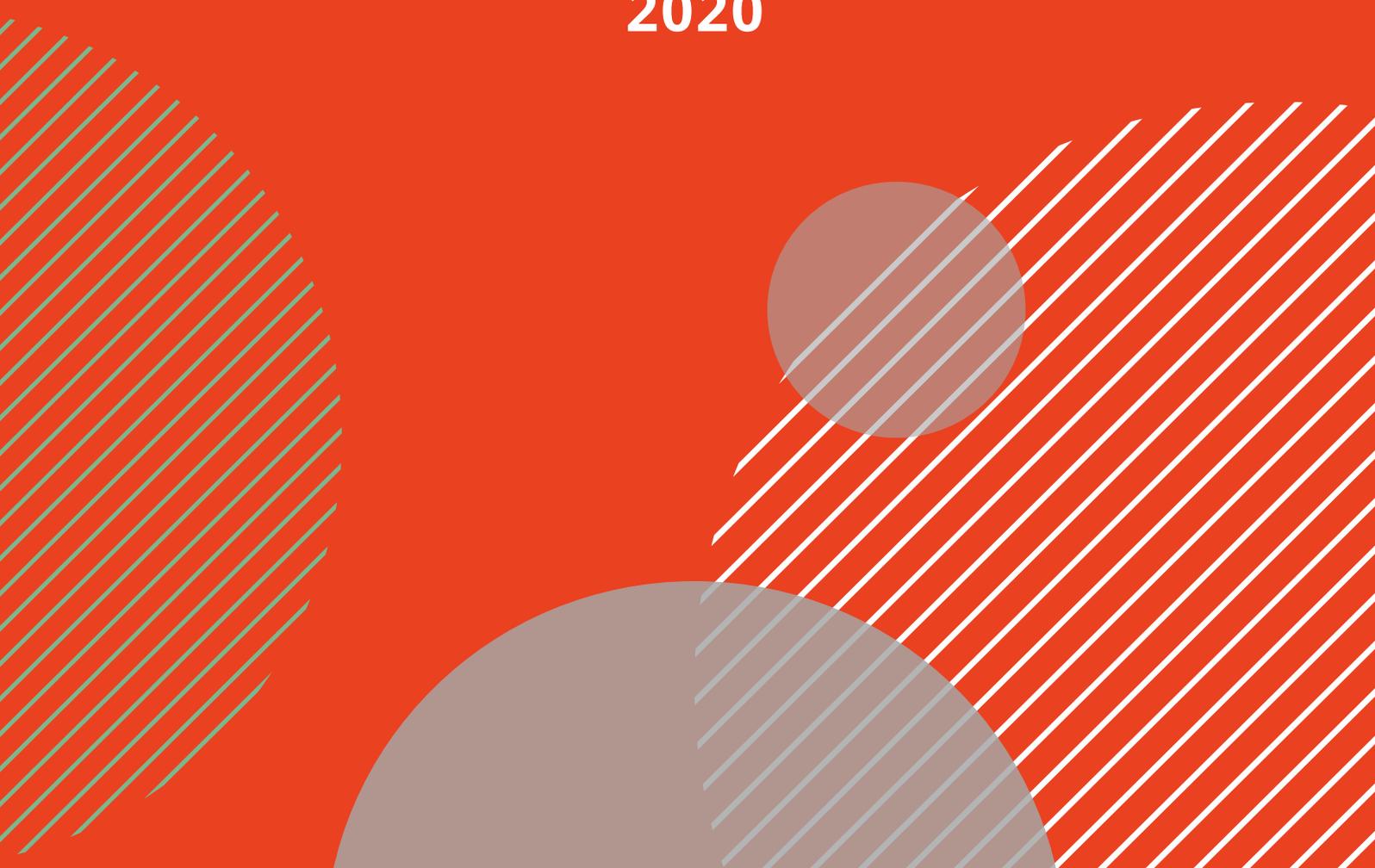




# Local Community Empowerment

**Activity Report VI**  
January-December  
**2020**







**To the tens of thousands  
of civil activists inside  
and outside of Syria  
devoted to helping their  
communities**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020 was a difficult and challenging year globally, especially with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the implications it causes on movement and work, psychological and health pressures, and a large number of casualties.

