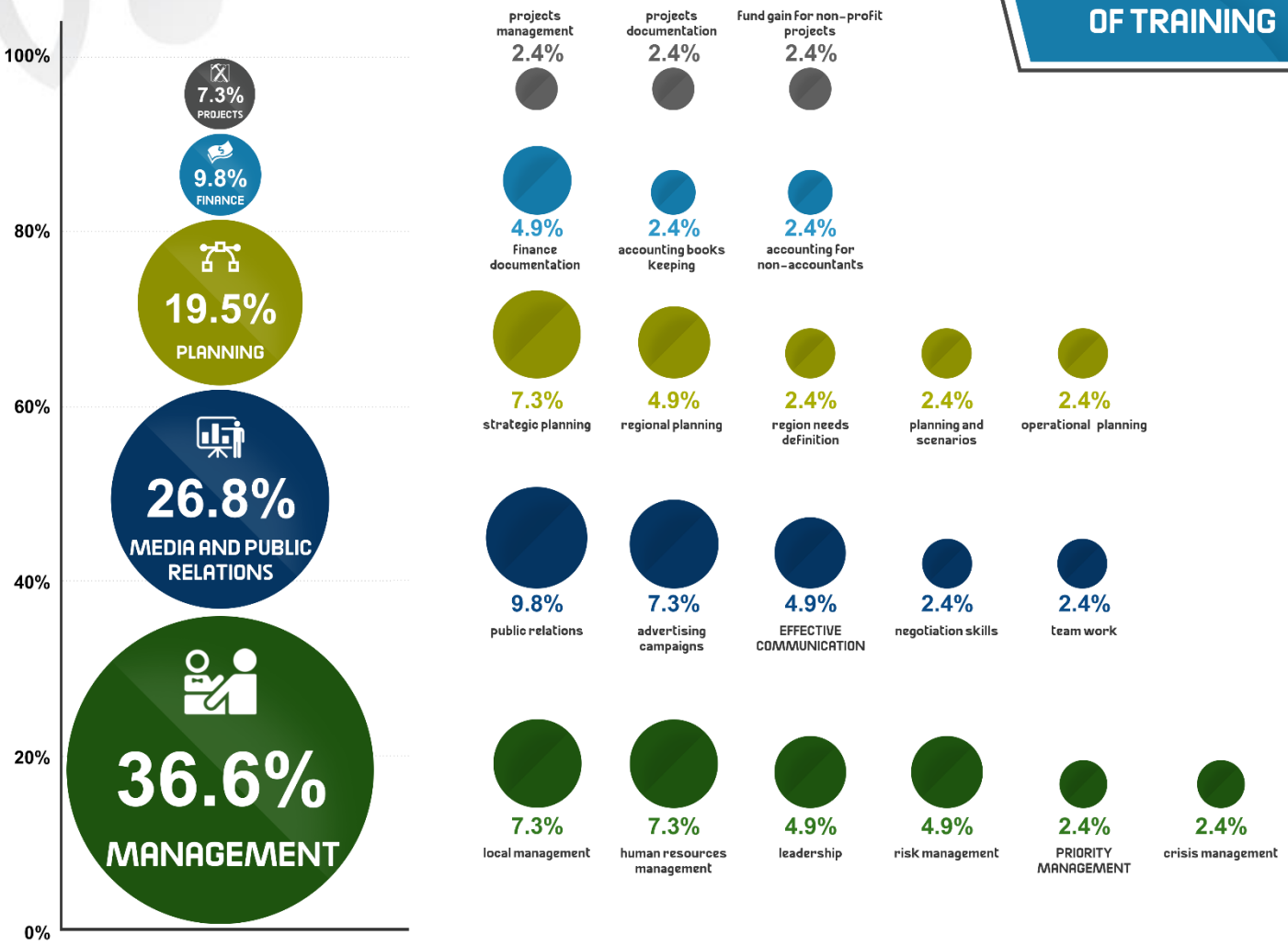
Category	Needs	No.	Total
Training	Administration	15	41
	Media and public relations	11	
	Planning	8	
	Finance	4	
	Projects	3	
Support	Material support	23	39
	Financial support	16	
Coordination and Guidance	Evidence and indicators	8	23
	Coordination and following	8	
	Governance	7	
Overall			103

