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# **RESTRUCTURING SYRIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES PERSPECTIVES FROM TURKEY, TAIWAN AND SYRIA**



Ankara  
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**Workshop Series-1**

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# Preface

The Syrian conflict has deeply affected the peace and stability in Syria and even the neighboring countries. Due to the conflict, over half of the population has been forced from their homes, and many people have been internally displaced many times. According to United Nations data, approximately twelve million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian aid and protection. For example, six and a half million people in Syria are experiencing food safety problems, and about 16 million have problems accessing clean water. Moreover, the civil infrastructure inside Syria was damaged during conflict. As a matter of fact, more than two-thirds of school have been damaged and destroyed, and almost half of the health institutions have become completely incapacitated.

On the other hand, the security of civilians is still in serious danger due to ongoing conflicts between many actors. The absence of security and lack the basic need exposing the Syrian people especially women, children, and other vulnerable groups to significant risks and creates serious problems and also impede the informed, voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and displaced.

In order to prevent further deepening of the humanitarian crisis and bringing a stable peace to Syria, it is important that the reconstruction process be initiated and carried out in a healthy way.

The process of reconstruction of Syria is a complex issue that needs to be examined in different dimensions and plans. The political, economic, social, human and moral dimensions of this process at the local regional and international level, and the challenges and opportunities that arise in this process should be addressed from the perspective of the Syrian people and from an international perspective.

In line with the above-mentioned facts, The Middle East Foundation organized a workshop titled "Reconstruction of Syria: Challenges and Opportunities" with the cooperation of Ankara Chamber of Commerce and Taiwan's economic and cultural mission in Ankara, to analyse with specialists in their fields the challenges and opportunities in Syria's reconstruction process.

Samir Altunkaynak  
Chairman of the Board





## Towards Reconstruction Phase

Early recovery and reconstruction process play an important role in the debate of decision-making circles and the interest of research centers, at a time when the political process is still pending. The processes associated with the issues of recovery and reconstruction are complex and have political implications especially when talking about reconstruction without reaching a political solution. This shows the importance of the political economy role in reconstruction, ranging from the characterization of existing political economy, and the approaches to reconstruction among the priorities of stability or participation. In addition to these the main actors in Syria's Reconstruction and the scenarios of this process are new factors.

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### Political Economy of Reconstruction and Relation With Political Process

Syria's political economy was reshaped during the conflicts. Decentralization is considered the main feature of the nascent political economy.

There is no longer a central administration that monopolizes the resources and controls the Syrian economy, but the economic patterns of these regions with trade networks, resources and structures of economic management vary from region to another. However, this doesn't eliminate economic interaction and informal trade between these regions.

The economy in Al Assad regime held areas is central and based on the partnership between both private and public sectors, the regime gave this partnership a legal framework and transformed the reality into the rent seeking sectors, particularly oil and real estate such as the Marotta City and Basilia City projects. The partnership between the regime and the emerging economic elites have provided the opportunity to merge their newly created capi-





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tal with existing economic networks, and allowed it to develop its role from a mere trading medium to play deeper roles in the economy.

In Hayyet Tahrir al-Sham and opposition-controlled areas, the economy is decentralized and the military and administrative fragmentation missed the opportunity to form a central management of the economy and contributed to the dependence of these regions on the support provided by the organizations and donors as well as being connected to the Turkish economy.

When we move to areas of under PYD-led autonomous administration control, the economy is centralized, as opposed to what’s in the social contract governing of the autonomous administration as a participatory, non-monopolistic economy as the PKK dominates economic decision-making.

The autonomous administration uses its arms to monopolize goods and politicize their distribution, and the economy is also lacking the independence by being subjected to the Syrian regime in terms of operating and managing vital economic enterprises such as oil and gas stations in addition to dams through intermediaries.

The war has boosted the rent-seeking economy especially after the productive sectors have been affected. The government’s attention to the real es-







tate has been noticed through its intensive work to issue regulatory reconstruction plans for 165 regions, as well as issuing a series of laws and regulations to facilitate its control over the property and the monopoly of its financial revenues.