In the Syrian context, the beginning of the year, like previous ones, witnessed an escalation of military operations that intensified with the attacks by the Syrian regime forces, backed by the Russian army and aviation, on the areas of Idlib and the western countryside of Aleppo, which as usual, began by targeting and neutralizing health structures in these areas. The attacks led to the regime forces taking control of large parts of the countryside of Idlib and the western countryside of Aleppo, after they were destroyed, scorched and empty of residents.

After the battles and the forced displacement of about 800K people to northern areas close to the Turkish borders, Syria witnessed a relative and long-term calm (which lasted until the moment of preparing this report in the fall of 2021) that the population in northwest Syria has not lived for years (with continuous escalations in the aerial attacks by the Syrian regime and Russian aviation on residential areas, especially during the summer of 2021).

Syria also witnessed an unprecedented economic crisis, as the Syrian Lira collapsed to a new level against the US dollar.

With regard to LDSPS, the pandemic affected the work of our offices inside and outside Syria, as people shifted to work from home for long periods, and the resulting psychological pressure and program delays, as well as the postponement of some projects and physical meetings.

## Despite the challenges posed by the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to support a cross-regional initiative and 1 LC general elections

However, the year marked the beginning of a new experiment for LDSPS in supporting a collective regional initiative, through the coordination and support of the "Volunteers Against Corona" campaign, which worked to spread awareness around prevention measures against the pandemic. In addition, LDSPS succeeded once again in supporting the experience of general elections (albeit partially) for the first time in the northern countryside of Aleppo.

During 2020, 59 projects were completed, and 48 projects were rotated for 2021.

During this year, cooperation took place with 32 partners, 14 of whom are new partners, with whom we were pleased to cooperate for the first time this year.

Since 2013-2020 LDSPS has supported 380 projects and activities with nearly 120 local partners, with a value of \$7,671,850.

The different realities, increasing challenges, in addition to the changes on the ground and the political climate, prompted the team to start rethinking the organization's strategy and theory of change at the end of 2020 (and this effort continued until spring 2021).

Increasing restrictions on Syrian CSOs in Turkey, including LDSPS, also cost the team an extra effort in logistical and legal work, to avoid any risks and prompt the organization to consider moving its operations out of Syria to a new country.

# GENERAL CONTEXT

In the 10th year after the spark of the Syrian revolution, following the massive oppressive approach used by the Syrian regime and what it led to in terms of war, foreign interference and destruction, the situation in Syria is very dire from all perspectives:

- Syria is currently fragmented into mainly 4 regions all controlled by de-facto ruling powers (including the Syrian regime itself), all using military force to enforce their power on the populations living in these regions. Despite some regions being out of the control of the regime for years, not one widely-spread “good” governance model has emerged because of the focus of all de-facto ruling powers on “controlling” the populations rather than on enabling them. In addition, with time, these different regions are drifting away from each other in terms of both governance models (the different “bad” models are being enrooted) and social changes (impact of the different ideologies/agendas of the different de-facto ruling powers).

- The human cost has been tremendous: more than 500K civilians have been killed and a similar number have a level of handicap because of injury/torture, 90% of both figures were by the hands of the regime forces and its backers (Iran and Russia). Around 100K civilians have been forcibly disappeared, the large majority of which by the regime security forces. Around 300K were arrested and tortured by the regime, of whom an estimated number of 15000+ died under torture. Half of the Syrian population has been forced out of their homes (the vast majority are still unable to return): 6.5 million refugees around the world (mainly in neighbouring countries) and 6.5 million IDPs (60% are in non-regime-held areas). Around 2 million Syrians live in camps (80% of which inside Syria). Almost no Syrian family has been spared from loss and pain.

