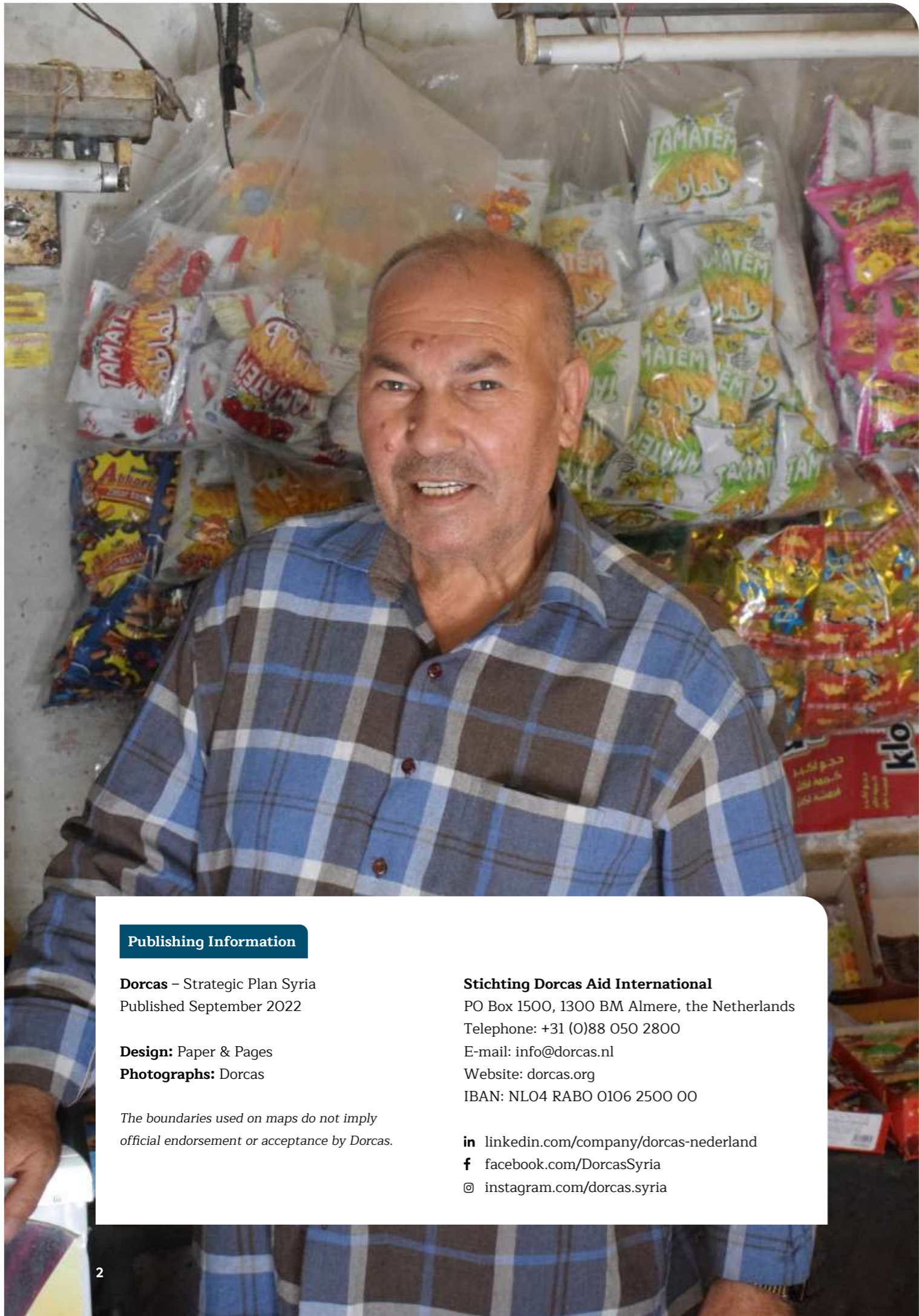


Dorcas Syria

Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Healing hidden wounds



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Our Identity

We fight poverty, exclusion and crisis. We empower marginalised people and communities to flourish.

What we believe

We believe in the value and God-given potential of every single person. We are called to demonstrate love for those in need.

What we see

We see a world where poverty, exclusion and crisis marginalise people. We also see the potential of these people and their communities to flourish despite their difficult circumstances.

What we do

We empower people who are marginalised to develop their talents. And we enable disadvantaged communities to flourish. We equip individuals and communities to promote and ensure participation of all.

We create hope and long-term perspectives in volatile and complex situations. We meet people's basic needs in times of crisis and increase their ability to overcome poverty

and exclusion. We persist despite frequent setbacks and invest in durable relationships to realise sustainable change.

We are part of a global movement of individuals and organisations working for a just and fair world. We recognise and appreciate everybody who supports our work. And we actively partner with others to create synergy and amplify our impact.

