

**THE CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL NON-  
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN RESPONSE  
TO THE SYRIAN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: A CASE  
STUDY OF MALAYSIAN INGOs**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the challenges that *Peduli Insan*, Syria Care Malaysia, and *Cinta Syria Malaysia* Organizations in their response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis. In addition, the study examines the extent to which their plans and programmes are taken into account to achieve the main objectives of successful NGOs (impact, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness) as had been determined by Edwards (1999). These organizations are active, in Syria and at least in one of its border countries, except Iraq. Their programmes include relief, food, health, education, and settlement projects. This study contributes to the field of humanitarian-based INGOs' in the international relations field as non-state actors. This is done through their response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis by highlighting the challenges these three Malaysian INGOs face and evaluating their performance. This qualitative research mainly used interviews with a number of executives, and management staff of those organizations as the main primary source of data. In addition, the study has used secondary sources such as books, journals, reports, and official websites of these INGOs. It uses thematic analysis to analyse the collected data. The findings of this study reveal that these INGOs are facing many challenges in Malaysia, Syria, and refugee host countries. The challenges start from the collecting of donation stage until the project's concluding stage. Over time these organizations focus mainly on Syrian refugees in their projects. They showed high flexibility in dealing with the changes and challenges they faced (Impact). They cooperate with many governmental agencies and NGOs and have plans to increase their funding sources (sustainability). Their local organizations' partners play the main role in selecting and implementing their projects (cost-effectiveness). However, there is a need to enhance cooperation among these INGOs themselves and other NGOs. Lastly, more studies targeting local organizations which are partners of these INGOs are required since this study is limited to a number of executives and management staff of those Malaysian organizations only.

## خلاصة البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التحديات التي تواجهها منظمات Peduli Insan و Syria Care Malaysia و Cinta Syria Malaysia في استجابتها للأزمة الإنسانية السورية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تفحص الدراسة مدى مراعاة خططهم وبرامجهم لتحقيق الأهداف الرئيسة للمنظمات غير الحكومية الناجحة (التأثير والاستدامة والفعالية من حيث التكلفة) كما حددها Edwards (1999). وتنشط هذه التنظيمات في سوريا وعلى الأقل في إحدى دولها الحدودية باستثناء العراق. تشمل برامجهم مشاريع الإغاثة والغذاء والصحة والتعليم والاستيطان. تساهم هذه الدراسة في مجال المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية القائمة على العمل الإنساني في مجال العلاقات الدولية بصفتها جهات فاعلة غير حكومية. يتم ذلك من خلال استجابتهم للأزمة الإنسانية السورية من خلال تسليط الضوء على التحديات التي تواجهها هذه المنظمات غير الحكومية الماليزية الثلاث وتقييم أدائها. استخدم هذا البحث النوعي بشكل أساسي المقابلات مع عدد من المديرين التنفيذيين وموظفي الإدارة في تلك المنظمات كمصدر أساسي رئيس للبيانات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، استخدمت الدراسة مصادر ثانوية مثل الكتب والمجلات والتقارير والمواقع الرسمية لهذه المنظمات الدولية غير الحكومية. يستخدم التحليل الموضوعي لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها. تكشف نتائج هذه الدراسة أن هذه المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية تواجه العديد من التحديات في ماليزيا وسوريا والبلدان المضيفة للاجئين. تبدأ التحديات من مرحلة جمع التبرعات حتى مرحلة الانتهاء من المشروع. بمرور الوقت، تركز هذه المنظمات بشكل أساسي على اللاجئين السوريين في مشاريعها. أظهرت مرونة عالية في التعامل مع المتغيرات والتحديات التي واجهوها (الأثر). يتعاونون مع العديد من الوكالات الحكومية والمنظمات غير الحكومية ولديهم خطط لزيادة مصادر تمويلهم (الاستدامة). يلعب شركائهم من المنظمات المحلية الدور الرئيسي في اختيار وتنفيذ مشاريعهم (الفعالية من حيث التكلفة). ومع ذلك، هناك حاجة إلى تعزيز التعاون بين هذه المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية نفسها والمنظمات غير الحكومية الأخرى. أخيراً، هناك حاجة إلى مزيد من الدراسات التي تستهدف المنظمات المحلية الشريكة لهذه المنظمات الدولية غير الحكومية نظراً لأن هذه الدراسة مقصورة على عدد من المديرين التنفيذيين وموظفي الإدارة في تلك المنظمات الماليزية فقط.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

