



Rojava-Fin Initiative (2014-2016)

RFI is a joint partnership initiative between the self-administrative cantons of Afrîn, Kobanî and Cizîre in northern Syria (Rojava) and Finnish partners interested in supporting Rojava in a sustainable way in the fields of humanitarian aid, reconstruction, sustainable development, democracy and peace-building.

We see Rojava's reconstruction also as an entry point to Syria's reconstruction, supporting the dialogue and development of other local civic administration and democratic initiatives similar to Rojava's inclusive and pluralistic model. RFI's experiences from reconstruction projects piloted in Afrîn canton can be extended to other cantons and also other regions in Syria.

We work with the following key partners:

- The self-administrations of 3 Rojava cantons and local civil society organisations (CSOs)
- Kurdish municipalities in Turkey (GABB, the Union of Municipalities in south-east Turkey, Suruc Municipality), local professional associations and CSOs
- Finnish expert organisations, universities, companies, civil society organisations and Kurdish resource networks
- International organisations and CSOs (in EU and Turkey particularly)



Objectives in Rojava, Finland and the EU

- Address Rojava's humanitarian needs and sustainable development agendas by developing effective processes, programs and activities for the benefit of the region's inhabitants and refugees.
- Facilitate and build the capacity of key local actors in the fields of humanitarian aid and reconstruction, and in international cooperation with Finland and the EU.
- Establish an enabling environment in Finland and the EU through which different parties can work cohesively in support of Rojava. Facilitate joint initiatives inside the EU between different NGOs and solidarity groups.
- Mobilise and coordinate support from Finnish civil society organisations and provide a channel for Kurdish professionals in Finland to contribute their expertise to the humanitarian aid and social and economic reconstruction and development of Rojava and the region.
- Resist the fundamentalist agenda that threatens the lives of millions of people in the region.

Work conducted in 2013-2014

- Produced document *Initiative for Syria and Syrian refugees*, presented to MFA in February 2014.
- Conducted 2 assessment trips to Turkey, building partnerships with relevant organisations in Turkey that are addressing the Syrian crisis.
- Organised delegations and partnership development with Rojava representatives, including 7 visits in Finland between February and September 2014.
- Facilitated direct humanitarian relief response (EUR 50 000) from FCA to Newroz Camp.
- Facilitated direct grassroots voluntary activities with Finnish and Kurdish organisations in Finland to organise and send humanitarian aid container to Rojava.
- Maintained regular direct contact with Rojava self-administration, Turkish municipalities and organisations dealing with refugees from Syria.
- Conducted communications work, including briefing the MFA, Finnish organisations and the media on the current situation in Rojava/Syria and the region, including the role of the Kurds as a key ally and actor in efforts to stabilize the region. Established the Rojava-Fin Updates portal which now has 500+ international followers.
- Received proposals for projects and partnership initiatives from Rojava cantons and Turkish municipalities, established contacts with Finnish companies, organisations and individuals interested in building sustainable long term cooperation in the region.

Pilot partnership programs

The pilot programs are based on initiatives from local partners in the Rojava cantons and Suruc municipality, and are planned according to the demands of the local environment and circumstances. The local partners also work with each other in cooperation with key strategic partners in Finland.

1. Humanitarian support for refugees who have fled ISIS from Kobani to Suruc municipality in Turkey and internally displaced people's (IDP) camps in Derik and Afrin canton in Syria.

