

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Operationalising Passporting in the Syrian Context

1. Background and Context

The Syria Lab baseline survey report identified several weaknesses in organisational workflow on a national level. Across the wide spectrum of L/NAs, two key challenges emerged: The capacity of local actors as described by power breakers and intermediary organisations, that form a major obstacle to ensuring compliance, along with the ability of local actors to forge new partnerships. Furthermore, The Syrian humanitarian response continues to face fragmented funding. National and local civil society organisations face repeated and duplicative due diligence, vetting, and compliance procedures from international NGOs (INGOs), UN agencies, and donors. These processes impose a significant administrative burden, delay programme delivery, and undermine commitments to localisation, efficiency, and principled humanitarian action.

Passporting, the mutual recognition or partial acceptance of due diligence and compliance assessments across agencies, has emerged globally as a promising mechanism to reduce duplication and accelerate partnerships. However, in the Syrian context, passporting remains conceptual rather than operational, with limited harmonisation of tools, risk thresholds, or decision-making processes.

This consultancy constitutes as the first phase of a staged approach to practising passporting in Syria and will focus on groundwork, stakeholder alignment, and the development of a practical roadmap for implementation.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

The purpose of this consultancy is to design the first operational phase of passporting in the Syrian humanitarian response, by:

1. Mapping relevant actors and current due-diligence practices
2. Analysing similarities, gaps, and non-negotiable requirements
3. Facilitating structured dialogue among key stakeholders
4. Proposing a practical, context-appropriate passporting model, including tools and governance arrangements

4. Scope of Work and Key Tasks

Task 1: Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement

The consultant will:

1. Identify and map:
 - Active INGOs
 - Relevant UN agencies (programmatic and funding roles)
 - Pooled funds and intermediary mechanisms
 - Key bilateral and multilateral donors
2. Categorise actors by:

- Role (implementer, funder, intermediary)
 - Decision-making power
 - Risk appetites and compliance mandates
3. Conduct initial outreach and secure buy-in for participation.

Deliverable:

Stakeholder mapping matrix and engagement plan.

Task 2: Mapping Existing Due-Diligence and Compliance Tools

The consultant will:

1. Collect current tools, checklists, templates, and SOPs used for:
 - Organisational due diligence
 - Financial and procurement capacity assessments
 - Safeguarding and PSEA
 - Counter-terrorism and sanctions compliance

2. Review:
 - Level of depth and frequency
 - Documentation and verification requirements
 - Renewal periods
 - Decision-making authorities
 - Identify which elements are:
 - Mandatory
 - Context-driven
 - Donor-imposed
 - Agency-specific preferences

Deliverable:

Comparative matrix of due-diligence and compliance tools.

Task 3: Comparative Analysis and Feasibility Assessment

The consultant will:

1. Identify:

- Common core requirements across actors
- Areas of divergence
- Non-negotiable elements (e.g. registration, safeguarding)

2. Analyse:

- Legal and contractual constraints
- Risk transfer and liability concerns
- Political sensitivities specific to Syria

3. Assess feasibility of:

- Full passporting
- Partial passporting
- Modular or tiered passporting approaches

The feasibility assessment should explicitly prioritise a modular or tiered passporting approach as the most likely and equitable model. The analysis should focus on how to implement it, and not be limited to feasibility.

Deliverable:

Analytical report on passporting feasibility in Syria and implementation roadmap.

Task 4: Design of Practical Passporting Options

The consultant will develop practical models, such as a Core Due-Diligence Passport (minimum common standard). The model should include a clear and details classification of National and local actors (National, Local NGOs, Charities, Civil society organisation, Anchor organisations, grass-roots initiatives..). It should also include modular add-ons for:

- High-risk donors
- Specific sectors or geographic areas
- Governance arrangements, including:
 - o Custodian of the passport (MoFA, Forums, Donors, pool funds?)
 - o Validation and renewal processes
 - o Dispute resolution mechanisms

It should also include the Roles and responsibilities of:

Originating organisation
Receiving organisation
Partner organisations

The model must also include a multi-level certification system (e.g., Level 1: Basic Compliance; Level 2: Operational Excellence; Level 3: Strategic Partnership) with clear, transparent criteria for progression between tiers.

The design must include the architecture for a secure, user-friendly digital platform for managing passports, tracking validity, and hosting a resource library with capacity-strengthening materials

Deliverable:

Draft Passporting Architecture and Tool Options.

Task 5: Consensus-Building and Validation

The consultant will:

1. Convene workshops or structured consultations with:
 - INGOs
 - UN agencies
 - Donors and intermediaries
 - Anchor NGOs

 - Separate consultation stream with a diverse group of Syrian actors (Covering the wide spectrum of local actors and CSOs up to national organisations) to ensure their perspectives on risk, capacity, and partnership are central to the design. These consultations ensure local voices are not dominated by INGOs and donors.
2. Facilitate agreement on:
 - What can be mutually recognised
 - What must remain agency-specific
 - Thresholds for acceptance
3. Document areas of consensus and dissent.

Deliverable:

Workshop reports and validated options paper.

Task 6: Passporting Roadmap

The consultant will produce a roadmap outlining:

- Steps required to move from agreement to practice
- Pilot options (who, where, and how)
- Monitoring and learning mechanisms with clear key performance indicators.
- The design of a digital platform for managing assessments, tracking validity and sharing resources.

Deliverable:

Passporting Framework and Implementation Roadmap for Syria

Presenting the process, methodology and framework during the Lab's annual conference.

Unified classification criteria for national and local actors tailored for the Syrian context and in line with the procedures.

5. Deliverables Summary

- Map existing local-led capacity-strengthening initiatives, platforms, and resource hubs to identify synergies and avoid duplication.
- Conduct a baseline perception survey among local/national actors regarding current partnership and due diligence practices to inform the design.
- Stakeholder mapping and engagement plan
- Comparative due-diligence tools matrix
- Feasibility and constraints analysis
- Draft practical passporting models and tools
- Consultation and validation report
- Passporting Framework and Roadmap
- Presenting the process, methodology and framework during the Lab's annual conference.
- Unified classification criteria for national and local actors tailored for the Syrian context and in line with the procedures.
- Capacity Development Framework:

In addition to the other deliverables, the consultant will produce a Capacity Development Framework. This document will outline a clear strategy for how the passporting system will link to targeted, needs-based capacity-strengthening support. It will detail:

How assessment results will be used to generate tailored organisational development plans.

A menu of support options (e.g., mentorship, targeted training, peer-to-peer exchanges, access to expert consultants) that partners can access to address identified gaps.

Pathways for how partners can leverage the passporting system to gain access to new resources and partnerships that support their growth

6. Duration and Level of Effort

Full engagement for 3 months.

7. Required Qualifications and Experience

- Advanced degree in international development, humanitarian affairs, law, or related field
- Minimum 8–10 years' experience in humanitarian operations or compliance
- Strong existing networking skills with stakeholders in Syria.
- Proven experience with:
 - Due diligence and risk management
 - UN–NGO–donor partnerships
 - Localisation initiatives
- Strong understanding of:
 - Sanctions and counter-terrorism frameworks
 - High-risk and politically sensitive contexts (experience in Syria preferred)
- Excellent facilitation and consensus-building skills

8. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report to the Lab coordinator and work closely with the Lab's PAWG in addition to his/her engagement with INGOs, UN agencies, and donors.

9. Ethical Considerations

All work must adhere to data protection standards, and do-no-harm approaches, particularly when handling sensitive organisational and compliance information.

To apply Please share your portfolio along with a technical proposal including a timeframe and a financial proposal via the link below.