DUTCH RELIEF ALLIANCE

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Terms of Reference

Evaluation Syria Joint Response

7 January 2026

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MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on the Syria Joint Response, please contact Marleen Spieker via m.spieker@zoa.ngo
For more information on the Dutch Relief Alliance, please visit our website: www.dutchrelief.org

Syria Protracted Crisis Joint Response 2024 – 2026 (former Government Controlled Area)

Project Details	
Joint Response (JR) name	Syria Protracted Crisis Joint Response 2024 – 2026 (former Government Controlled Area)
Country and locations	Syrian Arab Republic. Governorates: Hama, Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Lattakia, Tartous, Sweida and Homs
Lead organisation	ZOA
JR partners	Dorcas, Oxfam, Terre des Hommes and ZOA Local partners: MSJM, SSSD, SARC, EPDC, GOPA-DERD and Multiple Faith Based Organizations (FBO): OYM, Children of Word (under the Presbyterian Church), Latin Church, Armenian Orthodox Church, Armenian Protestant Church, Greek Catholic Church, Syriac Orthodox Church, Syriac Catholic Church, Maronite Church, Greek Orthodox church, JRS and Chaldean Church
Total budget	€ 15.841.149
JR timeframe	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026

1. Background & context of the evaluation

Short description of the SJR

The multitude of compounding crises in Syria contributed to increasing needs across sectors and added complexity and constraints to the humanitarian response. The deterioration of the economic situation, ongoing conflict, funding constraints, increasing fuel and electricity shortages and process, the collapse of infrastructure and basic services, and the 2023 earthquakes have had a significant impact on the needs in Syria and on the humanitarian response. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance across Syria significantly increased between 2021 and 2023 from 13.4 to 15.3 million with 6.8 million people being internally displaced. 11.2 million people are in severe need, 4 million are in extreme need, and 0.1 million are in catastrophic need.[1]

Against this backdrop, the Syria Joint Response 2024 – 2026 (SJR) was designed and implemented by four Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) partners (Dorcas, Oxfam, Terre des

[1] UNOCHA, "Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) Syrian Arab Republic" 2023, p. 7-10

Hommes and ZOA) in collaboration local partner organizations and several diaconal arms of churches in Syria. ZOA is the lead agency and responsible for the coordination of the SJR.

The design of the intervention is in line with and based upon the 2023 strategic priorities for the Syria Humanitarian Response plan:

a) Provide lifesaving and life-sustaining humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people with an emphasis on those in areas with high severity of needs.
b) Enhance the prevention and mitigation of protection risks and respond to protection needs through supporting the protective environment in Syria;
c) Increase the resilience of affected communities by improving access to livelihood opportunities and basic services, especially among the most vulnerable households and communities.

The SJR 2024 – 2026 focuses on addressing immediate needs through relief interventions, alongside early recovery and livelihoods interventions, to set the stage for economic stability and self-sufficiency, which are critical components of long-term resilience. Regular activities are implemented in three governorates: Hama, Aleppo and Rural Damascus; and five sectors: education, health, FSL, WASH and protection. During implementation, several crises happened which required SJR partners to respond and expand to additional governorates (Lattakia, Tartous, Sweida, Homs and Damascus) and additional sectors (MPCA and shelter).

The table below provides an overview of partners, locations and sectors for the regular and crisis modifier response.

INGO	Local partner	Locations	Sectors
Dorcas (regular)	MSJM and several diaconal arms of churches Presbyterian church, Nour al-Ihsan, Abnaa Al kalimah, Bethel, St. Georges, JRS	Aleppo, Hama	FSL, Protection, Health
Dorcas (crisis modifier)	MSJM	Tartous, Sweida, Homs	Health, FSL, Protection
Oxfam	SSSD	Aleppo, Rural Damascus	FSL, WASH, Protection
Oxfam (crisis modifier)	SSSD	Lattakia, Sweida, Rural Damascus	FSL, WASH
Terre des Hommes	SARC	Aleppo, Hama, Rural Damascus	Protection, Health, Education