Theory of Change in short

Dorcas works towards change on three levels. We create opportunities for people to develop themselves further, and if necessary, we provide for their basic needs. We invest in resilient, self-organising communities that work together to solve their problems. Lastly, we contribute to a just society in which everyone has the opportunity to participate.



In Syria, Dorcas aims to assist people so that they can regain dignity in their lives.

Dorcas Syria

History

Dorcas started to work in Syria in 2013 with emergency relief programmes in the food security & livelihoods and health sectors. We obtained our official registration in Syria in 2017 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and have an operational memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Health. Dorcas is now a well-established international NGO in Syria. We work towards sustainable solutions that protect vulnerable people by addressing related social and economic issues. Dorcas Syria currently operates in five governorates in Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, rural Damascus and Homs as well as in the south of Syria in Qunaitra and Daraa. The head office is in Damascus.

Context

Humanitarian needs across Syria have risen, with an estimated 14.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in mid-2022. Twelve million people are food insecure, unsure where their next meal is coming from. Infrastructure is crumbling, destroyed by years of conflict. Economic activity halved during a decade of conflict, regional financial crises, sanctions, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Ninety percent of people live below the poverty line and 30 percent live in abject poverty, which means they are barely surviving. In addition, 2.4 million are children out of school, 65 percent of Syrians report they cannot meet their household's basic needs and 7 percent of households report children showing signs of psychological distress. Within Syria's shattered economy, 70 percent of people lack regular access to clean water and 95 percent



lack satisfactory healthcare. The conflict has reduced life expectancy by six years, largely due to the war-torn environment, including water shortages, malnutrition and poor sanitation. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated an ongoing economic collapse in both Syria and neighbouring countries. The value of the Syrian pound continues to plummet, and the prices of basic goods have subsequently soared. Fuel shortages have increased transportation and agricultural input costs, raising the prices of basic commodities even higher.

The humanitarian needs of Syrians will remain extensive in the new strategic period, with significant protection risks due to continuous hostilities in localised areas, new and protracted displacements, ongoing spontaneous returns of internally displaced people and refugees, and the erosion of communities' resilience. Dorcas Syria will respond with multi-sector programming that focuses on access to food and nutrition, livelihood support and mental health support, especially for women, children and older persons. We will build capacity (mainly on protection-related topics) and link beneficiaries to public structures like schools and health centres.

Strategic Ambitions

For over forty years, Dorcas has reached out to people in need. We have learned how to contribute to the desired impact so that people and communities flourish. For the Strategic Period 2022-2025, we will focus on people who are marginalised, develop coherent and community-based programmes, achieve more scale by engaging and collaborating with thousands of individuals, partners, networks, and other agencies, and increase our agility. These main policy choices are worked out in six concrete ambitions for our Country Offices.



- We will increase our focus on **including people who are marginalised and socially excluded**.
- We will improve **the cohesion and integration of our community-based programmes**, monitor these more accurately and learn from those outcomes. We will also expand our influence on authorities and policymakers.
- We will **increase the scale and effectiveness of our work** through constructive partnerships that tackle today's complex challenges.
- We will **mobilise resources and engage communities** by increasing the number of foundations, groups and individuals who support our work.
- We will strengthen the position of our country offices, as well as the role of Dorcas as an **agile catalyst for change and a ConnActor** of various stakeholders.
- We will bolster and align our **regional strategies, cross-country learning and cooperation**.

How Dorcas Syria will work out these strategic ambitions is now described.



Include People who are Marginalised and Socially Excluded

Dorcas Syria will continue to meet the needs of vulnerable people and communities in existing areas and, where possible, in new areas in line with donor opportunities. Our target groups are women, children, youth, men and older persons. The work with women focuses on victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and maternity care, dealing with trauma, teaching life skills and creating livelihood opportunities. Among children, we work on improving nutrition and health, coping with traumas and access to education. And with the youth, we teach skills, create livelihood opportunities, meet SRH needs, help victims of SGBV and enable young people to be agents of change. Moreover, we support micro and small entrepreneurs with training, life skills, and reproductive assets to start or re-start a small business to obtain a livelihood.

In particular, we will pay more attention to older people with disabilities. They face increasing challenges that are mainly related to the procurement of medicines that are either expensive or not available in the country. We will also encourage clubs for older people as they have no one to take care of them and we will focus on mental health support to reduce isolation.



Realise Coherent and Community-based Programmes

Dorcas Syria continues to work in relief and early recovery and will also focus on projects related to development. Track records will be built and expertise and competencies reinforced to improve the work. We will use the three Dorcas programme concepts and apply Nexus principles. Through the concept of Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery, we aim to save and restore extremely vulnerable persons' lives through cash and protection activities and mental health and psychological support (MHPSS).

