Background:

The Syrian Civil Society (SCO) Platform managed by UNOCHA Turkey was established in 2014. From the outset, the purpose of the CSO Platform, the entry to which is voluntary, was established to support vetted members in several ways. These include engagement in international humanitarian coordination mechanisms; participation in inter-agency and humanitarian advocacy activities; networking with international NGOs, UN agencies, donors, and other international organizations/bodies; receive information on funding opportunities; calls for proposals; meetings with decision makers; and benefit from capacity building opportunities.

The Syrian SCO Platform is composed of self-identified Syrian civil society organizations (individual organizations and coordination bodies) - with a focus on humanitarian NGOs – that implement activities in Syria. These organizations are non-governmental and are not politically or militarily aligned or affiliated.

Applications to the Syrian CSO Platform are reviewed by UNOCHA Turkey based on publicly available criteria (see the link below). Coordination bodies are required to fulfill additional criteria, also available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/eligibility-criteria-syrian-cso-platform-enar. All Syrian CSO Platform members are requested to demonstrate, in all relevant situations, a commitment to various principles and standards (available on the same link).

To ensure the Platform details are up to date, a regular review takes place to look at the membership against criteria and commitments made. Therefore, the list of members is not static but changes over time with organisations being added or removed from the Syrian CSO Platform depending on their status, and their decision to be included or not. Sometimes an organisation no longer adheres to the commitments or criteria and is removed.

For the updated published list (June 2018), the application process started on 26 February 2018 for individual organizations, and on 20 May for coordination bodies. Following numerous reminders to participants, including one-to-one contact from the OCHA team, it closed on 25 June 2018 for all applicants. On 29 June 2018, UNOCHA Turkey released the updated membership list of the Syrian CSO platform. The current platform is composed of 137 Syrian CSOs and no coordination bodies whereas the previous membership list (as of October 2017) included 187 Syrian CSOs and 10 coordination bodies.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Why should my organization apply to the Syrian CSO platform?**

The decision to apply is up to each Syrian organisation. It is a voluntary Platform, and it is not a requirement to access coordination mechanism or the humanitarian fund. While some stakeholders give special consideration to organisations listed on the Syrian CSO Platform, UNOCHA does not make membership a requirement to be considered a humanitarian organisation, or to participate in UNOCHA led coordination mechanisms.

2. **Is there any benefit in being a platform member?**

UNOCHA Turkey supports vetted members to engage in international humanitarian coordination mechanisms, participate in inter-agency and humanitarian advocacy activities, network with international NGOs, UN agencies, donors, and other international organizations/bodies, receive information on funding opportunities, call for proposals, meetings with decision makers and benefit from capacity building opportunities.

www.unocha.org
The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.
Coordination Saves Lives

3.   What is the application process?

The application process requires the submission of various pieces of information on the NGO status, their organizational structure, activities, partnership and grants, involvement in coordination mechanisms and capacity building needs. The application is submitted using a confidential on-line application tool accessible via https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/x/#FaZ67wYe.

4.   How are membership applications evaluated?

Membership applications are evaluated by a review committee including UNOCHA Turkey's management. When determining the humanitarian nature of an applying organization and assessing its commitment to humanitarian principles and standards, all the documents received are reviewed. In addition to the documents, the information is triangulated through various means such as: cross reference with the United Nations Sanctions List, interviews with an organization's staff members, visits to the NGO's office, a review of an organizations' public internet sites and social media platforms, feedback from staff based in the field, discussions with key informants, humanitarian donors, etc. Included in the overall review are statements made by senior members of the organization and/or people directly associated with the organization such as trustees, board members, funders, etc.

Prior to the application, key staff from the platform member organizations are required to complete the online SPHERE[1] and BBR[2] trainings to demonstrate minimum level of technical and coordination knowledge.

5.   Did the eligibility requirements change?

The eligibility criteria for both individual organizations and coordination bodies has not changed since June 2016. In 2016, the eligibility criteria were developed in consultation with Syrian CSOs (including the coordination bodies). These criteria are public and can be viewed at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/eligibility-criteria-syrian-cso-platform-enar.

6.   Is there a possibility that eligibility requirements will change?

Eligibility requirements might be amended by UNOCHA Turkey in consultation with Syrian CSOs and networks. Should this occur, new requirements will be public and available to the broader community.

7.   What are the reasons behind the decrease of members (both individual organizations and coordination bodies) in the June 2018 membership list?

Sixty-four (64) individual organizations who were previously members of the Syrian CSO platform (as of October 2017) are no longer members, as of June 2018. Ineligibility was the result of one or more of the following reasons:
-   The organisation did not update its information through the online survey, which was a prerequisite and widely published and explained;

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[1] The Sphere Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, is one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response. Further information is available on www.sphereproject.org

[2] The "*Building a Better Response: Strengthening Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Capacity and Engagement in the International Humanitarian Coordination System*" project aims to strengthen the capacity of national and international NGO personnel, as well as other humanitarian actors, to engage with the international humanitarian coordination system in a manner that improves overall coordination and response to the needs of affected populations. Further information is available on www.buildingabetterresponse.org

- Since the last update, the organisation became an international NGO, as it no longer is exclusively serving Syrian communities [3];
- Reports were received and validated that the organisation breached agreed principles and standards;
- The organisation closed its activities inside Syria (often linked to change of control areas);
- The organisation did not implement any activity in Syria for the last 6 months;
- The organisation was not able to provide its organizational structure, meaning that it is an organisation and not individuals getting together to deliver aid; and/or
- Not enough information was provided to enable the review committee to make a decision.