- Taking into account the current status-quo both on the military front as well as on the political front, the current involvement of the international community in response to the situation in Syria can be summarized in two separate types of intervention: assistance (current annual pledges of 4-5 billion USD per year, 90% of which is humanitarian assistance) and targeted sanctions by some of the major international actors (mainly the USA and the EU). With the massive destruction that the country has known of its infrastructure and of its human capital, the need and reliance on assistance is unfortunately continuing to increase. As a sign of this destruction of the country's economy, infrastructure and social fabric, all socio-economical indicators are in their lowest values that the country has ever known and are now some of the worst in the world.

- Nevertheless, it is noticeable how local communities and Syrian civil society actors inside and outside of the country (as well as in some periods and regions, local administrative bodies like local councils or technical directorates) has stepped-up to the task of fulfilling the needs, especially in non-regime held areas. A tissue of activists/civil servants has emerged to help channeling the international assistance to local communities, especially in the regions that went out of the control of the regime. However, the margins of action are being reduced both inside and outside of Syria due to the pressure from the de-facto ruling powers (the Syrian regime being the far most constraining) and due to reduced support of the international community and the increasingly difficult operating conditions outside of Syria (partially because of the over-compliance of the international financial institutions with the sanctions and partially of the restrictions imposed by neighbouring countries on the action of the Syrian civil society organizations operating from there).

# VISION, MISSION & STRATEGY

**Our mission :**  
**Empower sustainable local civil structures to serve, represent and advocate for all community members**

We support local communities to define their own needs, set their priorities and decide on the adequate approaches to respond to those needs as they evolve, thus developing a strong sense of ownership and involving the local communities in the development process of Syria.

**Our vision:**  
**Promoting democratic citizenship at the level of local communities is key towards achieving stability and a sustainable democracy.**  
**The future of Syria is secured by reinforcing the role of the local civil society.**  
**Syrian NGOs must be empowered to achieve this vision**

LDSPTS was born in 2013, derived from the Local Coordination Committees (LCC) to support the local structures in the areas out of the control of the Syrian regime. Based on its vision it has set itself an objective of empowering the local communities in these areas and then throughout Syria.



# VISION, MISSION & STRATEGY

Our Local Community Empowerment (LCE) strategy is driven by the local action. On a local level, a virtuous cycle of change can be activated if support is timely given to the local community.

