

Center for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria (CCSDS)



Impact Report
2022-2024

Executive Summary

Between 2022 and 2024, CCSDS made significant progress in advancing our mission to raise awareness of democratic values in Syria, promote inclusive participation, and foster resilient communities. In a period marked by political instability, conflict, economic crisis, sanctions, and the devastating 2023 earthquake, we remained steadfast in our commitment to democratic change.

Despite shrinking civic space and other regional challenges, CCSDS successfully delivered on our goals and created a lasting impact by strengthening civil society and linking them, empowering individuals to lead, and advancing inclusive, community-driven solutions in Syria and neighboring countries, and by placing emphasis on marginalized communities, women, and youth.

CCSDS Impact Snapshot



Strengthened Civil Society

- **50+** local organizations supported in Syria and Turkey
- **120** youth leaders trained in peace and democracy
- **10 subgrants** distributed supporting 100 interventions.



Women Empowerment

- **15** Women's Peace Circles empowered to assist local community needs
- **100** Syrian women cooperated through the Space for Collaboration.
- **7 gender-sensitive advocacy documents** developed on peace, justice, and democracy.



Locally Rooted

- **100+ locally designed-and-led** interventions since 2022
- **100,000 people directly** reached with our programming
- **900,000 people indirectly** reached

About CCSDS

Vision

All Syrians live and participate in a democratic society with sustainable peace and enjoy their full rights and freedoms.

.....

“This is the first time someone has hosted me, asked me about my profession and work, and made me feel that I truly exist and have value.” - Female Participant CSO Project

.....

Mission

CCSDS is organized for the following purposes

- (i) to raise awareness of the benefits of a democratic society in Syria;
- (ii) to promote democratic values within Syria; and
- (iii) to devise new ways to connect communities through democratic ideology in Syria.



Values

Rights | Democracy | Learning | Integrity | Accountability | Flexibility

Programs

Youth Empowerment

Training youth in Syria in peacebuilding and democratic engagement, with select participants receiving mentorship to lead local Peace Actions and democratic interventions.



CSO Empowerment

Support for CSOs in Syria with training, mentorship, micro-grants which are locally designed and implemented, dialogue forums, and regional networking over a three-year learning-by-doing model.



Women Empowerment

Support for women-focused civil society in Syria by facilitating Women's Peace Circles, convening women leaders to promote peace and rights, and requiring 50% women's participation in all projects to elevate women's leadership.



Key Achievements

2022 – 2024

CCSDS's work before 2022 laid the foundation to shape the strategies, partnerships, and approaches that guided our work and were the basis for our continuous impact.

Youth Engagement & Inclusive Democratic Dialogue

- Trained and mentored diverse **youth leaders** to lead local peace efforts and engage in democratic processes.
- Facilitated **Inclusive Dialogue Forums**, contributing civil society perspectives to Syria's Constitution and Peace Process. Launched the first **Syrian Democracy and Peace Week (Sept 15–21)** in 2024, promoting the connection between peace and democracy.

Strengthening Local Capacity & Community Resilience

- Supported **50+ local organizations** in Syria and Turkey with leadership, planning, and implementation skills to improve humanitarian responses and peacebuilding.
- Supported **locally identified and led initiatives**, including lifesaving efforts during the 2023 earthquake. Projects included school rehabilitation, support for cancer rehabilitation centers, connecting families of missing people, psychosocial care for children, women, and civil society workers, and other projects.

Advancing Women's Leadership & Peacebuilding

- Advance the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS) by empowering Syrian women to engage in peacebuilding and to advocate for inclusion during the country's transitional process. Presented **key recommendations for women's participation in peacebuilding** in 2024.
- Created safe spaces for women to lead dialogues on justice, democracy, and security, at national and UN platforms.



Tracking Our Impact

Goal 1: Advance the Syrian political process grounding it in an integrated framework for peace and justice that includes: 1) meaningful participation of civil society; 2) robust inclusion of women and marginalized people; and 3) human-rights based agenda and process.

From 2022 to 2024, CCSDS amplified Syrian civil society voices through sustained engagement, strategic partnerships, and targeted advocacy in key political spaces.

Strengthening Civil Society Contribution

- Advocate for a democratic Syria with international government and participated in different **coalitions** such as the Women Advisory Board, Civil Society Support Room, Bridges of Truth, Madaniya, and the Women Alliance for Security and Leadership WASL.
- Strengthened **transparency and accountability** for citizens and decision makers.
- Called for **Partnership to Build the Future of Syria**, published immediately following and in celebration of the fall of the Assad Regime.

Investing in Leadership and Learning

- Sponsored **three Syrian fellows** to attend a summer program in Switzerland focusing on governance, decentralization, and conflict resolution.
- Fellows shared insights through **CCSDS's Youth Empowerment Program**. Trained **120 youth** in peacebuilding and democracy skills.
- Facilitated **six regional webinars** with youth from Yemen, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Rwanda, and the UK to promote cross-border dialogue and learning.

Amplifying Syrian Voices in Global Policy Advocacy

- Maintained active roles in the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on WPS.
- Ensured Syrian representation at international events, including Brussels Conferences (2022–2024), Caritas's 2022 Leadership Conference, and 2023 Feminist Foreign Policy Conference in the Netherlands.
- Led advocacy at the 2023 UNGA and WPS Week through the Women's Initiative for Sustainable Peace and Inclusive Security.