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## DECLARATION

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IGOs	Intergovernmental organizations
SRRP	Syrian Regional Response Plan
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It has been more than 10 years since the beginning of the Syrian refugees' humanitarian crisis. The Assad regime's response to the peaceful civil protests in 2011, was extremely violent. He chose to use military power to stop the protest from spreading throughout the country. This led to the transformation of the mass protests' demands to topple the Assad regime and announce the start of the Syrian revolution. However, the excessive force used by Syrian security and military forces, undue violence, home destruction, and lack of access to necessities for humans such as food and medication were the motivations and reasons for millions of Syrian people to flee their home country in order to survive and secure life for their families to neighbouring countries and beyond.

These millions have been distributed around many countries worldwide, but the highest percentage of them have settled down in Syria's neighbouring countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq). Among those host countries, only Turkey has signed the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 1967).

The Syrian refugees are settled down in camps on the border or inside urban areas. The rights and services are different in these host countries based on their policies. This new situation created new and complex challenges to the host governments and communities in many sectors such as education, health, security, and the housing sector.

The international community attempted to establish several initiatives to deal with refugees' crisis in the region, such as Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) initiative co-launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2014. However, these initiatives did not succeed in providing coherent and effective coping mechanisms (Beaujouan & Rasheed, 2020).

Many International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) around the world implemented many charities and services projects within Syria and the host

countries to respond to the huge need of those refugees/displaced persons. Some (INGOs) are Malaysian organizations that have implemented many projects (relief, food, health, education, and settlement projects) in these host countries and within Syria. For instance, *Peduli Insan* “Insan care” was established due to the awareness of humanitarian issues in Syria and the need to ease their burden (Insan Care, 2021a). Syria care Malaysia founded in 2012 (Syria Care, 2021a), and *Cinta Syria Malaysia*, founded in 2013 were established in response to the Syrian crisis (CSM, 2021). Until today, these Malaysian INGOs still focus mainly on Syrian refugees and displaced persons in their operations, while there are many other Malaysian INGOs which have their projects and activities not limited to the Syrian crisis victims such as *Iman care*, Global Peace Mission Malaysian, My Fund Action, and Muslim Volunteer Malaysia, etc. However, Malaysia is not a part of the 1951 Convention nor the 1967 Protocol, despite the fact that Malaysians contributed much of the money to fund these projects, and all these programmes have been implemented based on humanitarian principles and values (Jan et al., 2018).

This study seeks to shed light on the challenges Malaysian INGOs face in providing humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees/displaced persons in neighbouring host countries and within Syria, in addition to examining which performance achieves the main objectives of NGOs success (impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness) (Edwards, 1999).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

In the last decade, Syria was the scene of the world’s most severe and complex humanitarian crisis. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, stated that:

Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering for millions which should be garnering a groundswell of support around the world. Adding that more countries had to take a greater share of refugees (United Nations, 2016).

Five years later, in 2021, Grandi reconfirmed that:

Ten years of the Syrian crisis have inflicted unimaginable human suffering and pain, ... half of the Syrian population has been forced to flee their homes, ... and hardly any town or village in Syria has been spared

the violence and the humanitarian suffering and deprivation (UNHCR, 2021).

As the number of Syrian refugees/displaced persons has increased since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, the number has exceeded thirteen million refugees/displaced persons. The refugees'/displaced persons' poverty and vulnerabilities are increasing, the impact on host communities is on the rise, and funding for the humanitarian response is not keeping up with the sharp rise of needs, which placed the international community in front of a big challenge to do its responsibility which is protecting the civilians fleeing from the conflict zones.

More than 5.5 million Syrians have escaped across borders, fleeing the bombs and bullets that have devastated their homes. In addition to over 6.7 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Syria, it is the biggest IDPs population in the World (UNHCR, 2021). That led Syria to become the second-largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2018, with US\$2,292 million (Thomas & Urquhart, 2020).

Since 2011, many INGOs have come forward to render help and lessen the plight of the Syrian refugees. Currently, UNHCR is working with its partners of International and National NGOs to undertake programmes to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance protection for the neediest and most vulnerable Syrians inside and outside Syria. As a humanitarian response, many Malaysian INGOs such as *Cinta Syria Malaysia*, *Humanitarian Care Malaysia*, *Syria Care Malaysia*, *Malaysian Life Line for Syria*, *Insan Care*, and *Iman Care*, etc., have contributed to these efforts and have had their projects within the host countries and in Syria.