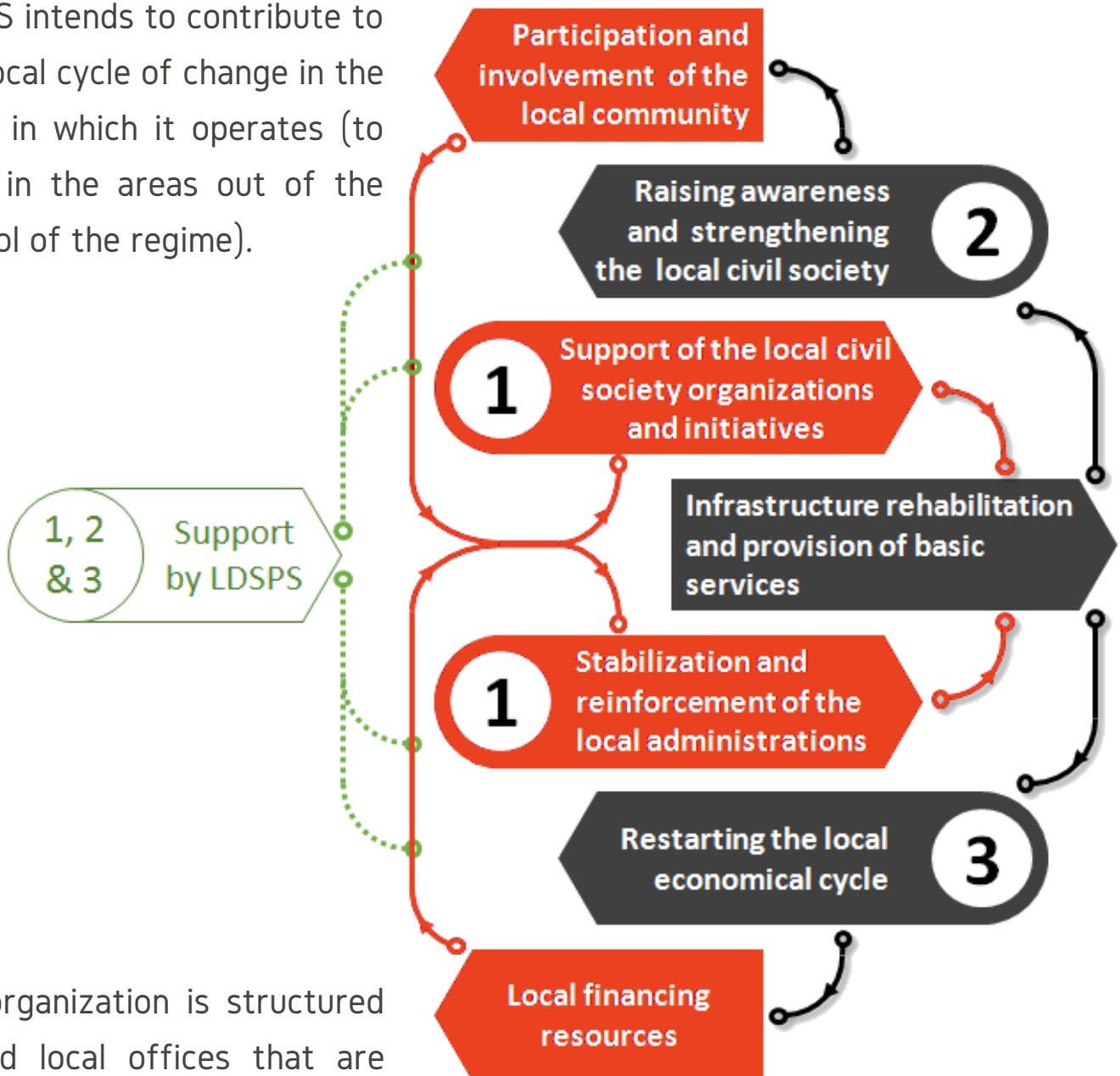
## **Our Local Community Empowerment (LCE) strategy : Contribute to a virtuous cycle of change at the local level**

This local cycle of change is described in the following figure: Supporting the local civil structures (local councils and civil society organizations) will contribute to the rehabilitation of the infrastructure and the provision of basic services, which on one hand will strengthen the local civil society and increase the awareness of the local population and then their participation in the local public life and on another hand will contribute to restarting the local economic cycle that should create local financing resources.

Both elements will contribute to strengthen the local civil structures allowing a virtuous cycle to start on the local level that carries with it the empowerment of the local community and that of the local structures in an inclusive and democratic manner.

# VISION, MISSION & STRATEGY

LDSPS intends to contribute to this local cycle of change in the areas in which it operates (to start in the areas out of the control of the regime).



Our organization is structured around local offices that are supported by a central team under the guidance of a Board of Trustees.

# OUR PRINCIPLES OF ACTION:

Local presence in all the areas supported

1

Local support in three fields: local coordination and capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and funding of local projects

2

Emphasis on the efficiency and the values of local partners, not on their size or the sector of activity of their project

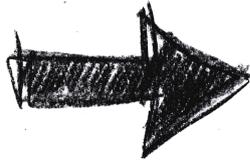
3

When possible, tight coordination with the elected/consensual local councils

4

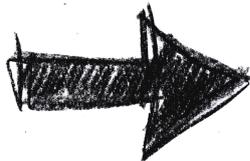
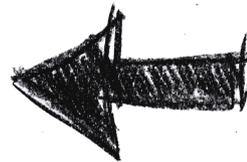
# SUCCESSSES WITH LOCAL COUNCILS\*

The administrative structure of many partner councils has significantly improved and the rate of effective participation within the councils' cadres in planning and feedback has increased.