The internal crossings have emerged as a major source of profit for the conflict sides. The revenues from the crossings have taken multiple names such as accompanying trucks convoys (known also as al-Tarfiq) and fees imposed on the transportation. However, the number of the crossings decreased from 30 in early 2018 to 17 at the beginning of 2019. Foreign aid which are provided by donors through their partners, as well as external remittances of Syrians are the most salient sources of the Syrian economy during the war years. Official United Nations publications estimate the size of the international response to the Syrian crisis between 2012-2018 at more than 20 billion US dollars. On the other hand, numbers issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics of 2017, the high volume of such transfers from \$ 1.22 billion in 2011, to reach 2.37 billion US dollars in 2016.

The conflict has created an economic and commercial elite that is emerging as a source of revenue. The above can be seen in the rise of new names in the field of trade and business, such as Wasim Al-Qattan and Al-Qatraji brothers. The regime has worked to integrate them into its economic networks according to the principle of care in

return for loyalty and employing them to overcome sanctions and weaken its opponents. Regional economy in rebels held areas increases trade with Turkey and leads to emergence of new elites, the center of gravity in trade is transferred from Aleppo to southern Turkey.

### Approaches to Reconstruction and The Main Actors

There are two approaches to the reconstruction process and its role in building peace in Syria, the first approach, "stability-prosperity", starts from the economic priority at the expense of the politician approach as a means of reconstruction and peace building. Starting the restructuring of the economy, this approach believes that attracting investments and generating employment, can fix the problems emerged after the conflict and to form a common interest among the conflict sides and create dynamics conducive to peace through "the legitimacy of performance and services." On the other hand, the second approach, "participatory-prosperity", is based on the political priority at the expense of the economy as an approach to reconstruction process and peace building. In addition, reaching a political solution to the conflict will produce local and international legitimacy that will help launch and finance reconstruction.

The United States and the European Union adopt the "participatory-prosperity" approach towards



the reconstruction process and both of them see an opportunity to induce behavioral changes on the regime by leveraging financial support for the reconstruction process. According to that, the US and EU are using sanctions as a bargaining chip to pressure the regime to change its behavior and push it to accept a political solution to the Syrian crisis based on the UN's Geneva Conventions. Both parties are intensifying sanctions on pro-regime business networks involved in reconstruction efforts, such as in Marotta City and Basilia City, and those who play a role in breaking the sanctions regime, supplying the regime with oil derivatives, conducting its financial and commercial operations abroad. USA and EU are waving new sanctions based on the Caesar Law to obstruct the regime and its allies from starting reconstruction process and rehabilitation of the regime before reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

The sanctions are not responsible for the deterioration of the Syrian economy. The main reason is the

catastrophic effects and devastation of the conflict and the economic policies of the regime before and during the crisis, but it should have mentioned that sanctions have also indirect impact:

- protected the interests of Syrian crony capitalists.
- overrun Syrian small and medium enterprises.
- protected Russia and Iranian companies from international competition.
- Impacted the livelihoods of normal citizens.

In contrast to Syrian regime, Russia and Iran and to a certain extent Turkey, adopt the "stability-prosperity" approach. Moscow wants to launch reconstruction process in order to float its ally the Syrian regime, and to invest its military intervention with long-term economic gains that can be observed through its acquisition of profitable economic sectors such as ports, airports and natural resources. Iran seeks to have a significant share of reconstruction contracts for its companies and allies and to use it to strengthen its influence in the Syrian economy in the long term.

Turkey also wants its companies and allies to have a significant share of the reconstruction contracts, especially those based in north Syria, and to use this process to open the markets of the region to its products and to achieve a long-term economic link to the economies of the region through the Syrian posts.