By implementing our programmes, we can contribute to social and economic change at the individual, household and community levels. For instance, our livelihood and business support gives beneficiaries the chance to assume responsibility, regain their independence and become more active members in the community.

As part of early recovery, Dorcas will continue working on supporting small businesses in Syria to improve the lives of the most vulnerable populations who are willing to work but do not have the means to do so. We do this through the programme concept of Inclusive Entrepreneurship, with which we want to enhance employability and entrepreneurship by teaching personal and

technical skills to people and providing them with the tools they need to start their own businesses.

Through the Social Empowerment and Protection programme concept, we will promote and support protection and safety nets via our community centres. The most vulnerable community members will be informed about and referred to relevant basic service providers to address the urgent and priority needs. Where required, Dorcas Syria will build the capacity and work with local service providers so they can provide quality services, especially in the area of health and protection.

Dorcas Syria will mobilise community leaders and active members of the community to identify community priorities, resources, needs and solutions in a way that promotes representative participation, good governance, accountability, and peaceful change. Unfortunately, realising an impact at the societal level is difficult because advocacy is highly sensitive given Syria's situation and political context.



Increase the Scale and Effectiveness of our Work

Dorcas Syria focuses on local communities and partners with faith-based organisations, community-based organisations and (international) NGOs. We are active in sector working groups and in the Damascus International NGOs. Through our partners, we can increase the impact of our work since they can mobilise more resources, influence different sectors and reach more vulnerable people. Dorcas will continue to identify and assess new partners to submit joint proposals, form consortia, and identify joint collaboration and complementarity. Our role in Syria depends on the context and the situation. The Syrian government requires self-implementation for all NGOs working in Syria. Dorcas is also considered a co-implementer because it works with different Syrian partners wherever self-implementation is not possible.



Mobilise Resources and Engage Communities

Dorcas Syria aims to identify new opportunities and collaborations for its programmes. We are approaching various UN agencies to explore the possibilities for partnerships and collaboration and we are active in various workgroups in Syria. For example, we actively contributed to the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan 2021, and the sector lead accepted four of the five projects we submitted under this.

As the situations in Syria and Lebanon are interlinked, we jointly work on proposal writing and identifying funding opportunities. Our Communication Officer helps us to strengthen our public profile and increase the visibility of all activities in Syria. We convey our achievements and, where possible, give credit to the donors concerned. This greater visibility increases the effectiveness of our resource mobilisation.



Become an Agile Catalyst and ConnActor

Dorcas Syria expects to continue to operate with a strong motivated team of experts that supports the work in the field and will enhance our visibility among different civil society actors. Particular attention will be given to improving protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policies. We will also expand our expertise in livelihood and entrepreneurship.

The International Office provides support in certain areas, such as corporate positioning, identifying potential partnerships and consortia, financial monitoring and evaluations, monitoring adherence to policy, proposal writing, and monitoring programme indicators. Dorcas Syria is reviewing its operational structure to optimise its response. We are also reviewing our Country Office competencies to ensure mainstreaming of PSEA, intergenerational activities, gender inclusion, disability and protection in all projects.

Dorcas Syria will maintain its field presence through its community centres. We work with implementing partners whenever there is no possibility or approval for self-implementation. Our main office in Damascus coordinates closely with government institutions.

Finally, we are developing a disaster preparedness plan so that we can adapt to any situation to assist beneficiaries during an emergency response. Such planning involves all intervention sectors, which can help ensure timely and effective provision of humanitarian aid to those most in need when a disaster occurs.



Effect Regional Priorities, Cross-Country Learning and Cooperation

Dorcas is present in five countries in the region (Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Yemen). The cooperation between Lebanon and Syria has proven to be efficient. Now we will increase the communication and cooperation with other Country Offices in the region to boost our chances of acquiring funding and maximising the impact of the programmes we implement.

The Country Offices share context and cultural similarities. For example, Arabic is our common language and that facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences. That has enabled the Country Offices to acquire significant expertise in protection, community-based approaches, MHPSS and relief. We will also improve our shared programmatic focus to ensure a greater impact. Dorcas staff are active members of sector and cluster meetings and form dynamic teams that are always ready to intervene. That makes us a highly agile and responsive partner in the region.

Meet our Country Director



Najla Chahda - Country Director Syria

'I'm a firm believer in prioritising mental health and psychosocial support in emergency humanitarian aid and Dorcas' activities. The sooner we act following a conflict or crisis, the more chance a child or young person has of recovery. That's why I joined the 2019 International Conference on MHPSS in Crisis Situations in Amsterdam. Humanitarian aid has historically focused on water, food and shelter - and that will continue to be vital. But in light of the global mental health crisis, we need to do more, especially in countries like Syria, where mental illness invites shame or remains taboo. These are the people who go unseen and it is our duty to reach them.'

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