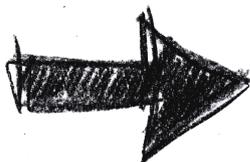
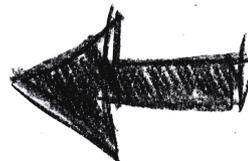
The improvement of the self-financial resources of the councils, even if at varying rates

Access of women and displaced persons to the LCs in different administrative positions



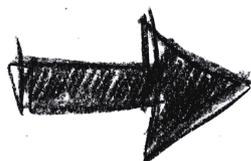
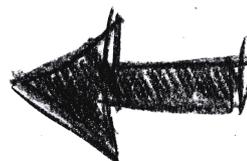
the start of the actual activation of policies and procedures within councils, especially human resources and employees' rights

Improvement of effective communication between councils and their communities to enhance their legitimacy and responsiveness



We witnessed the beginning of building an effective cooperative relationship between the central and subsidiary councils

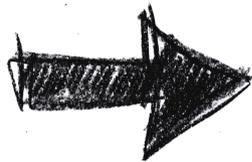
The training project raised the professional competencies of executive staff within the local councils



Reaching general elections in at least one town in all areas of action\*\* and promoting the culture and importance of election

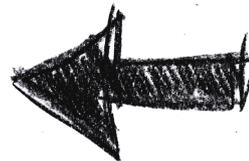
# SUCCESSSES WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

A noticeable improvement in the administrative performance of the partners, specifically at the level of writing reports, the development of the administrative structure, and the presence of technical skills that allow good project implementation

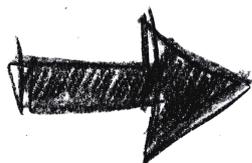


Some organizations started to gain a deeper understanding of their role and the change they can bring to their local communities

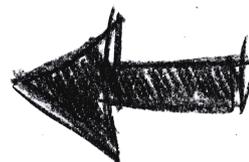
The ability of some organizations to engage and effectively communicate with the local community has improved



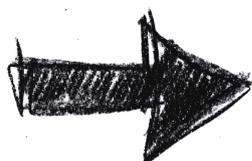
Improvement in the ability of organizations to negotiate with donors, resist preconceived ideas and ready-made plans, and reach working formulas that are more appropriate to local realities and needs, and capabilities of the organizations



The emergence of professional and specialized associations and leagues in different regions



Stability and sustainability of many partners as a result of continuous support and their ability to form partnerships and find multiple funding opportunities despite the security and funding challenges they face



# 2020 Key Figures



Local Councils

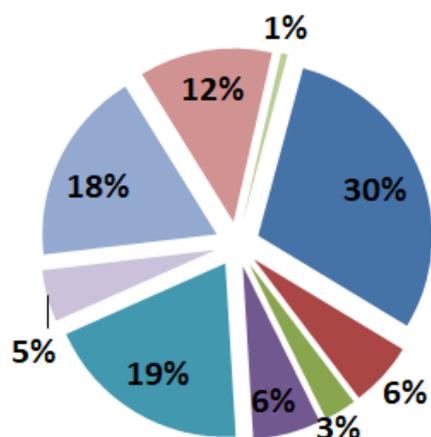


Local Civil Society  
Organizations/  
Initiatives



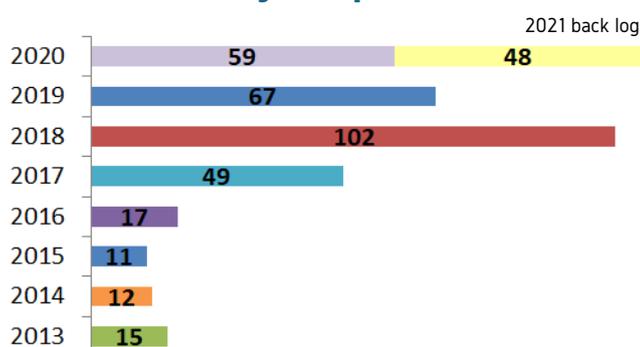
Projects  
Implemented

## Projects per Type



- Local administration
- Local administration-coordination
- Local administration-elections
- Local administration-self-financing
- Public Services
- Local capacity building
- Local CSO support
- Local awareness and participation
- Local coordination