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**“One of the main actors is Turkish Government who has invested significantly in local administrations and economic infrastructure.”**

There are also many actors, for example: China two main interests in Syria are security (Uyghurs in north-western Syria), and its geostrategic location. Thus its participation is formatted as follow:

- Unmaterialized pledges (2 billion dollars to Syria, and 23 billion dollars in loan to the MENA region).
- No real confidence in investing in Syria.
- China does not see any real benefit in taking part in a fierce competition with Russia and Iran for influence over the regime.

Another actor is India who has shown little interest in regime change in Syria, instead politically support it for its fear of instability, its commitment to non-interventionism and Al-Assad's continued pro-India stance on the Kashmir issue. So we can conclude their main interest is represented in: In-

terest in trade but not investment (Annual trade did not exceed \$175 million).

GCC countries especially Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are willing to engage with Syria in the hope that Russia has the capacity to contain Iran and to a lesser extent countering the influence of Turkey in Syria. So they are slowly warming to the Syrian regime, but they are also reluctant to pour billions into an effort that ultimately could strengthen Iran.

### Scenarios of reconstruction and main pillars of reconstruction

The general opinion is that no reconstruction is possible without a conclusive and credible political transition, while Damascus is gearing up for a phase of reconstruction and stabilization by enacting new legislation, reinforcing its security and military apparatus, and endorsing new middlemen and businessmen to lead future reconstruction efforts. Regardless above if reconstruction starts now, we can summarize the potentials as follows:

1. Moscow perceives reconstruction as an oppor-





tunity to facilitate the international and regional rehabilitation of Bashar al-Assad.

2. Damascus and its allies could use "Reconstruction Funds" as:
  - Political rewards to distribute to "loyalists".
  - Bringing the majority that have rebelled back to silence and humiliating obedience which means to reconsolidate the regime authority.
3. Viewing current governmental and business attitude political economy will depend on:
  - Trade, and lack of investment in industry.
  - High inflation rates.
  - The emergence of monopolies.

Moving to analyze the Current and Possible reactions, the possibilities are as follows:

1. Doing nothing: will spread the problem increase the cost of future intervention.
2. Quarantine: demands proactive monitoring and constant drain, not applicable in Syria
3. Dissolution of the territorial integrity: poses a threat to regional security.

4. Absorb the state into a larger entity: demands the presence of a larger viable state.
5. Transactional approach: no strategy and prone to short-sighted non-sustainable deals.
6. Regional engagement: delegate the stabilization of Syria to neighboring countries.
7. One side takes all: further bloodshed and no real perspective of success anytime soon.

The proposed comprehensive plan for any future reconstruction should respect following conditions:

1. Security: creating a safe and secure environment and developing legitimate and effective security institutions.
2. Justice and reconciliation: creating an effective law enforcement apparatus, an open judicial system, fair laws, and a humane corrections system.
3. Social and economic well-being: providing emergency relief, restoring essential services to the population in areas such as health and education, laying the foundation for a viable economy, and initiating an inclusive and sustainable development program.
4. Governance and participation: establishing a representative constitutional structure, and ensuring the active and open participation of local communities in the formulation of the country's government and its policies.
5. Leadership: the engagement of widely acknowledged and popularly supported capable local and national social, political and technical figures.

### Economic recovery and Refugees Crisis: Lessons and Experiences

Many actors have played and still play an important role in the early economic recovery inside Syria and dealing with refugee crisis; those actors have experience which can be used in the reconstruction process in the future. One of the main actors is Turkish Government who has invested significantly in local administrations and economic infrastructure. Others are several international foundations like Taiwan Tzu-Chi Foundation who is working with Syrian refugees in Istanbul.





### Economic Recovery Activities in Northern Syria

The restructuring activities are complex issue and include many different aspects: political, economic and cultural aspects. The decisive factors that can affect reconstruction are: the nature of conflict, the scope of reconciliation that ends the conflict, the attitudes of the conflicting actors towards reconstruction attempts, geographical conditions, accessible sources, demographic structure, the culture and consent of the population, foreign intervention, and radical groups. For example, sectarian division in the region may play a role in terms of equity; or if you go through the terrorist organizations as a suppressive actor of these organizations, this will be a major impediment to realize these restructuring activities.