Although of all the humanitarian efforts to help, people's suffering in Syria and its neighbourhood countries is increasing. In addition to the lack of studies that focus on the Malaysian INGOs' efforts to reduce the suffering of Syrian refugees and IDPs in Syria and its neighbourhood countries, all of which make this study important.

This study is a preliminary attempt to know the challenges that they are facing and examine their efforts, through examining the types of projects they provide, in addition to the coordination and cooperation level among themselves and with intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), INGOs and local NGOs, and with host governments as requirements to any NGO to succeed in its performance (Edwards,

1999) in providing the best services for Syrian refugees/displaced persons within host countries and inside Syria, throughout the following research questions.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1- How do Malaysian INGOs choose the country in which they implement their projects?
- 2- What type of projects do they implement, temporarily-oriented projects or sustainable-oriented projects?
- 3- What are the obstacles that the Malaysian INGOs are facing to implement their projects into host countries and /or inside Syria?
- 4- What is the cooperation and coordination level among these INGOs and other IOGs, INGOs, local NGOs, and host governments?

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- To identify the parameters for the Malaysian INGOs while choosing the country to implement their projects.
- 2- To determine the nature of the projects they implement, whether they are temporary-oriented or sustainable-oriented projects.
- 3- To explore and determine the obstacles that Malaysian INGOs face in implementing their projects into host countries and/or inside Syria, and present them to governments and organizations interested in supporting refugees.
- 4- To determine the cooperation and coordination level among these INGOs and other IOGs, INGOs, local NGOs, and host governments.

### **1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

According to Tobin and Campbell (2016) there are over 200 NGOs currently working on the Syrian refugee crisis in the Middle East. The significance of this study lies in the fact that the number of refugees worldwide is increasing. In addition to that, the

international community has already started decreasing its funding and interest in the Syrian refugee crisis (Nachabe, 2020). At the same time, the suffering of Syrian refugees/displaced persons is still increasing, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (UNHCR, 2021). Therefore, INGOs are required to implement more efficient, effective, and sustainable projects.

The dynamics of the military conflict has changed over these years, which affect the situation of the Syrian refugees/displaced. Thus, it is important to examine the impact on the performance and plans of INGOs and their types of projects. Many studies that were conducted focused on INGOs response to the Syrian crisis, but a very small number of those studies focused on Malaysian INGOs.

The research found that many Malaysian INGOs have been working on humanitarian projects for Syrian refugees/displaced. However, due this study is focusing on the Syrian humanitarian crisis mainly, and because of the limited previous studies on the role of Malaysian INGOs in response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis. This study chose to focus on the Malaysian INGOs which were established as a response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis, and their projects targeted Syrian refugees/displaced mainly. Because that makes those organizations more able to answer the research questions, due to their deep experience in response to the Syrian crisis.

This study would help in improving the living conditions and alleviate the suffering of Syrian refugee/displaced by shedding light on the difficulties a number of Malaysian INGOs are facing. The host governments need to eliminate these difficulties. In addition to examine and evaluate these INGOs performance to improve the efficiency of their future performance and working plans.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The term “refugee” has come to be used in many different contexts and disciplines. The literature shows several definitions; some are legal, some are sociological, and some are anthropological. However, this study will rely on the definition contained in the Refugee Convention. Based on The Refugee Convention, a person qualifies as a refugee if:



The person has already been considered a refugee under prior treaty arrangements or the person is outside the country of his nationality (or not having a nationality) and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion (Worster, 2012, p. 102).

The convention holds that the person must have crossed an international border to be considered as a refugee, while people who have the same precarious situation but are still within their state border are called as internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Haddad, 2004).

### **1.6.1 Non-Governmental Organizations**

According to Bromideh (2011), the definition of an NGO is a subject of much debate. It can refer to any organization independent of government control, not challenging the government, non-criminal, and non-profit making. In addition to that, its performance scope is limited to the domestic level.

Since the late 1980s, the NGOs sector has witnessed fundamental changes in the rising number of these organizations working across borders, their budgets, and the role they play at the international level, which has systematically engaged in multiple fields. In addition, Collingwood states:

Transnational NGOs have moved beyond traditional relief, campaigning and advocacy activities to take on new roles such as devising and monitoring compliance with ethical standards and codes, engaging with governmental and private sector actors, and contract work for governments (Collingwood, 2006, p. 440).