Terre des Hommes (crisis modifier)	SARC	Rural Damascus, Lattakia, Homs	Protection, WASH, FSL
ZOA	EPDC, SSSD and GOPA-DERD	Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Hama	FSL, WASH, Protection
ZOA (crisis modifier)	EPDC and GOPA-DERD	Lattakia, Rural Damascus and Damascus	FSL, Protection, shelter, MPCA

Throughout implementation and in line with the DRA strategy for 2022-2026, the SJR emphasizes localization, gender responsive programming and inclusion, nexus programming, adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and collaborative impact by 1) Sharing technical capacity and expertise; 2) Integrated programming and geographical complementarity / coverage; 3) Joint learning & evaluation; 4) innovation.

Short description of the DRA

The SJR 2024 -2026 is implemented by a consortium of Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) partners. The DRA is a coalition of 14 Dutch aid organisations in partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The structure of the DRA enables participating NGOs to respond to major international crises in a timely and effective manner, delivering greater impact than members operating independently. The rising number of humanitarian disasters around the world has placed an increased burden on international aid organizations, the DRA was established to meet these challenges. Improved cooperation and coordination between NGOs enable them to better respond to major international crises in a timely and effective manner. The SJR is part of the DRA Protracted Crisis (PCM) Mechanism.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

An evaluation is defined by the DRA as*: 'The systematic and objective assessment of a planned, ongoing or completed intervention, its design, implementation and results.*[1]' Evaluation refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an intervention and should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into decision-making processes. The aim is to review the SJR using a pre-determined set of criteria.

Specifics of the Evaluation

The SJR runs from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2026, the Evaluation will take place in March / April 2026. As the lead agency of the SJR, ZOA is looking for an external consultant who can lead this process.

Evaluation purpose
The purpose of the evaluation of the SJR is to provide a holistic understanding of the project performance and achievements, to provide learnings and recommendations for future programming and to enhance accountability. The specific objectives of the evaluation include:

- To assess the performance of the project, paying particular attention to the outcomes and outputs of the project interventions against its key result indicators.
- To assess the relevance, effectiveness and the coherence of project strategies and activities.
- To assess how the project has implemented the main prioritized cross-cutting themes, such as gender sensitivity and inclusiveness, and localization / equitable partnerships.
- To assess complementarity of project interventions and the collaboration between DRA and local/national partners
- To document lessons learned (what worked well, what did not work well, what can be improved - practices that worked well within the consortium/ added value of the structure and working as a consortium) and provide evidence-based and action oriented recommendations (2 – 3 per evaluation criteria) for future collaboration in Joint Responses.

3. Scope

The scope of the evaluation is the implementation period of the SJR between January 2024 and December 2025. The evaluation should cover and provide updates on achievements in all targeted sectors (WASH, FSL, Health, Protection, and Education) across the intervention locations in targeted governorates (Aleppo, Hama and Rural Damascus governorates) and potentially in locations as part of the crises response. Additionally, crosscutting topics should be assessed. The target groups to be included in the evaluation are staff of the lead agency, SJR partners (INGO's) in country and the Netherlands counterparts, representatives from local partners, project beneficiaries, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders. The target audience for sharing the evaluation findings include the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Relief Alliance partners, SJR partners (incl. local partners) the humanitarian community in Syria, local authorities and affected populations.

The evaluation should be structured around the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS). The following specific criteria should be assessed as part of the evaluation:

- CHS commitment 1 "People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them"

- OECD-DAC criteria Effectiveness, including CHS commitment 2 "People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities"
- OECD-DAC criteria Coherence, including CHS commitment 6 "People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability access coordinated and complementary support"
- OECD-DAC criteria Relevance
- Additional crosscutting criteria include gender sensitivity and inclusiveness, and localization / equitable partnerships.

4. Research questions

The evaluation should be structured around the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and the additional criteria as mentioned in the table below. The evaluation questions are indicative. The consultant is expected to review and improve the evaluation questions in the initial stage of the evaluation exercise.

