

## PRESS RELEASE



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

### **Enhancing the Quality of Life, Autonomy and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs): A team of experts from Italy provided their time and expertise to do a peer-to-peer training for Syrian physiotherapists**

Damascus, 6 May 2018 – The United Nations Development Programme in Syria welcomed 4 experts from FELCOS Umbria, Italy, a non-profit Network of Local Authorities for Decentralized Cooperation and Sustainable Human Development, who provided their time and expertise to train 35 Syrian physiotherapists. The training aims to convey the knowledge and help physiotherapists develop the necessary skills to choose and customize wheeled mobility devices and seating support systems.

The four FELCOS Umbria's experts are from 4 different Rehabilitation Centers for Assistive Technologies for PWDs. These centers belong to the Italian Public Health System, which is managed by Regions.

Organized by the United Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with FELCOS Umbria and FEDERSANITA'-ANCI Umbria, in coordination with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Syria and funded by the Government of Japan, the training went for 6 days at the end of which trainees will be able to identify evidence based practices to help Syrian PWDs who need wheelchairs to improve their quality of life, integration, and social participation.

This type of partnership with networks of local authorities, provides experiences and expertise from territories, be them regions or municipalities, on specific priority issues. It is the first of its kind in Syria, and it will hopefully pave the way for future collaborations with other similar partners from around the world.

This modality provides several comparative advantages and clear added value for UNDP's work:

- 1) It helps UNDP to draw on a wide network of experiences and know-how from other regions of the world with a high sense of initiative, solidarity and commitment.
- 2) It helps to reduce expenses, which will positively impact on reaching more beneficiaries in the country.
- 3) Helps to increase the skills within Syria on an individual and institutional level.

4) It contributes, horizontally, to provide the international community with a clearer picture of the situation and needs within Syria.

8 different high-quality wheelchairs and several cushions at an estimate value of 12,000 Euros were provided by FELCOS Umbria for the purpose of the training, in addition, 9 other wheelchairs provided by UNDP for the same purpose. These assistive devices will be donated to reinforce the equipment of MoH rehabilitation Center for patients assessment and evaluation after the training. Donations by FELCOS Umbria for more wheelchairs has been possible thanks to different Italian companies specialized on assistive devices. Additional 6 customized wheelchairs, for an estimated value of 15,000 euros, will be delivered by UNDP and FELCOS to the case studies patients who participated in the training.

The situation of war-born injuries and resulting impairment and disability was clearly reported as a number one priority for humanitarian response with an estimation of around 2.8 million people living with disabilities in Syria.

UNDP as one of the first responders to PWDs' needs in Syria during the crisis, encourages and hope similar cooperation will be feasible in the near future. Moreover, it is in UNDP intentions to expand this decentralized, horizontal modality of technical cooperation by mobilizing other partners, also to respond to needs in other sectors, always with the aim of increasing resilience in Syria.

---

**For further information, please contact:**

**Louay Fallouh**, Rehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities Project Manager, [louay.fallouh@undp.org](mailto:louay.fallouh@undp.org), Tel: +963 95 88 80 024

**Giacomo Negrotto**, Partnership Development Officer, [giacomo.negrotto@undp.org](mailto:giacomo.negrotto@undp.org), Tel: +963 99 33 38 908

**Asma' Nashawati**, Communications Associate, [asma.nashawati@undp.org](mailto:asma.nashawati@undp.org), Tel: +963 99 33 00 193

---

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.