At an international level, an international non-governmental organization (INGO) is defined as a voluntary association operating on a non-profit basis at the transnational or global level. As non-profit voluntary associations, INGOs rely primarily on donations, member fees, and voluntary labour for their operations (Boli, 2012).

Some analysts have called out for an international 'power shift' towards non-state actors. The international community has witnessed a significant increase in the level of INGOs activities on the international level, consequently boosting the competitiveness in the international relations field between state actors and non-state

actors. In other words, the state that fails to fulfil her task of giving humanitarian aid to those who need will be replaced by NGOs or INGOs, which means the state would lose part of its sovereignty (Collingwood, 2006; Idris, 2012).

The success of INGOs in rendering help and lessening the plight of the Syrian refugees/IDPs shows the international community that INGOs could do things that states could not do in addition to sharing with the international community the suffering condition of civilians in conflict zones. Furthermore, it helps to understand why in 2018, 89% of funds from private donors were channelled to NGOs (Thomas & Urquhart, 2020).

For that purpose, it is a commonplace to hear calls for NGOs since the late 1990s to professionalize their performance, borrow management skills and strategic planning techniques from the commercial and private sectors, and standardize their procedures for cost-effectiveness (Edwards, 1999).

The INGOs and Syrian refugees' conditions are different among the host countries. The study will explore their situations in Syria's border countries which are hosting the highest percentage of Syrian refugees.

### **1.6.2 Refugees in Turkey**

In 2017, Turkey was the eighth-largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance (Thomas & Urquhart, 2020). Among the hosting countries, Turkey is the largest in terms of the numbers of Syrian refugees, where in November 2020, there were more than 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees (UNHCR Registration, 2020).

The European Union (EU), Turkey, IGOs, and the INGOs were new to operating projects inside Turkey. They have faced many serious challenges in managing the settlement and mobilization of Syrian refugees with the influx of huge numbers of refugees to Turkey. The INGOs have found themselves in front of complicated relations between civil society and the government and they have to deal with bureaucratic and legal restrictions. Thus, some of these organizations took a few years until they managed to settle their work permits for their staff to officially operate in Turkey (Aras & Duman, 2019). Why that happened could be understood if we know that, in general, crisis-affected countries prefer locally humanitarian response over international

humanitarian response because they consider them more legitimate and trustworthy (El Taraboulsi et al., 2016).

In 2011, the official decision of Turkey was not to join the UN in its first Syrian Regional Response Plan (SRRP) and neither to cooperate with UNHCR. However, in 2012, Turkey changed its decision and began to cooperate with the UN agencies after it became clear for the Turkish decision-makers that Turkey will not be able to manage the refugee crisis alone (Kirişci, 2014). The Turkish government took a few years to prepare the legal foundation for Syrian refugees on its land (Aras & Duman, 2019).

### **1.6.3 Refugees in Lebanon**

Since 2011 and until today, the Lebanese political entities and the Lebanese community, have been divided between pro-Assad regime (The March 8 alliance) and pro-revolution positions (The March 14 alliance). However, the official Lebanese position remains stable that Lebanon is not a party of the UN refugees' conventions, and it considers Syrian individuals seeking asylum in Lebanon since mid-2012 as "displaced" people, not as refugees. Whereas the main purpose of the Lebanese government is to ensure that the existence of Syrians on its lands is a short-term residence (displaced) and to work on not allowing their status to turn into a long-term residence (refugees). Thus, to avoid facing a similar case of Palestinian refugees who are lived in Lebanon for decades. Moreover, for a part of the Lebanese government, this is also part of supporting the Assad regime's version of the conflict's nature in Syria, by rejecting to consider the flee of Syrian people from their country as an escape from the oppression of the government and fearing for their life.

In 2014, the Lebanese state had refused the suggestion of establishing refugee camps within its borders and adopted a policy plan with an explicit aim to decrease the number of refugees (Beaujouan & Rasheed, 2020).

Around 70 percent of the Syrian refugees, with an estimated number of over one million persons, live in Lebanon under the poverty line. They are distributed over more than 2,100 rural and urban communities and locations because there are no formal refugee camps in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2018). Until September 2020, there were over 870,000 Syrians registered as refugees in Lebanon (UNHCR Registration, 2020). The

2020 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees estimates that while 55% of Syrian families in Lebanon were living in extreme poverty in 2019, the percentage has increased to 88% in 2020 (UNHCR, 2020). In 2021, nine out of ten Syrians living in Lebanon are in extreme poverty (UNHCR, 2021). According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020, Lebanon was the eighth-largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2018 (Thomas & Urquhart, 2020).