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions
CHS commitment 1	• Did the SJR ensure that affected communities were able to exercise their rights and participate in decision-making processes? If so, to what extent and how? If not, why not?
Effectiveness / CHS commitment 2	• Has the SJR achieved the intended outcomes in a timely manner, in the short, medium and long term? If so, to what extent and how? If not, why not? • What were the successful approaches applied by the program, and what evidence is there to support their effectiveness?
Coherence / CHS commitment 6	• Was the intervention consistent and synergistic, internally within the Joint Response and with other interventions carried out by Partners, as well as with relevant international norms and standards? If so, to what extent and how? If not, why not?
Relevance	• Was the overall project design relevant in the local context and for the intended beneficiaries (communities and local government)? If so, how? If not why not? Were changes made during project implementation to increase the relevance of the activities? If so, how? If not, why not?
Other criteria	
Gender sensitivity and inclusiveness	• To what extent was a gender-sensitive programming approach applied in the project? • To what degree did the program address the needs of marginalised groups and ensured equal access?
Localization and equitable partnerships	Collaboration with local partners was mandatory. Furthermore, SJR partners collaborated with local authorities and community representatives. • How have local partners, local authorities and community representatives been involved in the project design, throughout implementation and in decision-making? • To what extent have partnerships with local partners been effective and how has this added value to the response?

	• What learnings can be provided on improving collaboration and equitable partnerships? • To what extent did the project contribute to strengthening the capacity of local partners (including financial management, advocacy, and program design) • To what degree did local partners lead or co-lead key processes (e.g., needs assessments, strategy design, budget allocations, coordination forums)?

5. Evaluation design & Methodology

Methods and data collection

The consultant is expected to design the evaluation and determine the methodological approach. The methodology should be further detailed in the inception report and will be approved by the SJR lead, including the research tools. The following guidance is provided for the development of the methodology:

- The consultant is expected to use and review existing project documents during the evaluation. These documents include the PCM SJR 2024-2026 project proposal and logframe, annual reports, RTR reports, monitoring and progress reports, financial reports, policies and strategies, and any other relevant project document. ZOA will provide the external consultant with all available project documentation at the beginning of the consultancy.
- A mixed research methodology is required, which includes the collection of qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and document review.
- The applied methods will be participatory. Participation of stakeholders in the evaluation should be maintained at all times, reflecting opinions, expectations, and visions about the contribution of the project towards the achievement of its objectives.
- Triangulation of data is important. Therefore, the consultant is expected to use multiple data sources to allow for the verification of results.
- The sample size must be statistically representative of the target population. The evaluation team should ensure that people from different groups targeted by the project, including people with disabilities, different genders and age categories, are included in the sample size. The consultant's proposed methodology and sampling should take into consideration comparability with baseline and generate evidence to show most significant impacts. The analysis among others should be disaggregated by governorate, gender, age and disability.
- Field work is mandatory. The consultant / consultancy team will undertake field visits to the project implementation areas to collect primary data amongst a variety of stakeholders, including local authorities and beneficiaries. Data collection in all targeted locations will not be feasible. The consultant will agree with the lead agency in which locations data will be collected.
- The consultant must consider participants' safety throughout the evaluation (including recruitment and training of research staff, data collection / analysis

and report writing) as well as research ethics (confidentiality of those participating in the evaluation, data protection, age and ability-appropriate assent processes) and quality assurance (tools piloting, enumerators training, data cleaning). The consultant should ensure prior informed consent for participation in the study and for any picture being taken.
- The consultant is expected to be aware of and understand political and cultural sensitivities, consult the SJR lead agency regularly and adapt the evaluation approach if needed. The consultant should consider mitigation measures if project locations are deemed inaccessible.

Limitations and bias
The following limitations and biases are expected:

- Depending on the location, the security situation in Syria remains fragile and is subject to change. This might affect the accessibility of project locations and could hamper data collection.
- The consultants is responsible for obtaining the required approvals from relevant authorities for data collection. Approvals might cause delays, which should be anticipated.
- The consultant is expected to be aware of and understand political sensitivities, and make sure that this is considered in the interpretation of the data.