In this context, referencing research conducted by global centers classify phases of post-conflict reconstruction efforts to three main phases:

1. Response: involving military intervention, emergency humanitarian aid, and a guarantee to provide basic security for the aid services.

2. The transformation or transition: through this, the society becomes self-sufficient through the increased economic development, infrastructure, and governance capacity for the society to become self-sufficient.
3. The final phase or period where normalization to prevent the resurgence of the conflict becomes the forefront, the consolidation of the recovery efforts are sustainable and self-sufficient.

What Turkey have done in Syria is actually is consistent with the literature that we know but Turkey persuade the ten steps strategy in the structuring liberated areas after the operations. These ten steps were not continuous though, Turkey had to invent these steps to coordinate the military operations with the humanitarian need on the ground and after the military interventions, Turkey had to and still actually, employ this strategy.

Turkish side is working on providing security environment, governance capacity and capability of providing service, infrastructure and the establishment of a financial and economic system, justice, and prosperity in northern Syria. To achieve this



- **Building an Environment of Trust**
- **Picturing the Environment for Reconstruction**
- **Determining Needs and Priorities, making a Comprehensive Reconstruction Plan in The Light of the Resources**
- **Execution of Emergency Humanitarian Activities**
- **Improvement of Infrastructure and Living Conditions**
- **Eliminaing Conflict Traces and Making Efforts for normalization**
- **Social Services and Reinforcement of a Sense of Confidence**
- **Development of Administrative Capacity and Ensuring Political Consensus**
- **Rendering Self-Sufficiency of local Authority**
- **Establishment of Permanent and Sustainable Social Structure and Administrative Capacity**

Figure, Turkey's Reconstruction Model.

(Murat Aslan, TURKEY'S RECONSTRUCTION MODEL IN SYRIA, Presentation In The Workshop)

**“The restructuring activities are complex issue and include many different aspects: political, economic and cultural aspects.”**

environment, Turkish side has established on cooperation between local administrations units (there are totally nine local councils in northern Syria) and the governance of neighboring provinces (of Turkey) like Gaziantep or Hatay or Urfa for instance. Governors have the ultimate responsibility and authority to coordinate all the activities of governmental assets and also civilian society assistance groups including the municipality. For example, The Gaziantep Governorship is responsible for providing support in health, education and infrastructure fields to the local units in Jarabulus and Al-Bab.

The local people's views towards local councils and local economy in Northern Syria can be summarized as follows:

#### 1. Local Councils:

- It is a fact that local councils are acknowledged and accepted by the local publics.
- Local Councils have customs services, directorates also built up incomes, although it is limited.
- Local Councils after ISIS are described as a state-institutions and accepted as authority upon the provided services.
- Businessmen contracted with the local councils, recognizing them as legitimate organizations.
- Local Councils pay salary for the clerks though; it must be high enough to deter corruption.

But on the other hand there are negative perceptions on the local councils:

- Some locals perceived as illegitimate and authoritative,
- They usually do not have regulations to have themselves run transparently.



**“The both Syrian and Turkish volunteers played key roles in helping Tzu Chi carry out its work inside Turkey.”**

- Most of them are not elected.
- There are many working rhythms of local councils at the mean time pending to city centers.

## 2. Local Economy:

- Economic recovery is significant for the last three years.
- Encouragement of businessmen and investors to do business need to be priority
- Trade is the basic tool to overcome the deficiencies. The issue to be solved is certification to facilitate export
- There is a reality that local public is dependent on humanitarian assistance, despite there can be witnessed betterment.
- Local public need to surpass the level of receiving humanitarian assistance but be self-sufficient.
- The problems, on the other hand, are inadequate level of money flow into region and foreign currencies

## NGO Lessons in dealing with Syrian Refugees: Taiwan Tzu-Chi Foundation

The Tzu Chi Turkey branch started providing care for Syrian refugees in 2014. Now the branch distributes aid to more than 6,000 families every month and at the same time, emergency assistance is given to an average of 250 families each month. In 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers established El-Menahil School with the support of the local government. This school was established not only to provide education, but also to give hope for the future. Volunteers have also established a free medical clinic, which is open seven days a week (till year 2019 the doctors and nurses serve nearly 280,000 patients).