The ten (10) coordination bodies who had been part of the Platform, for the June 2018 review did not comply to the specific coordination body criteria that had been agreed. Ineligibility was the result of one or more of the following reasons:

- The Board of Directors/ Steering Committee of the coordination body is not composed of Syrian organisations, all of whom must be members of the Syrian CSO Platform; and/or
- Less than 50% of the coordination body organization members are members of the Syrian CSO Platform;
- They did not apply to renew their membership.

8. Did any new organisation join the Syrian CSO Platform?

Yes, fourteen (14) new individual organizations became Syrian CSO Platform members.

9. Can organizations and coordination bodies know why their membership was terminated or their membership application was not successful?

Organizations and coordination bodies can request an explanation as to the reasons why their application was not successful. Final decisions are made by management based on triangulated information.

10. Is it possible to appeal the decision?

It is possible to appeal the decision by providing the evidence that eligibility criteria are met.

11. Can individual organizations and coordination bodies reapply to the Syrian CSO platform? And what is the timeline to reapply?

Yes, organizations and coordination bodies can reapply to the Syrian CSO Platform.
Organizations can reapply at any time. Should their application be positively evaluated, they will immediately be considered platform members and be granted all related benefits. However, the name of the organization will be mentioned in the public document once it is updated, approximately, every six months.
Ahead of the publication of the new public Syrian CSO Platform list, coordination bodies will be invited to apply through an official email from UNOCHA Turkey.

12. Why does UNOCHA Turkey release the updated membership list of individual organizations and coordination bodies at the same time?

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[3] The working definition agreed is that "a Syrian CSO is an organization established inside or outside Syria for the exclusive purpose of undertaking activities in Syria and/or supporting Syrian communities within the MENA region or abroad; and whose Board of Directors is composed of at least 50% Syrian nationals and whose Director is a Syrian national. Place of CSO registration is not a factor in this definition".

Two eligibility criteria for coordination bodies are directly related to the membership of their constituent organizations to the Syrian CSO Platform. Governance and membership of the coordination bodies are steered by the coordination bodies based on their commitment to humanitarian principles and standards. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the coordination bodies to ensure that their governance structure and constituency is in-line with those principles and standards. Screening and selection of members of coordination bodies' general assemblies and the steering committees (also known as Board of Directors) should not be based on the singular criteria of membership of the CSO platform, thus, ensuring decision ownership of the coordination bodies.

13. Is there a relationship between the Syrian CSO Platform and the Turkey Humanitarian Fund (THF)?

The Syrian CSO Platform and the Turkey Humanitarian Fund have different eligibility processes and criteria. It is possible for an organization to be a member of the Platform, but not eligible to the THF or the other way around. The Field Coordination Unit and the Humanitarian Financing Unit within UNOCHA Turkey coordinate and triangulate information when evaluating applications to the Platform and Fund.

14. What is the relation between the Syrian CSO Platform membership and the cluster membership?

Membership in clusters (at Turkey hub level) is delinked from membership to the Syrian CSO Platform. However, some clusters (such as Protection and Education) decided to make CSO Platform membership a prerequisite to a cluster membership application. Some other clusters triangulate information with UNOCHA Turkey while reviewing cluster membership applications. UNOCHA Turkey does not make it a requirement for participation in any coordination mechanism.

15. What is the relationship between the Syrian CSO platform and the League of Syrian Networks?

While the Syrian CSO platform is currently supported by UNOCHA Turkey, the League of Syrian Networks is governed by Syrian NGOs and networks. As such, the membership criteria for each is different, and applications are channeled through different processes and are not linked. As a result, membership may overlap but is not identical.

UNOCHA Turkey channels its outreach to Syrian CSOs through the League of Syrian Networks and the League of Syrian Networks is the mechanism used by Syrian CSOs to select their representatives at Turkey hub level in the Humanitarian Liaison Group (HLG), the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and at the WoS level in the Syria Strategic Group (SSG) and the Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group (ISG). The League of Syrian Networks decided that only organizations that are members of the Syrian CSO Platform can be nominated to the above-mentioned coordination mechanisms.

16. What is the relationship between the Syrian CSO Platform and the donors?

Platform membership is delinked from any funding channel. Some donors choose to use the Syrian SCO Platform membership as a pre-requirement to applications for funding.

17. What is the geographical coverage of the Syrian CSO Platform members?
The operational mapping specifies the coverage of Platform members at sub-district level and sector level.