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SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME "SYRIA AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES" 2026–2029

Imprint

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Background

The Cooperation Programme Syria and Neighbouring Countries 2026–2029 builds on Switzerland's long-standing engagement in the region and its reputation as a neutral and trusted partner. It covers five countries: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Türkiye, and aligns with Switzerland's Foreign Policy Strategy. Switzerland has an interest in a stable, peaceful and economically resilient region and is committed to supporting the aspirations of the people in the target countries to live in freedom, security and dignity.

The 2011 conflict in Syria triggered one of the world's most protracted humanitarian and displacement crises impacting the region at large. Switzerland responded rapidly with a regional approach that grew into one of its largest humanitarian operations. Switzerland has been supporting vulnerable populations across the region, providing assistance based on humanitarian needs and independently of conflict lines.

More than a decade after the outbreak of the conflict, the region stands at a critical turning point. While the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the conflict remain acute, the political change in Syria in late 2024 has opened up new perspectives. The transition process marks a significant shift and presents an opportunity for an inclusive system of governance based on the rule of law and economic recovery. At the same time, major risks persist amidst a volatile security environment, weakened institutions, deep social fractures and competing geopolitical interests. Progress will depend on a credible, inclusive political transition and functioning state institutions for the benefit of all Syrians.

Across the region, humanitarian needs remain severe. More than 16 million people continue to require assistance in Syria and in neighbouring countries. Limited access to basic services, protection concerns, and scarce livelihood opportunities hinder lasting recovery and refugee returns. Rapid climate change, increasing water scarcity and environmental degradation further compound vulnerabilities. Addressing these interconnected challenges is essential for strengthening regional stability and resilience.

In response to the evolving context, Switzerland is adjusting its engagement by supporting political transition processes, socio-economic recovery and development while maintaining life-saving assistance for the most vulnerable populations. The transformation of the humanitarian office into a cooperation office in Damascus at the beginning of 2026 reflects Switzerland's continued commitment to Syria and the region.

كسر الجليد
عمل فردي:
اختر معًا بأي طريقة تعرّف من خلالها عن نفسك:
أ-ترسم صورة تحوي المعلومات(اسم، هواية)
ب-تأليف أو إنشاد أغنية مرتبطة بالاسم والهواية
ج-ذكر الاسم ومعناه ومن أطلقه عليك والتحدث عن الهواية
د-تمثيل الاسم من خلال الحركات أو الإيماءات

Results and lessons learned 2019–2025

Over the period 2019–2025, Switzerland pursued a coordinated approach in the region that combined peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation across four strategic priorities:

Conflict prevention and peace promotion Switzerland played a pivotal role as a convener and facilitator of dialogue in Syria, Lebanon and the wider region. Working with the authorities, civil society and strategic partners, it contributed to the promotion of inclusive dialogue, and supported processes aimed at preventing, mitigating and resolving conflict. Switzerland helped improve institutional conditions for peace, supporting efforts to clarify the fate of the missing in Syria and Lebanon as well as to promote accountability and respect for the rule of law.

Protection & migration Results were achieved by combining activities with policy dialogue and advocacy efforts. This was particularly evident in advancing the Children and Armed Conflict agenda through the UN Security Council, and in efforts to prevent and respond, through UN partners, to grave violations within Syria. Regionally, legal aid and counselling ensured better access to civil documentation as well as access to services and dignified returns. A social entrepreneurship programme strengthened support structures for migrants, refugees and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon. Across portfolios, Switzerland promoted political inclusiveness and the strengthening of conflict-sensitive programme management.

Water & Sanitation services Switzerland has been working on water governance and services through various engagement modalities, combining practical work with policy dialogue at different levels. Switzerland helped Jordan produce the country's first flood maps and drove forward the creation of a national system for flood management. In Lebanon, Switzerland strengthened water-sector reforms through the Bekaa Water Management project and the operationalisation of a system for data-driven management. Regionally, the Blue Peace Middle East initiative evolved into a locally led cooperation platform and positively influenced water diplomacy, including through a Turkish-Iraqi agreement on shared water resources.

Education & Income Switzerland has been playing a key role in enabling conflict-affected children to move from non-formal education into formal school systems. Tens of thousands of displaced children across the region gained access to education and were able to reintegrate into national systems, with many passing national exams. Switzerland has also been applying its expertise in vocational training to reinforce education-to-employment pathways. In Jordan, vocational and business-skills programmes provided young people with market-relevant skills and showed strong potential for scaling up.

Switzerland's commitment – focus areas for 2026–2029

Switzerland's priorities address shared challenges and opportunities while allowing flexibility to respond to country-specific contexts. In line with Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy, the programme is structured around four mutually reinforcing priority areas.

