



Case Study: NGO Effectiveness in the Context of the Syrian Crisis

The Context

As the Syrian conflict enters its fifth year, more than 12 million people are in need of aid to stay alive. Almost 8 million have been forced from their homes, sharing crowded rooms with other families or camping in abandoned buildings. An estimated 4.8 million Syrians inside the country are in places that are hard to reach, including 212,000 trapped in besieged areas.

For safety reasons, many of the NGOs responding to the crisis are located in border towns in Turkey, Jordan and Egypt with Syrian nationals on staff crossing the border regularly to deliver aid and manage rebuilding programs.

The Turkish city of Antakya is one of the border towns, hosting over 100 NGOs and scores of relief workers who make their way across the border just 12 miles away to support communities in the war zone. In early 2013, the NGOs in the city created the **Syria NGO Forum** as a means to support NGO coordination in the region, comprised of over 90 NGOs.

The Challenge

Over the past two years, the strength of the Syria NGO Forum has been its clear leadership and its emphasis on sharing and coordination. Increasingly, however, the Forum Members and the Secretariat have identified the need to expand the forum's role as a capacity building resource among the organizations and individuals serving communities in Syria—many of which were thrust into a relief role as a result of the civil war.

Yet, the operating environment in Syria makes it especially challenging to conduct capacity building activities. Challenges related to insecurity, border closures, interrupted travel schedules and frequent turnover of staff prevent organizations means that traditional capacity building approaches would not be effective. Furthermore, many representatives are continuously traveling between Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon.

The Solution

In response, the Syria NGO Forum and LINGOs have introduced an integrated learning program to develop an information and learning clearing house for the Forum's 90 member NGOs and to professionalize the project management skills of Syrian-based NGOs in the region. An emphasis was placed on localizing the program through significant use of appropriate technology and investing local organizations with expertise and leadership of the program.

The Syrian NGO Learning Program includes the following elements:

A Syria NGO Forum Learning Platform, led by the Forum and based on LINGOs' design, approach and resources –

- **Access to eLearning Resources:** The Platform hosts over 25 eLearning courses ,in English and Arabic, on topics critical to NGO effectiveness that include People/Team Management, Financial Management, and Project Management. The Platform supports learning in both connected and intermittently connected environments, allowing off-line users the option of accessing courses when and where they need them.
- **Social Networks and Communities –** An integrated online community includes user groups, discussion boards, events calendars, wikis, blogs and document sharing. These communities allow Forum members to share information, collaborate on shared challenges, coordinate more effectively, and retain institutional memory of their work together.
- **Virtual Online Classrooms –**Online classrooms and virtual meeting applications enable training facilitators and relief workers to participate in meetings and courses regardless of challenges related to insecurity, border closures or travel schedules.

Project Management Professionalization Activities – LINGOs, its Jordan-based partner, Genome Consulting, and a Syrian NGO, SYAN, are implementing a series of project management activities to provide needed skill development and ensure that local NGOs can share and communicate with their International NGO colleagues about critical project components. Activities include:

- **Face-to-Face Project Management Training:** Face-to-face training prepares Syrian NGO professionals to receive the PMD Pro certification in project management. The PMD Pro certification is contextualized to the relief and development context and workshops are conducted in Arabic and English.
- **Virtual On-Line Project Management Training:** A series of virtual on-line workshops prepare Syrian relief workers to receive the PMD Pro certification who cannot access face-to-face training. The courses are conducted using the Syria NGO Forum Learning platform and the LINGOs-provided online classrooms – thereby making it possible for learners to participate even if they are unable to travel to Antakya.
- **Training of Trainers:** A series of training of trainer activities, aimed at establishing a cadre of PMD Pro facilitators inside Syria to extend the reach of the certification and provide local expertise and ownership.

About LINGOs

We believe that people working to create change in the most vulnerable contexts have a right to the best training and skills building programs available. With a membership of 90 international NGOs and 20 private sector organizations, we seek scalable models that curate, develop, and distribute learning tools, technology and content to over tens of thousands NGO staff and social change makers in low/middle income countries each year. The PMD Pro certification, developed by LINGOs with the sector, has reached over 13,000 project managers working in the international development sector with the skills and tools needed to successfully manage their projects for positive impact.