## no. of Projects per Year



## Projects' Funding per Year



## LDSPS has had its financial accounts (as presented here) audited in the past four years (starting 2017)

	2020	2019	2018	2017
Funding obtained during the period	\$1,546,210	\$2,614,850	\$1,514,250	\$2,129,700
Incoming funds (delayed payments)			\$102,200	
Other income (mainly currency gains)	-\$36,980	-\$23,700	-\$6,000	\$22,150
<b>Total income during the period</b>	<b>\$1,509,230</b>	<b>\$2,591,150</b>	<b>\$1,610,450</b>	<b>\$2,151,850</b>
Projects implemented during the period	\$513,220	\$768,000	\$1,458,600	\$886,150
Funded in current year	\$323,280	\$520,300	\$953,600	\$757,550
Partner projects	\$307,300	\$403,700	\$785,250	\$628,850
Activities implemented by LDSPS	\$15,980	\$116,600	\$168,350	\$128,700
Funded and started in previous year	\$189,940	\$247,700	\$505,000	\$128,600
Partner projects	\$126,700	\$237,250	\$427,900	\$128,600
Activities implemented by LDSPS	\$63,240	\$10,450	\$77,100	
Operating expenses of LDSPS	\$539,680	\$577,300	\$750,100	\$483,100
Payroll costs	\$413,380	\$449,400	\$438,300	\$267,800
Offices Expenses	\$87,880	\$81,050	\$185,350	\$75,000
Consulting and professional services	\$12,160	\$28,550	\$16,900	\$21,850
M&E	\$14,720	\$0	\$66,350	\$72,200
Money transfer cost	\$11,540	\$18,300	\$43,200	\$46,250
Provisions (accruals and releases)	\$456,330	\$1,245,850	-\$598,250	\$782,600
Accrual for ongoing projects and activities	\$471,620	\$248,850	\$249,250	\$185,550
Accrual for future projects and activities (backlog)	\$409,400	\$343,000	\$0	\$465,100
Accrual for future operating expenses	\$415,470	\$200,500	\$63,700	\$238,400
Accrual for unplanned expenses (using currency gains)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$22,150
Accrual for closing the contract with the Dutch MoFA	\$616,440	\$664,250		
Released past provisions before the period	-\$1,456,600	-\$210,750	-\$911,200	-\$128,600
<b>Total expenses and provisions</b>	<b>\$1,509,230</b>	<b>\$2,591,150</b>	<b>\$1,610,450</b>	<b>\$2,151,850</b>
<b>Net result</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

# A Story from North-eastern Aleppo Countryside



## Supporting the Electoral Process of Tal'ar Local Council

A pioneering experience in terms of citizen participation in public life, and the strong coordination between local governance institutions and civil society organizations.

Tal'ar elections are considered the first general election (partially) in the northern countryside of Aleppo.

This was preceded by several coordination meetings with the provincial council, the local council of Akhtarín, the local council of Tal'ar, civil society organizations and the media to coordinate the activities to be carried out during the electoral process.

The elections were an important step for us as a council, and it changed the way the local community interacted with the council.

- A member in the LC

For the first time, I witness democratic elections to choose our representatives

- One of the women participating in the elections

Women showed a great interaction and welcomed all the teams raising awareness during the election day, in addition to the positive impressions of old men and women and their happiness for the first time they express and participate in a democratic process.

# A Story from North-eastern Aleppo Countryside



## Founding of the Basketball Association

The idea arose about establishing an umbrella body for basketball teams and the existing expertise to organize the game, set laws and unify the efforts. The members of the initiative shared the idea with clubs, teams and institutions (sports' offices in the local councils), and it was agreed to form a governing body for basketball, provided that this body works in the future to reach a basketball federation that includes all current and future clubs.

This initiative has created an opportunity for social cohesion between residents and displaced people and acceptance of the other.