Tracking Our Impact

Goal 2: Ensure sustainability of Syrian grassroots civil society organizations inside Syria and in the neighboring countries.

CCSDS strengthened local civil society by building its capacity, supporting earthquake emergency responses in Syria and Turkey, fostering sustainable partnerships, and channeling timely, flexible funding to vetted grassroots groups.

Capacity Building Through Long-Term Investment

- Launched the Empowering Civil Society Organizations Pilot Program in 2022.
- Published **Inputs from Syrian Civil Society to the Constitutional and Political Process** in September 2022, based on consultations with over 80 civil society actors.
- Expanded the program to support **30 CSOs** over two additional years with funding and mentorship in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding.
- CCSD provided **flexible support** tailored to each CSO's capacity, needs, and local impact, including administrative assistance.
- By the end of 2024, CCSDS provided flexible funding, support, and oversight for **50+ CSOs**, ensuring accountability while adapting to local challenges.
- Continued investment in **15 Women's Peace Circles**, deepening local ownership and women-led peace-building across multiple regions.

Rapid Emergency Response to the 2023 Earthquake

- Mobilized earthquake aid within **48 hours** in February 2023, supporting CSO Empowerment Program partners.
- Enabled **44 local partners** in Turkey and Syria to support their communities.
- Provided professional psychosocial support to 200+ humanitarian responders.



Tracking Our Impact

Goal 3: Leverage learning from the last 10 years to generalize models/learning for activists in other conflict-affected countries.

From 2022 to 2024, CCSDS expanded its role as a convener and connector, fostering cross-border exchange, elevating Syrian voices in global dialogues, and supporting peer and academic learning in conflict-affected contexts.

Academic Partnerships and Learning Exchanges

- In 2022, CCSDS's Executive Director served as the **Sergio Vieira de Mello** Visiting Chair at **Seton Hall** and Visiting Fellow at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, launching a seminar series on UNSCR 1325 and women peacebuilders.
- Partnered with **Seton Hall** and **Columbia University** to host 10 interns, offering hands-on experience in grassroots and policy-level peacebuilding.

Global Knowledge and Documenting Best Practices

- Advised **Afghan** activists on diaspora mobilization, supported **Yemeni** organizers in learning more about the Syrian Women's Advisory Board model, and mentored **Somali** partners on consortium building and coordination.
- Developed internal case studies on **CCSDS's youth peacebuilding** efforts to support peer learning and local ownership.
- Contributed to research on diaspora-led movements and women's roles in peace.
- Developed a **Lessons Learned Report** on organizing Dialogue Forums in 2024.
- Shared best practices on Consortium Building to support learning from Syria to other conflict zones.
- Issued **Together for Democracy**, a public statement marking the anniversary of the Syrian revolution in March 2024.



Conclusion

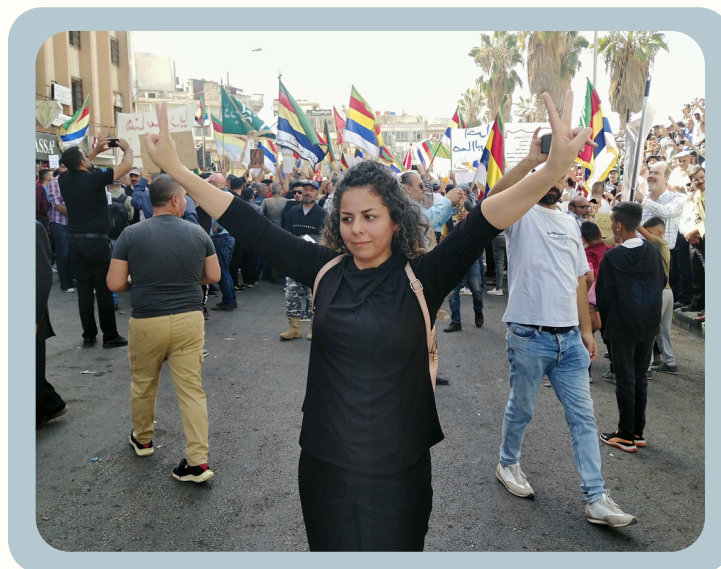
Constructing the Future: Vision and Priorities Beyond 2024

Following a review of our impact from 2022 to 2024 and our analysis of Syria after Assad, CCSDS renews our commitment to strengthening civil society organizations and supporting their collaboration in shaping Syria's future with inclusive governance, human rights standards, and justice.

Our 2025–2030 strategic plan reaffirms our dedication to advancing the Syrian democratic transition and building an inclusive democratic state based on a human-rights framework.

We will prioritize survivor/community-led local action, empower marginalized groups such as women and youth, advance social cohesion through dialogue and inclusive community initiatives, and build local capacity for long-term resilience to contribute to peace, democracy, transitional justice, and accountability.

We will support Syrian civil society organizations as they respond to urgent humanitarian and on-going development needs, using a peace-building and gender lens to promote sustainable relief and long-term recovery.



Want to Connect?

For further information or inquiries on partnership opportunities with CCSDS, contact: Rajaa Altalli, Co-Founder (rajaa.altalli@ccsd.ngo)