- Sustainable housing solutions** for refugees in Turkey and IDPs in Rojava/Syria.
Potential partners: Adamatic Oy, Naps Solar Systems Oy, Miletus Ltd, Finplats Oy, Shalin Suomi ry
- Mobile health clinics** (as a pilot for developing basic health services to the refugees and IDPs)
Potential partner: FCG
- Social programs**, including pilot program to ensure children's education (facilitation of quickly built pre-fabricated school buildings, teaching staff with local teacher organization, integrated trauma counselling for refugees and IDPs).
Potential partner: network/consortium of Finnish CSOs (CoopNet)



2. Reconstruction projects (with Afrîn as a pilot canton)

- a. **Renewable energy** pilot program in Afrin and Cizîre cantons.
Potential partner: Naps Solar Systems Oy
- b. **Local food and agriculture production** pilot programs; milk and olive/cooking oil production.
- c. **Health** pilot program in Afrîn canton.
Partner: IEH – International Emergency Help
- d. **Education** pilot program in Afrin canton; University of Afrîn, vocational education and teacher training, scholarships. Partner: University of Tampere, key pilot departments.

3. Capacity building and facilitation

- a. Facilitating the establishment and seed funding of a “**Development Cooperation Unit**” representing Rojava’s three cantons in international cooperation for reconstruction programs and building the capacity of Rojava’s civil society and self-administration.
- b. **Strengthening the development of civil society** in Rojava and CSO program partnership between local CSOs in the target regions (Turkey/Syria) through matchmaking and tailored workshops organised in Finland, Turkey and Syria/Rojava.

RFI administration and functions

RFI staff operates in Rojava, Turkey, Finland and the EU.

- a. The office in Finland supports, facilitates and builds the capacity of the cantons’ “Development Cooperation Unit”, for example in mapping different funding sources and partners in Finland and internationally.
- b. Capacity and network building for partnerships and programs by organising seminars, workshops and capacity/network events in Finland, Nordic countries, EU and Turkey for organisations participating in building cooperation for the target regions.
- c. Integrating the role and projects of Finnish NGO development cooperation in humanitarian and reconstruction in Syria. Educated Kurds and Syrians act as a key resource for the professional-based Finnish CSOs, as in the Coop Net model.
- d. Communications and research work. Building an information portal and providing tailored information services to key interest groups like policy decision-makers, media and expert organisations. Facilitating media training in Rojava.

Sustainability of the Initiative - Proposal for Phase 1 (6 months)

Seed funding for a six-month period should enable the “Development Cooperation Unit” to be self-sustainable. Key activities in the first phase include:

- a. Assessment of the humanitarian and reconstruction needs, funding and implementing partner alternatives.
- b. Joint planning for the pilot humanitarian and reconstruction programs.
- c. Facilitating the study visits and partnership visits of local partners to Finland and EU.
- d. Information gathering, workshops.

Strategic partners and key personnel

In the fields of humanitarian and bigger sectoral reconstruction programs RFI acts as an intermediating actor, not as an implementing or administrating partner. RFI can, however, act as a consultative and capacity building partner.

Strategic partners in Rojava:

- Sinam Mohamad , (Co-chair People's Council in Rojava and key representative of the cantons in Europe)
- Dr Ahmad Yousef (Minister of the Economy, Afrîn canton)
- Coordinator and 4-6 staff in "Development Cooperation Unit"

Strategic partners in Turkey:

- GABB, the Union of Municipalities in south-east Turkey, Suruc Municipality as a pilot
- CARE International has been a local INGO strategic partner since March 2014 (RFI intermediated the partnership development for INGO application for Rojava (Cizîre Canton) for MFA in April 2014.
- SREO – Syria Research Evaluation Organisation (www.sreo.org)
- Local NGOs: Zeytun, Egitim-Sen, SES

Strategic partners in Finland:

- Pekka Marjomaa, (toimitusjohtaja, Adamatic Oy) – sustainable housing, WatSan, civic engineering, mapping the Finnish private sector partnership in Rojava/Syria reconstruction
- Peter Kuria (Shalin Suomi ry) – Environmental sustainability and renewable energy
- (under negotiation) University of Tampere, HAMK University of Applied Sciences
- Coop Net – Finnish CSO Consortium for Human Rights and Civil Society Development
- Kurd Aid for Rojava resource network

Strategic partner in Germany:

Dr Akram Naasan (International Emergency Help) – health sector development and humanitarian relief

Staff in Finland

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