The three tables below present all Syrian local councils needs on training, support, coordinating, and guidance:

First: Training

Category	Needs	No.	Total
Administration	general Administration	3	15
	Local Administration	3	
	Human Resources Management	3	
	Leadership	2	
	Risk Management	2	
	Priorities Management	1	
	Crisis management	1	
Media and public relations	Public relations	4	11
	Media campaigns	3	
	Effective communication	2	
	Negotiation skills	1	
	Teamwork	1	
Planning	Identify the needs of the region	1	8
	Strategic Planning	3	
	Planning by Scenarios	1	
	Regional Planning	2	
	Operational Planning	1	
Finance	Financial Documentation	2	4
	Accounting bookkeeping	1	
	Accounting for non-accountants	1	
Projects	Collecting Fund for non-profit projects	1	3
	Project management	1	
	Projects documentation	1	
Overall			41

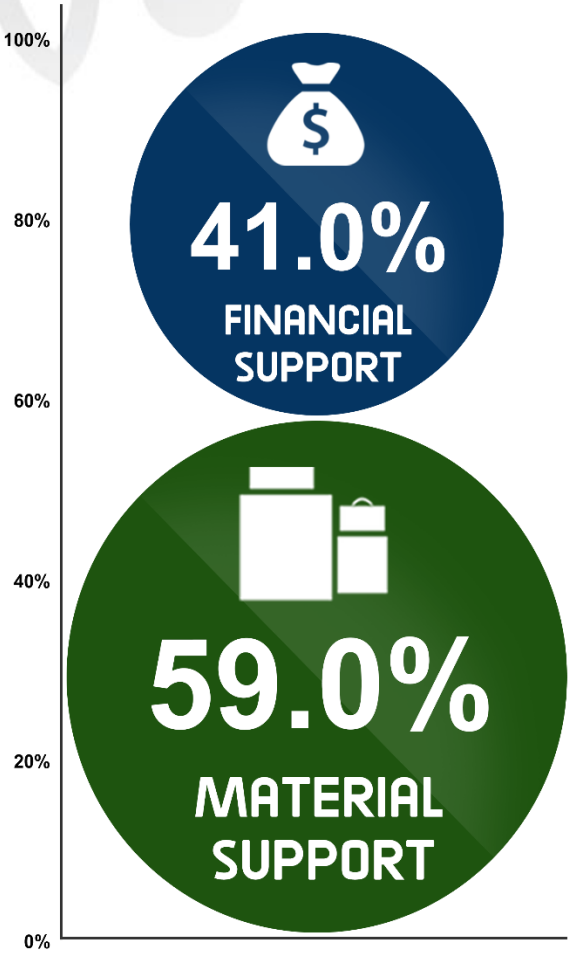
NEEDS INDICATOR OF TRAINING

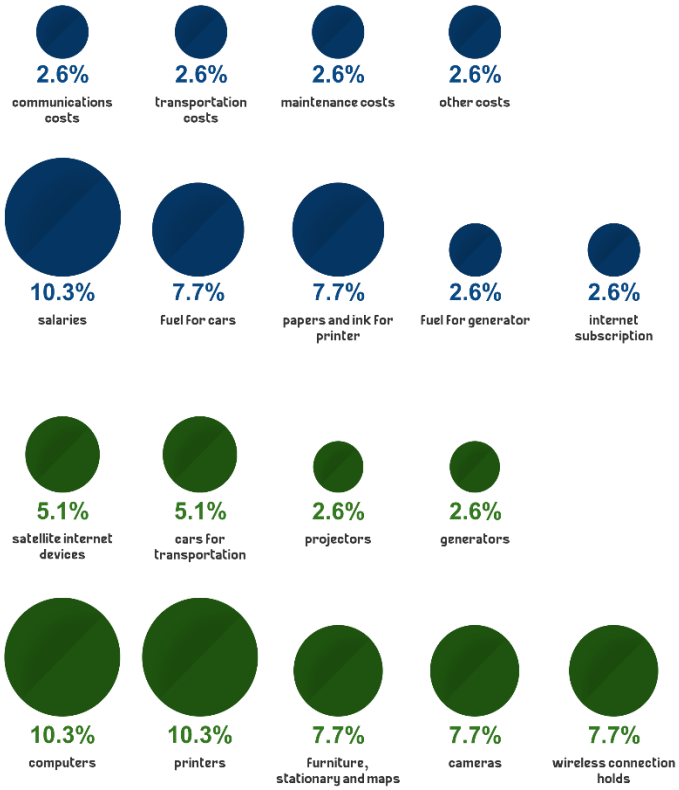


Second: Support

Category	Needs	No.	Total
Material support	Computers	4	23
	Printers	4	
	Office furniture, stationery and maps	3	
	Cameras	3	
	Wireless connections holds	3	
	Satellite internet devices	2	
	Cars for transport	2	
	Projectors	1	
	Generators	1	
Financial support	Salaries	4	16
	Car fuel	3	
	Paper and printer ink	3	
	Generators fuel	1	
	Internet fee	1	
	Connection costs	1	
	Transport costs	1	
	Maintenance costs	1	
	Other costs	1	
Overall			39