It is also considered a pioneering project in breaking the stereotypical support for civil society organizations and spreading the culture of voluntary specialized unions.

Support with planning and organizing contributed to transforming the youth's vision from a mere hobby to organizing and establishing an association

# A Story from North-eastern Aleppo Countryside



## "Be Strong" Team

Establishment of the Association of People with Disabilities:

It was the first elected association that was formed of people with disabilities to advocate for their rights and to provide a safe environment and space to develop their abilities cognitively and to secure opportunities for them to enhance their participation and involvement in public life.

In addition to being a pioneering project in the northern countryside in supporting voluntary unions and spreading the culture of volunteerism, the association has signed partnership and coordination contracts with several other civil society organizations/initiatives,

in addition to working on preparing an institutional structure that includes a strategic plan and a clear vision.

It also helps the local council and organizations to reach people with disabilities.

The presence of LDSPS in civil work is very influential, and we consider LDSPS the "spiritual father" for us and for all teams, associations and unions

# A Story from Western Aleppo Countryside



## Al- Bayan Center for Deaf-mutes

The project is to equip a center for teaching children and adolescent girls sign language and provide it with equipment, educational supplies and recreational activities necessary to be a safe space for the education of children and adolescents who suffer deaf-mute.

The project aims to empower women in the local community and build their capacities by supporting activities carried out by women.

The importance of the project lies in the fact that it supports a young woman with disabilities as a leader in her local community, in addition to providing rehabilitation and education opportunities and targeting a marginalized group with support and development programs.

“With your support, the fruits of our dream have become ripe. We were providing education for the deaf in the guest room of our house. Today, every student has his/her assigned chair and table and they are happy.”

- the center's finance manager

# A Story from Western Aleppo Countryside



## Volunteers Against Corona Campaign

A joint sectoral initiative that included the health directorates, civil defense (White Helmets), organizations working in the medical sector, civil society organizations and voluntary teams, which included about 2000 volunteers distributed among teams covering the Idlib region and its countryside and the western countryside of Aleppo.

LDSPS contributed to activating the role of volunteer teams and civil society organizations to limit the spread of the Corona virus through networking, collective coordination and help supporting the activities of the campaign and its teams to achieve direct and indirect service to community members by increasing their awareness around preventive measures.

The importance of the project lies in the fact that it crosses geographical areas with a wide participation of medical, relief and civic teams and individuals with the ability to reach many local communities.

The campaign's management was able to organize elections in which the leaders of the volunteer teams chose their representatives according to geographical sectors

- Ramez Al-Abdullah:  
Campaign Manager

# OUR PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



## THANK YOU!

We hope that our collaboration and combined action have effectively helped to empower the local communities in Syria

### Our Funding Partners in 2020:

- The Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Society for International Cooperation, GIZ)