The both Syrian and Turkish volunteers played key roles in helping Tzu Chi carry out its work inside Turkey.

There are three volunteers who are responsible of Tzu Chi foundation in Turkey, but they are receive support from the Tzu Chi Foundation headquarters in Taiwan, and they are depending on more than 200 Syrian refugees and other Turkish volunteers who serve as volunteers.

That shows very clearly the value of culture of volunteering, spirit of giving and cooperation with refugees in achieving big works. For example, volunteers can quickly and smoothly handle 650 families in every distribution, in a much shorter time because they are working together and using a powerful software system that was developed by a Syrian refugee. Moreover, many Turkish students joined in to help Tzu Chi volunteers prepare the distribution, wanting to welcome the Syrian students and display their offer of friendship.

Engaging refugees in works that they benefit from, making them more satisfied and happy, for example, one time, a company offered to develop the system of a high salary in an attempt to snatch him away from Tzu Chi, but they refused and preferred to stay put. One of the lessons that Tzu Chi foundation learned from the working with Syrian refugees is that integration and respect for refugee culture making work easier. At an aid distribution on March 2017, a former Imam of the Mosque in Taipei, Yunus Ma also came to visit the liaison office in Sultangazi (Istanbul). Speaking the language of the refugees, he was able to make the refugees feel welcome and at ease.

Other lesson that Tzu Chi foundation learned it is “working with local and central government making work more effective, and helping governmental institutions to communicate with refugees for example, the El-Menahil School employs over 70 teachers, selected from 450 Syrian applicants. The representatives of Tzu Chi foundation went to Ankara, the capital of Turkey, and pleaded with government officials to issue work permits and grant insurance coverage for the teachers at the school. Now there are more than 3,000 students in this school from elementary to high school, in which instruction is in Arabic, for Syrian refugee children.





## Economic Perspective to the Reconstruction

**“The most painful thing is that when there is a natural disaster, which has a 22% impact on investment, so this affects investment negatively.”**

### Preconditions For Economic Growth

The economic restructuring and reconstruction doesn't mean just construction industry but also included the functioning economy.

It is necessary to talk about an economic structure which has an organized industrial zone, energy, logistic lines, and exports. Unless there is such a structure, plans for energy, zoning plans, logistics, factory and consumption, there will be an economic activity but no development.

Talking about Syria, we can't talk about a truly functioning market economy. When we look at how the World Bank evaluates, in 2011 the World Bank was active in more than one area in Syria. The World Bank works primarily on the development of the private sector, human resources development, social protection and environmental issues. After the war, the World Bank withdrew, but it is conducting two studies on Syria. One of which is in 2017 to show the extent of the damage, and the second one is on issues like these refugees and trying to produce a picture of how the economy might be working in new conditions.

The most painful thing is that when there is a natural disaster, which has a 22% impact on investment, so this affects investment negatively.

But when the economic structure breaks down (human resources, production centers, energy, logistics, education, vocational training), their impact on investments - 80% - that is more than



four times the impact of a natural disaster. In other words, when almost 80% investment cannot be made, economic activity ends.

There is a prediction that the longer the war lasts, the different the effect. Looking at the difference between ending this crisis in the 6th year and ending it in the 10th year, if this war end in the 6th year, it can close 41% of national income in the next 4 years, but if the war ends in its 10th year, it can close only 28% of national income in 4 years. In other words, the longer the war, closing the gap is more difficult when this infrastructure is more destroyed, moving away from the rest of the world.

If the war ends in its 10th year, for example, the whole crisis is over in 2021, there is a loss of 13.2 times the GDP in 2010 over 20 years (\$ 700 billion GDP loss). This is the visible structure of Syria; building a house is not enough to keep people.