6. Roles and responsibilities

ZOA, as the SJR lead agency, is responsible for the overall evaluation process. The SJR lead in the Netherlands and SJR coordinator in Syria will be the main focal persons for this assignment and have the following responsibilities:

- Lead on procurement process of consultancy services.
- Coordination of the whole Evaluation, including with SJR partner organizations to schedule and organize data gathering visits.
- Facilitate the communication between the consultant, SJR members and local partners
- To provide the consultant timely with relevant documentation during the inception phase and respond to additional requests for information.
- To keep track of deliverables and coordinate feedback from partner organizations on the inception and draft report.
- Review the inception report, including data collection tools, draft and final report and provide approval on the final deliverables.

The SJR members (INGO's) in coordination with local partner have the following responsibilities:

- To provide project documentation relevant to the evaluation, including beneficiary lists (if feasible and if confidentiality can be maintained)
- Establish availability and identify tentative dates for the KII and field visits.
- To facilitate connections with project teams and local partners in the field for data collection and provide practical support in case needed.
- To appoint a focal person for the evaluation and support the consultant in the selection of participants and introduce the consultant to relevant stakeholders.
- Obtain necessary approvals from local partners and facilitate their work during the process
- Ensure availability to review the draft documents, including the data collection tools to ensure appropriateness, and attend learning session/workshop organized by the Lead organization.

The evaluation consultant / consultancy team is responsible for:

- Organize an inception meeting with the SJR coordination team
- Design the evaluation methodology, including evaluation matrix, data collection tools for the program and relevant program indicators (including translation into Arabic) and sampling technique and size.
- Conduct desk reviews of secondary information and program documents
- Develop the inception report and submit to ZOA for feedback, including the data collection tools.
- Address feedback on the inception report and data collection tools.
- Recruit and train enumerators (ensure male and female enumerators) who will pre-test the data collection tools. If necessary, make final adjustments to data collection tools. For in-country data collection with beneficiaries, local authorities and local field staff enumerators should be speaking Arabic.
- Collect data from a representative sample of individuals from the target groups and key program relevant stakeholders using methodologies as outlined in the approved inception report. The consultancy team is responsible for the transportation and security of enumerators in Syria.
- Responsible for the translation of data collection tools from English to Arabic, and for the collected data from Arabic to English. Ensure to keep the original Arabic documentation of the data collected.
- Process and analyze the data (data entry, cleaning, verification and analysis);
- Report writing and submission of first draft of the report;
- Finalize the report incorporating feedback and submission of final report.
- Organize a session for relevant stakeholders to present findings of the evaluation and share learnings for discussion;
- Arrange necessary visa's and in country travel approvals if required.

7. Deliverables

The table below provides an overview of the expected deliverables.

Deliverables	Description	Timeframe
INCEPTION REPORT	The inception report must include findings from the desk review, an evaluation matrix (table describing per key question the method, data source, tools), detailed workplan, procedures for data collection, analysis, sampling and the data collection tools. The inception report and data collection tools both need to be approved by the lead before the start of data collection.	16 February 2026
DRAFT REPORT	The draft report should structurally mimic the final report (see below for structure) and include data analysis, initial findings, conclusions and actionable recommendations (2-3 per evaluation criteria).	Before the end of March
FINAL REPORT	In the final report the feedback on the draft report needs to be addressed. The final report will be a maximum of 25 pages (excl. annexes) and consist of the following sections at a minimum: 1. Table of contents 2. Executive summary 3. Intervention description 4. Scope of the evaluation 5. Purpose and objectives of the evaluation 6. Methodology 7. Findings 8. Lessons learnt 9. Conclusion 10. Actionable recommendations (2-3 per evaluation criteria) 11. Annexes - photos, human stories, final research tools, bibliography of secondary data used, a list of persons interviewed. Alongside the evaluation report the consultant will provide the raw data.	15 April 2026
Learning / sense-making workshop	The consultant is required to deliver a learning / sense-making workshop with selected stakeholders to present findings, recommendations and key learnings.	First week of April 2026

8. Budget

Interested consultants are required to provide a budget including travel costs, number of working days per specific activity, daily rate and any other costs. The budget range for this evaluation is between 15.000 and 25.000 EUR.