NEEDS INDICATOR OF SUPPORT

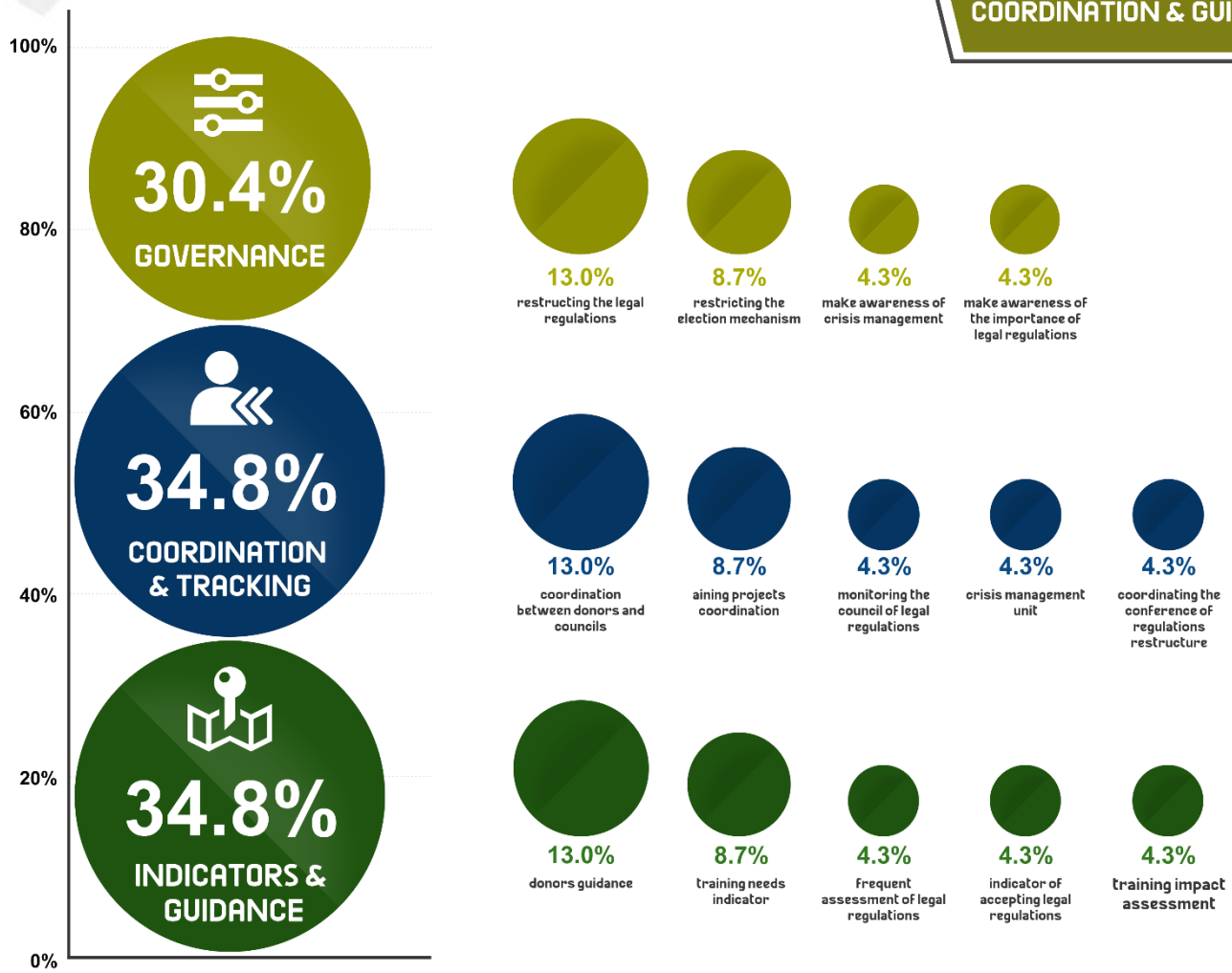




Third: Coordination and Guidance

Category	Needs	No.	Total
Evidence and indicators	Supportive parties Directory	3	8
	Training Needs indicator	2	
	Periodic evaluation of legal regulations	1	
	Acceptance of legal regulations indicator	1	
	Assess the impact of training	1	
Coordination and Follow	Coordination between donors and councils	3	8
	Training Projects Coordination	2	
	Follow-up Committee of Legal regulations	1	
	Crisis Management Unit	1	
	Coordinating conference of Restructuring regulations	1	
Governance	restructuring of the legal regulations	3	7
	Restructuring the electoral mechanism	2	
	Making Awareness of the importance of crisis management	1	
	Making Awareness of the importance of adopting legal regulations	1	
Overall			23

NEEDS INDICATOR OF COORDINATION & GUIDANCE



8 Recommendations:

1- **Stakeholder participation:** This study needs to be disseminated to official bodies and organizations interested in local councils' affairs.

2- **Support balance:** showing the need indicator of local councils does not mean neglecting less important aspects, as doing this may entail creating new gaps in the councils' performance. A balance of support and efforts is needed to be struck in accordance with the indicators of weighted aspects.

3- **Set priorities for local councils' support:** A number local council have been funded or supported with training, and many have not. The relationships between those who had and others who did not is not good. Tensions exist over donor relations and access to resources. It is vitally important that all supportive entities (i.e. MoLA/SIG, NGO's, donors) adopt a balanced strategy of support to local councils. A strategy that is not based on convenience of access but one based on the needs of the councils and their constituents, one that combines (the right kind of) capacity building and resourcing, with robust monitoring and evaluation to promote accountability ('upward' and 'downward') and learning.

4- **Local councils training priorities and synergies:** The study offers an indicator that contains details of training programs that increase the effectiveness of local councils. Training needs exist, and training matters. Training in management (and associated components such as organizational development) is the biggest priority need. The study identified a correlation between management training, effective service delivery and successfully completing donor-funded projects.