There is a need for an economic activity in which people will produce, export, import and trade. As long as this cannot be established, humanitarian aid can be stabilized, but in the long run, it must continue again as part of the needs of the normal nation state. The process of rebuilding requires resources and the main question is who will protect the resources?

US and EU will not fund reconstruction as long as Al-Assad is the head of Syria. Russia and Iran have a resource constraint in order to create a vibrant economy, and cannot transfer the resource. Moving to Turkey's stance, it must be a legitimate government which recognized by international area in Syria, and that government needs a full agreement with our government, because investment is something different from trade. Currently, Antep's exports to Syria are 430 million dollars

In order to invest in Syria, provide added value and create employment, the investment environment of Syria needs to improve, in this context, establishment of internationally legitimate government is a precondition of development and activating economy. However, how this happens?

Lebanon is an example; it was one of the richest countries in the region yesterday. After 15 years of civil war, there was nothing left of its former wealth. Nevertheless, to mobilize with trade and tourism,

**“The main reasons for migration to rural centers are due to the relative safety of rural areas and the less damaged infrastructure compared to the destruction in the cities.”**

the actors that everyone considered legitimate had to come in and a long-term growth performance had to come.

### Lessons from Local Communities in Asia: Self-Reliance

In every post-disaster zone, there are many challenges; the houses are destroyed, the community is vanished, and there are also difficulties in finance, resources and labors. For that, the main question for the both government and local residents is: how can we rebuild the civilization?

According to the experiences in the past 20 years, none of the governments, NGOs, or private sectors can achieve this mission along. What is the alternative?

The Architect HEISH Ying-Chun and Atelier-3 have conducted a survey in more than 2000 houses for the post-disaster reconstruction in Southeast Asia. As the result of their radical experiments and empirical studies, they conclude “self-reliance” as the fundamental philosophy for facilitating reconstruction projects with local communities. This philosophy was developed according to the following six local perspectives:

1. Appreciating and adopting local resources and knowledge: every resource and labor should be appreciated and adopted. For example, women should participate in the construction.
2. Designing and building of housing are human rights: building a house is part of a human right and every human being should design and build their own house which they will appreciate by their own.
3. Working is relieving and healing: all survivors can feel rewarded and socially recognized when they can contribute to the housing construction, their communities' life and further



- re-gain their socio-economic status.
4. Rebuilding the community by building housing together: it is important for survivors to participate in the collaborative construction work. During the housing reconstruction, the trust and friendship will be built, and the society and community will be rebuilt.
5. Building a new home and community is a life-long process: in the rural areas, building a house is not a one-week, one-month, or one-year task. Building a house is a life-time task.
6. Housing is the production of survivors, not the products sold to them: the house should never be the 'product' sold to the survivors; instead, it should be the 'production' of the survivors. The "production" is served as the foundation to help the survivors to re-gain their socio-economic status.

The above perspectives have been responded by the following five architectural principles:

1. Forming community-based cooperatives.
2. Reinforced lightweight gauge steel frame with post-and-beam system for quality, efficiency, and affordability of building construction.
3. Open system for adopting and submitting to nature and culture
4. Single-line drawings for participatory design.
5. Adoptable and affordable technology for collaborative construction.

The principles were served as a foundation for succeeding community-based post-disaster reconstruction work to protect the well-being of survivors from the land grabs and expropriation, as well as rapid urbanization, expected usually.

An example of conducted post-disaster reconstruction projects that we can learned from Nepal. Each of the newly re-built house at Nepal costed 2000 USD. The prize included the production, transportation of materials, and the supervision of the construction.

### Community-Based Approach for Reconstruction: Learning from Syrian Tradition

The debate about post-war reconstruction has been ongoing during the last seven years of the continu-

ous Syrian war. The increasing volume of destruction in different big cities has created a need for new ideas and innovative building solutions.

Two fundamental approaches for reconstruction have been adopted in the literature: "technology-based approach" and "community-based approach". While technology-based approaches using housing imports from developed countries, the community-based approach is based on the principle of taking advantage of local resources in reconstruction process.