Despite the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon is a mixture of security, political, and socio-economic factors, it was clear that sectarian issues are the base of the Lebanese political parties' division over the Syrian refugees' case. Hence, after more than nine years, the Lebanese socio-economic life has been affected by the Syrian crisis on different levels, and this created several problems which led to further domestic tension between the Lebanese community and the Syrian refugees. Moreover, the most supportive Lebanese communities became supporters to encourage their return to Syria. These problems result from several reasons such as weak governance, lack of resources, poor planning, the absence of the government role in managing the refugee crisis, and the absence of coordination between the domestic and international humanitarian organizations (Beaujouan & Rasheed, 2020).

Boustani and his associates, in their study, focused on how national, local, and international humanitarian actors can work together more effectively to enhance urban refugee responses in Lebanon and perhaps in other countries. Moreover, they argue that “humanitarians will only be able to ensure their responses are sustainable and meet needs on the ground if they work closely with local authorities” (Boustani et al., 2016, p. 3).

#### **1.6.4 Refugees in Jordan**

The geographical location of Jordan made it a border state with (Palestine, Syria, and Iraq) the three unstable neighbouring states, which made it a haven for millions of refugees from these countries over the past decades, despite its low levels of resources and capacities.

According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020, Jordan was the tenth largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2018 (Thomas &

Urquhart, 2020). Jordan hosted the third-largest population of Syrians. Approximately 80 percent of them, estimated by more than 655,000 people are living outside camps, while more than 139,000 have found sanctuary at the camps of *Za'atari* and *Azraq*. However, around 93 percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan live under the poverty line (UNHCR, 2018).

Tens of NGOs operate in camps to help refugees throughout Jordan. The government has largely restricted its activities to deploying police and regulating camp access. The NGOs are local, national, and international. They supply a diverse array of services, focusing on the health and education. Their projects and services support schooling and training, food aid, health care, first aid, and water supply. The majority of these NGOs are working in the *Zaatari* camp, the second-largest refugee camp in the world (Tobin & Campbell, 2016).

### **1.6.5 Refugees in Iraq**

Hundreds of thousands of Syrians sought refuge in Iraq, and the majority of them are living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020, Iraq was the third-largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2018 (Thomas & Urquhart, 2020). In October 2020, over 241,000 Syrians were registered as refugees in Iraq (UNHCR Registration, 2020).

The support provided by the Kurdistan Region of Iraq government is not enough to cover the basic needs of Syrian refugees. For that, the government turned to rely on cooperation with INGOs to respond to the refugee needs (Rashid & Maghdid, 2017).

Saaid argues that the influx of refugees to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has had a tremendous impact on the economic and social sectors. However, the government of the Kurdistan Region is required to consider the refugees as a crucial resource in increasing the economic vibrancy of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Furthermore, this can be achieved through working together with the federal government of Iraq and the international community to make the humanitarian response in its region more effective and sustainable and to look for innovative solutions, which will lead to economic recovery and stability in the KRI. Besides, it will reflect positively on the level of Syrian refugees' welfare (Saaid, 2014).

### **1.6.6 Displacement in Syria**

One of the ramifications of the Syrian crisis is that the conflict brought about the biggest displacement crisis in the world, with more than 6.7 million displaced persons within the country (UNHCR, 2021). The humanitarian crisis is becoming increasingly desperate in northwest Syria. The civilians displaced are in critical need for shelter, food, and health care. Many have had to flee several times during the last few years, leaving behind them possessions, homes, and limited places to stay in north-west Syria.

The existing camps and settlements are overcrowded, and mosques and schools have been turned into shelters for the displaced persons' families (UNHCR, 2020). To deliver the humanitarian aid to conflict zones inside Syria and due to the rejection of the Assad regime to give access for the international agencies to enter those areas, some INGOs were forced to cooperate with civilians or armed non-state actors to get the necessary logistical and technical support (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020).

Many INGOs depend on a partnership with local organizations in implementing their relief projects inside Syria. This cooperation faces some challenges represented by the capabilities and competence of local organizations and their staff.