5- **Repetition of local councils needs indicator survey:** it is advised to repeat the indicator survey half yearly, in order to track changes with the local councils in the context of Syria, allowing an appropriate period to measure the results of local councils and supportive entities to applying the indicator results.

6- **Syrian local councils 'scale':** The role of this local councils' needs indicator provides a means for directing support efforts better, based on perceptions of needs, priorities and comparative impacts of previous efforts. However, we recommend the development of a complementary tool. A tool that enables a further depth and measurement of Syrian Local Council performance against a complementary 'objective' benchmarking of performance indices.

7- **Authority's strategy for support:** We recommend that the Syrian Interim Government and Ministry of Local Administration move from a planning methodology dependent upon a centralized authority giving legitimacy to and governing the conduct of local councils, to focusing their efforts on improved coordination and resource sharing between local councils in Syria and coordination between these councils and supportive entities (donors, NGO's). Having the capacity to guide and monitor the performance of local councils is a also a key role that the Syrian Interim Government and Ministry of Local Administration can play which will support the empowerment of local councils and the deepening of establish local administration concepts that are proving to work.

8- **Democracy support:** For all entities supporting the establishment of effective local governance in Syria we remind them that democracy matters, but capacity building of local councils in this respect needs to be more than just holding elections. The constituency of local councils needs to be made more aware of their right to not only elect their local council representatives, but also to participate in the monitoring and holding to account local councils in the range of services that they can provide, including donor funded projects.

9- **Crisis management:** Without adequate preparation for crisis, it is difficult for local councils (and other actors such as civil defense, NGO's) to protect people, maintain essential services, and support rapid recovery. Management capacity, preparedness and response plans, and the coordination between councils and between councils and other actors are critical. It is essential to establish and support a crisis management unit at all levels of local councils.