The "community-based approach" creates solutions based on the understanding of a rich reconstruction heritage in the area, which was developed through long history of destruction and reconstruction, and produced appropriate practice which could be used in future intervention to reverse the construction problem into an opportunity.

Using the knowledge obtained from the heritage, some suggested principles to convert the construction sector into a source of income instead of a burden of expenditure are being proposed in this speech.

In addition to that, how the reconstruction of built environment could be used as a vehicle for economic growth in post war instead of causing debt for the country budget for example, Direct sector of Construction before the war was one of the biggest economic sectors in Syria, 10% approximately of national income including Buildings, Infrastructure and Materials, but it was Underdeveloped and the Materials are imported. On the other hand, Indirect participation include manufacturing, transportation, and industry 20% of the national income. Thus, the Construction need industry, and industry needs construction as a vehicle of development.

This approach proposes to provide transitional

**“Two fundamental approaches for reconstruction have been adopted in the literature: “technology-based approach”**



**“Due to the war in Syria, the direction of migration has alternated for many reasons. The main reasons for migration to rural centers are due to the relative safety of rural areas and the less damaged infrastructure compared to the destruction in the cities.”**

housing in rural areas for the returning Syrians to answer the above defined housing need in the rural areas and also to align with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for rural development.

Rural communities in Syria were always presented as self-sufficient societies, economically, demographically, socially and even culturally. However, rural areas have had poor regional planning; development efforts have concentrated upon urban areas.

Due to the war in Syria, the direction of migration has alternated for many reasons. The main reasons for migration to rural centers are due to the relative safety of rural areas and the less damaged infrastructure compared to the destruction in the cities. People originating from the rural areas surrounding the cities have also returned to their home villages and towns due to losing their city jobs and have also found the possibility to work in agriculture to secure their minimum needs for living, i.e. water, energy and food. For example, a village such as Dabiq in Northern Syria has grown from a population of 4,800 inhabitants in 2011 to 12,568 in January 2017 after the liberation of the village from the control of ISIS.

### **Design Concept for Rural Houses in Northern Syria and learning from Syrian Tradition**

An alternative design concept is being developed using the beehive house as a basis that is dependent mostly on the availability of local material that is adapted to the environment. The design incorporates the utmost respect of the modern users'

needs and the modules can be built with minimal construction knowledge. The main building material will be earth mixed with water and straw. The composition may differ using dung, sand, silt, clay, small pieces of gravel, or even recycled rubble from destroyed buildings.

Syrian can learn from previous experiences and can found several guidelines such as:

1. Women historically reconstructs, thus the efforts should take care on women training in reconstruction
2. Education is essential for restructuring and especially in construction industry, the established schools in Aleppo is an evidence across history. Thus a multidisciplinary study for professional-refugees (Master in AYBU) is established.
3. Training of nonprofessional (refugees build their own houses) is a used methodology.
4. Go Rural, in every war the rural areas were the refuge for IDPs.

### **ICT Possible Applications in The Reconstructions: Lessons Learned from TaiwanICDF's**

The development of ICT (Information, Communication Technologies) has broken down geographic boundaries, raising overall development and bringing better solutions in the humanitarian assistance context. It can provide a wide range of real-time information which can then be exchanged among actors as well as improve management systems and transform service delivery.

ICT plays a significant role in three cornerstones of sustainable development (economic development, social inclusion, and environmental protection). The three cornerstones are very important to achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN in 2015.

The transformative power of ICT in facilitating the progress of the SDGs and development work is astonishing. It has indicated the useful aspects of ICT in different fields:

1. In agriculture: ICT can improve productivity



**“At present, the health care service is in critical condition in Syria and it is estimated around 13.2 million people are in need of health care services.”**

on farms, help farmers access markets and value chains, and improve the delivery of agriculture extension services.