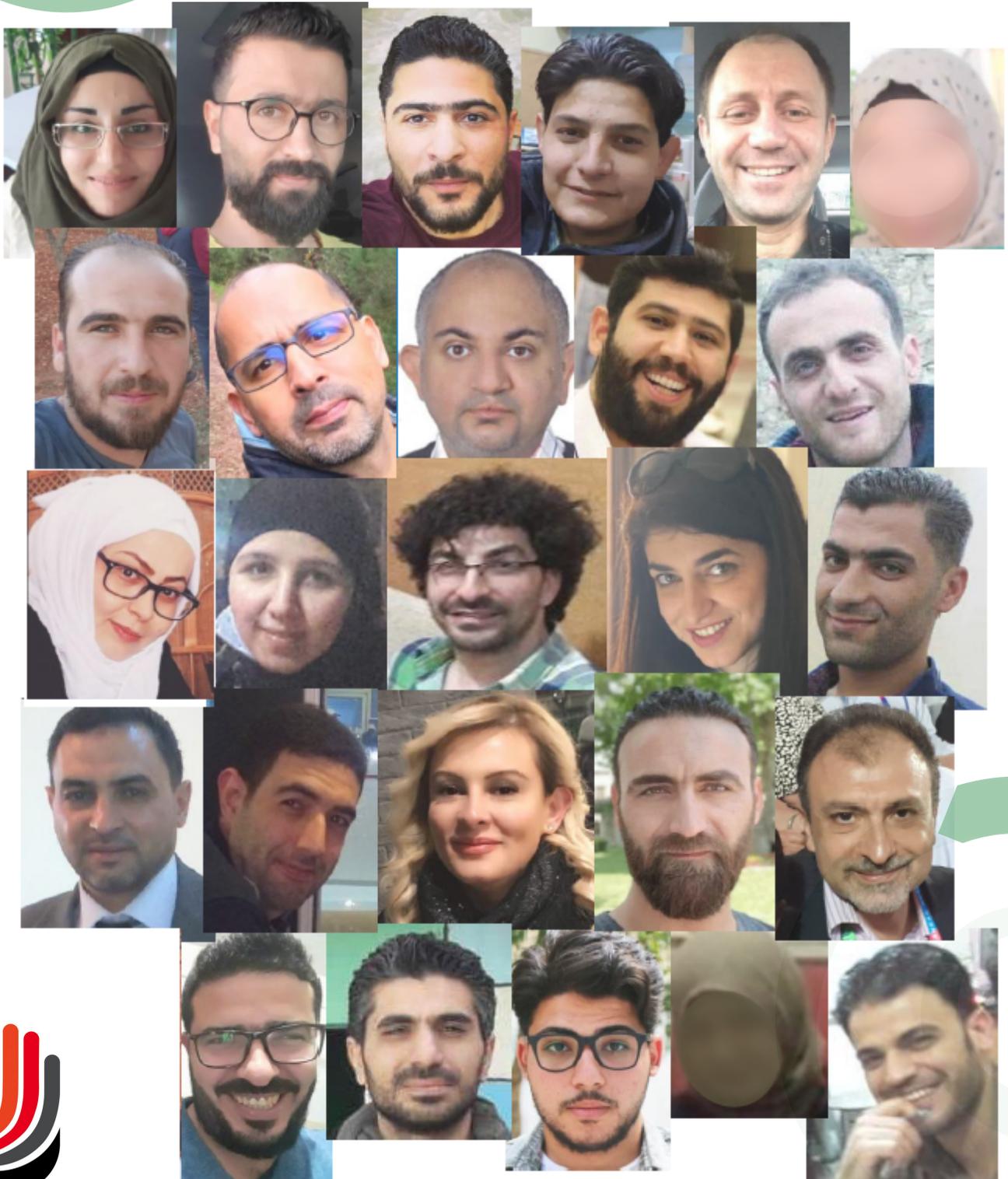
LDSPS is a founding member of the Shaml Syrian CSOs Coalition aiming at coordinating the action and the cooperation between its members sharing the same values.

LDSPS is also the coordinator of the Working Group for Building Free Syria, a group of Syrian CSOs working on a framework and principles for policies for the Rebuilding of Syria.

### Our Main Local Partners (for 2020)

- Local councils (LCs) in North-Eastern Aleppo Countryside: Akhtreen LC, Al-Bab LC, Arshaf LC, Azaz LC, Dabeq LC, Kafr Kalbeen LC, Qabaseen LC, Rael LC, Sajo/Salameh LC, Shamarekh LC, Soran LC, Talaar LC, Tlaleen LC, Turkman-Bareh LC. and Free Aleppo Governorate Council
- Local CSOs:  
In western Aleppo countryside: Target Voluntary Team, Mandella Voluntary Team, Midad, To Be Safe Initiative.  
In north-eastern Aleppo Countryside: Bassmet Watan, Bara'em Center, Hooz Center, Shamal Center, Souriana Al Amal, Funoon Yadawiya, Be Strong, Basketball Assosiation,
- Syrian NGOs based outside of Syria: RMTTeam, LACU (Local Administration Coordination Unit), LDO (Local Development Organization).

# LDSPS TEAM





# SUPPORTING SYRIANS HELPING THEMSELVES