Human development

Humanitarian needs in the region remain high after years of conflict and displacement. Switzerland continues to support access to basic services for the most vulnerable, including protection, civil documentation and education in emergencies, in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Building on its expertise in education in emergencies, Switzerland promotes inclusive and equitable access to schooling for displaced and marginalised children. Emphasis is placed on mainstreaming gender equality, women's participation, leadership skills and access to services.

Economic development

The evolving regional context and the political transition in Syria are opening up new opportunities for recovery and job creation. Switzerland mobilises its expertise in vocational and skills training, entrepreneurship and small business development to strengthen livelihoods and promote self-reliance. In Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, Swiss engagement supports job creation, small business development and market-relevant skills, and the mobilisation of private actors where relevant. At the regional level, Switzerland contributes to long-term solutions for displaced persons, including income generating opportunities for returnees and those unable to return.

Climate and environment

Climate change, water scarcity and environmental degradation are accelerating across the region. Switzerland builds on its long-standing expertise in water governance and public service provision, such as water supply and sanitation, to promote the sustainable management of water resources and strengthen national and local service providers. Ensuring access to safe drinking water and effective sanitation systems remains a priority. Swiss support also addresses climate-related risks, including droughts and floods, and advances regional cooperation on transboundary water management, notably through multi-country initiatives.

Peace and good governance

Geopolitical tensions, fragile institutions and social fragmentation continue to undermine stability. Switzerland encourages inclusive dialogue, trust-building and power-sharing at national and local levels and efforts promoting reconciliation and dealing with the past. The political transition in Syria offers a new opportunity to engage with the transitional authorities and civil society on governance, peacebuilding and development-oriented approaches. This represents a significant shift with new forms of engagement, including in transitional justice, local governance, conflict prevention and protection of civilians. Switzerland supports the meaningful participation of civil society actors in political and social processes and promotes access to justice, with a focus on child protection and preventing gender-based violence.

Human development
1 NO POVERTY
2 ZERO HUNGER
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
Peace and good governance
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Focus Areas
Economic development
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
Climate and environment
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
13 CLIMATE ACTION

نوع
اجتماعي

Approach and Partners

Switzerland's engagement combines regional initiatives with national and local level programming. It follows a pragmatic approach, ensuring efficiency and impact through strategic partnerships. The work is done with national and local authorities, civil society, the private sector and other partners, prioritising locally led solutions, where possible, and national ownership.

Regional: At the regional level, Switzerland works on multi-country initiatives such as transboundary water management as well as on protection and viable long-term solutions for displaced persons, including job opportunities for returning refugees and those unable to return.

Syria: Alongside the humanitarian response, the political transition creates new opportunities for engagement in governance, peace and development-oriented approaches. This represents a significant shift, allowing collaboration with transitional authorities and civil society. Economic recovery is pursued through skills development and partnerships with the private sector.

Jordan: Switzerland continues to respond to the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable refugees and host communities. In support of Jordan's economic reform and to help foster the country's stability, Switzerland promotes skills development, entrepreneurship, and private-sector growth.

Lebanon: Swiss efforts continue to support access to basic services, protection and education for the most marginalised groups. Seizing the opening created by institutional reforms, Switzerland works to strengthen institutions and accountability between citizens and the state.

Iraq: With a targeted approach, Switzerland's engagement focuses on severe protection cases, including for Iraqi returnees from Syria, as well as the reintegration of returnees from Europe, human trafficking and migration governance.

Türkiye: The focus of Switzerland's engagement in Türkiye is migration governance. The country's close ties to Syria offer opportunities in cross-border community mobilisation and remittances.

Cooperation Programme Syria and Neighbouring Countries 2026–2029

Indicative Whole-of-Government Budget for the 2026–2029 period
CHF 243 million*

Target Countries
Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq & Türkiye

Priority Areas
Human Development; Economic Development; Climate and Environment; Peace and Good Governance

* *The information on the financial envelope is indicative. This information serves merely as a basis for the forward spending plans that are reviewed each year by the Federal Council and the Swiss Parliament.*

BULGARIA
GREECE
Istanbul
Ankara
TÜRKIYE
İzmir
GEORGIA
ARMENIA
Van
Aleppo
Mosul
SYRIA
CYPRUS
Homs
IRAN
Zahle
Beirut
Damascus
LEBANON
Baghdad
IRAQ
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY
Irbid
Amman
ISRAEL
Nasiriyah
Basrah
EGYPT
JORDAN
Aqaba
SAUDI ARABIA
KUWAIT
200km
Legend
Swiss Representations
Major cities
Disputed international boundary
International boundary
Subnational boundary
CoPr focus countries
Sources: ESRI; OSM; OCHA; FDFA, Natural Earth
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Map compiled by: FDFA, SDC, HA Operations, HA-GIS.

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