2. In the field of health: ICT can strengthen the demand for health services, improve the ability of health workers to deliver those services, and strengthen health system capacity.
3. Under emergency situations: ICT can improve early warning systems, conduct rapid assessments, and facilitate communication, coordination, and management of resources.
4. In education: ICT can facilitate access to educational services, improve teacher capability to deliver those services, and strengthen education system capacity
5. In the face of peacebuilding and governance, ICT can monitor and report trends and events, engage citizens in dialog, and facilitate crisis management

The above-mentioned all represent, in terms of development work, how ICT can assist to deliver quality goods and services in plenty of areas or sectors. With proper application and design, the impact ICT can produce is huge and will bring long-term positive influence on people.

The International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF) has served as the official development assistance organization of Taiwan for 23 years and has extensive experience in assisting Taiwan's partner countries in implementing projects in humanitarian assistance, technical cooperation, and education and training through ICT. The TaiwanICDF assists partner countries to improve their ICT capacity, reduce development gaps and cultivate their digital capabilities, which together represent an indicator of the pursuit and further upgrading of our foreign aid operations. The TaiwanICDF have conducted many projects which using ICT in various areas and sectors like: Sigi-Biromaru Livelihood Support Program (Indonesia), Improving Community Resilience in the Dry Cor-

ridor of Honduras Project, Health Information

Management Efficiency Enhancement Project in Paraguay, Capability Enhancement in Using Geographic Information Systems in Central America-Nicaragua and Honduras and Belize Urban Resilience and Disaster Prevention Project.

### Conceptualizing ICT Application in Syrian Reconstruction

At present, the health care service is in critical condition in Syria and it is estimated around 13.2 million people are in need of health care services. Therefore, in the Syrian reconstruction, one of the possible ways in health intervention is to use mobile technology. Based on the local needs and through assessment, the government, NGOs, aid agencies, private sectors, and civil community could work hand in hand to develop a health application to provide an easier way for the populations to access health care services under the circumstances that many infrastructures and health system await to be rebuilt. Vice versa, under the condition of insufficient health workers, the health application can also effectively and efficiently improve the health workers' services and ensure they can be delivered with better quality. For the refugees living in hard-to-reach areas, the health application can also assist the health workers to perform long-distance clinical consultations and diagnosis. Furthermore, it is also estimated that the operating cost will be reduced as well with the mobile technology application.

On other hand, there are also challenges. First, public infrastructures were ruined, including those facilities related to electricity and internet. Second, the information update and maintenance of the applications are in need of continuing support and resources, Third, without proper coordination and collaboration, various software and technology developed by different organizations may serve the same purpose and these applications would not be integrated and implemented on a larger scale. Fourth, concerns about privacy, ethics, and cybersecurity will very likely be raised and will require us to assess the rights of individuals along with benefits of the community.



# Policy Recommendations for Syria's Effective Reconstruction



In order to turn the challenges and losses caused by the eight years of the conflict into an opportunity for stabilizing a new Syria and creating a sustainable new system, providing Syrians with their needs for a free, justice and to developed political, economic and social system, the following are recommended:

1. The Human capital of Syrian people should be used as an asset more than a burden, and being invested in it for the future through education and development.
2. Restructuring requires Security: by creating a safe and secure zone and developing legitimate and effective security Syrian institutions.
3. Justice and reconciliation: no sustainable reconstruction is available without a credible and sustainable political settlement.
4. Social and economic well-being: by supporting auto sufficiency of the communities
5. Taking in consideration the interests of different actors and making a balanced plan through negotiation between influential stakeholders.
6. Organization of NGO efforts and managing their work will result in more efficient benefits for Syrians and decrease the waste or conflict of interests.
7. Learn from the traditions of the region and avoiding the import of other experience will result in a local perspective for reconstruction, which achieves more sustainable and permanent solutions.
8. Go Rural: focusing on the rural areas in the short term plans will avoid the complexities of mega cities reconstruction and reestablish a basic economic system for the IDPs and returnees
9. Modern education for different disciplinary to reconstruct the different sectors of Syrian's life on a modern and stable scientific bases, and helping them to develop the solutions and plans upon their own needs.









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