Elkahlout and Elgibali in their research found that:

Local actors need technical training on monitoring and evaluation methods from remote managers and INGOs. This monitoring and evaluation training will improve the ability of local staff to evaluate the outcome and long-term impact of activities. Without this key training, local NGOs lack the hard skills to improve project design and implementation (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020, p. 6).

It is nearly impossible for local NGOs to properly function without training, communicating, reporting, accessing technology, and other needed tools. The responsibility of offering that is on the INGOs where their responsibility is to support project activities of local NGOs and carry the project until completion.

### **1.6.7 INGOs Challenges**

The dynamics of the military conflict has changed over the past ten years, which has a significant impact on the situation of the Syrian refugees/IDPs. In the beginning, almost the entirety of Syria was a conflict zone; meanwhile, recently two thirds of the Syrian

territory were restored by the Assad regime in the aftermath of the official Russian intervention in 2015. The Russians forced the opposition troops to withdraw from different zones of Syria to get enclaved in the northwest of Syria, while the northeast of Syria is kept under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

The cooperation between Russia, Turkey, and Iran under the Astana negotiation platform succeeded in curbing the fighting zones, where they set up four zones of de-escalation. Three of them were then closed down and this led to lowering the level of violence and eased up the process of humanitarian aid deliveries (Vakhshiteh et al., 2020).

The INGOs operating across nations face several complexities of challenges, especially in developing countries, where the main obstacle is the host government's desire to restrict and control the INGOs' activities (Bromideh, 2011). INGOs and NGOs face many challenges in operation and cooperation among themselves and between each other. There are several reasons for these challenges, such as imbalance of power among the partners, the uncertainty of resources, poor governance, and in some cases, malpractice of administration skills, instability because of the employment of new inexperienced employees and high employee turnover, and in some organizations tension usually happens between managers and local staff because of the desire of local actor to be part of the decision-making process (Adem et al., 2018).

In Turkey, there are challenges in cooperation and coordination among the actors of the humanitarian aid sector on three tracks: among INGOs themselves, between INGOs and local NGOs, and between INGOs and governmental institutions (Aras & Duman, 2019).

In Lebanon, the INGOs and NGOs face challenges in creating a strategic, effective, and comprehensive common humanitarian aid policy, where there is a crisis in the conditions and funding policies regarding the Syrian refugee aid provision system in Lebanon.

According to Mitri (2014), the three main reasons for this crisis are the following: Firstly, is strategic planning and coordination. There is a lack of strategic and emergency planning, and relying only on responding to day-to-day planning, the cooperation between the Lebanese government and UNHCR, as the leader of the cooperation platform, does not appear to be able to deal with the crisis properly. For

instance, the assistance provided was conditioned by short-term considerations and it was limited to emergency humanitarian aid response and did not reach the level of long-term development strategies.

Secondly, are the specificities of Lebanese geopolitics. The open-door policy towards Syrian refugees, the weakness of the Lebanese State, and the latest government crisis caused more challenges for the humanitarian organizations which deal with the Syrian crisis in addition to the rejection of Lebanon's government to allow camps building, as well as the impact on the Lebanese economy and social cohesion, and the infrastructure inability to withstand the pressure of huge numbers of displaced people.

Thirdly, is the politicization of humanitarian aid, which makes the attempt to balance the divergent political agendas, the host community stability and needs, and the real need of Syrians displaced impossible, because of the mismatch between the agenda of western humanitarian actors and the Gulf-states actors.

In Jordan, despite the seeking of international and local stakeholders to turn the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity, the Jordanian government policies and the influence of mass refugees on the socio-economic context make it hard for local NGOs and INGOs to develop their partnerships and to succeed in development projects (Adem et al., 2018; BURLIN, 2020). Burlin determined three dynamics that hinder the development opportunities, which are: the diversity of actors and interests, a lack of local management, and accountability to donors, all of these had limited the impact of development programmes (BURLIN, 2020).

Rashid & Maghdid (2017), in their study on the Peace Wind Japan INGO's performance in the Kurdistan region of Iraq in providing the necessities like shelter, food, education, etc., for Syrian refugees, found that there is a good partnership and cooperation between the organization and the government. However, they face some challenges in communication and administration to implement their projects because of the increased demands of refugees of basic needs and the huge number of refugees in the camps, and the cultural diversity. However, they noted that, there is a need to develop a strategic plan for dealing with and helping refugees, and the staff of the organization need to learn more about the culture and the environment to attain success in their projects.