9. Timeframe

Task	Date / deadline
Publication of the Terms of Reference	7 January 2026
Deadline submission expression of interest	31 January 2026
Interview with shortlisted consultants	Between 9 and 12 February 2026
Signing of contract with selected consultant and kick-off meeting	By 19 February 2026
Submission inception report	5 March 2026
Data collection	March 2026
Submission draft report	Before the 15th of April 2026
Presentation of results	Last week of April 2026
Submission final report and final deliverables	15 May 2026

10. Selection Process

Required expertise

The SJR is looking for a lead consultant or team that has a convincing track-record. The specific requirements for this assignment are hands on experience in evaluating a joint response program implemented by international and national partners (or another consortium-based humanitarian program with a variety of implementing agencies), and experience in evaluating multi-sectoral humanitarian response programs in complex environments. Additional required qualifications are detailed below.

- At least a master's degree in economics, developmental studies, business administration and social science or related field for the lead consultant / a minimum of bachelor's degree on the relevant academic areas with 7 years of progressive experience in research.
- Extensive experience in research work and in assessments/evaluations. Knowledge of mixed research methodologies and application of various tools including practical experience in assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian interventions. Proven experience of using participatory methods is required.
- Strong experience in humanitarian response, Child Safeguarding and knowledge of humanitarian standards (CHS, Sphere, Code of Conduct), and expertise on SJR sectors (FSL, protection, health, MPCA, WASH)
- Understanding of and experience in evaluating cross-cutting themes, including gender equality, inclusion and localization.
- Good understanding of the Syrian context and previous work experience in Syria are required.
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills with skills in using statistical packages such as SPSS, STATA etc.
- Fluent in English. Understanding of Arabic of the lead consultant will be an added advantage. Staff responsible for data collection need to be fluent in Arabic.
- An experienced protection/safeguarding person should be included as part of the team.

- Cultural awareness and ability to operate in politically complex and sensitive environments are required.

Description of the application and selection process
To be considered for this position applicants should submit an expression of interest to m.spieker@zoa.ngo (in cc e.obied@zoa.ngo) by 31 January 2026 that includes the following:

- Brief CV along with a succinct rationale of how the consultant meets the requirements (max 2 pages).
- Work plan, including conceptual framework, time frame and methodology for how the work will be undertaken and a proposed schedule (maximum 10 pages, see requirements below).
- Indicative budget including daily rates in Euros for the lead consultant and possible other team members.
- Contact details of two references that can confirm experience with similar type of work.
- Confirmation of availability to undertake this assignment and to deliver the report on time.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview.

Work plan
The Consultant will prepare a draft work plan of the evaluation, to be submitted as part of the application. The work plan will describe how the evaluation will be carried out, elaborating on the Terms of Reference. The following elements are part of the work plan:

- Introduction
- Methodology
  - Methodological approach for the evaluation
  - Data collection tools
- Question matrix, summarizing the scope of the evaluation by identifying:
  - Questions suggested by this ToR
  - Description of the basis on which judgements are made
- Plan how observations, conclusions and recommendation will be fed back to:
  - Stakeholders involved in JR (in situ and in the Netherlands)
  - Affected people and their representatives
- Schedule of activities and travel
- Budget
  - Total budget with a breakdown of expected cost in days or hours spent and the related fees for the tasks (making the distinction for each evaluator)

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview. For questions related to this position please contact: Marleen Spieker (m.spieker@zoa.ngo) and Ebrahim Obied (e.obied@zoa.ngo in cc)

11. Disclosure of information/ethics

The consultant is expected to sign the Code of Conduct as part of the agreement and follow ZOA's policies to ensure adherence to ethical standards.