



# FCO independent monitoring programme

## Bi-annual Findings Report

Syria

Reporting period: Workplan 1, September 2016 – June 2017

Cover photo: Pilot data collection session for Taallum North in Atareb, Aleppo © IMPACT, 2017

**About IMPACT**

IMPACT Initiatives is a Geneva based think-and-do-tank, created in 2010. IMPACT is a member of the ACTED Group. IMPACT's teams implement assessment, monitoring & evaluation and organisational capacity-building programmes in direct partnership with aid actors or through its inter-agency initiatives, REACH and Agora. Headquartered in Geneva, IMPACT has an established field presence in over 15 countries. IMPACT's team is composed of over 300 staff, including 60 full-time international experts, as well as a roster of consultants, who are currently implementing over 50 programmes across Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Central and South-East Asia, and Eastern Europe

## Executive summary

The situation in Syria has significantly deteriorated in 2015 and it is estimated that approximately 250,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict and 6.5 million are internally displaced. An estimated 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including 4.49 million in hard to reach areas and some 360,000 in besieged areas<sup>1</sup>. According to UNICEF, 8.7 million people are unable to meet their basic food needs, and community vulnerability has worsened as many essential services, such as health facilities, food security and schools have been closed or are operating at reduced capacity (2016).

In this highly volatile security environment, monitoring exercises in Syria are extremely challenging and a general lack of reliable information prevails in a rapidly changing context. This high risk security situation makes it challenging for Her Majesty's Government (HMG) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to effectively monitor the delivery of projects supported through HMG in Syria.

IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT) has developed a systematic third party monitoring (TPM) in support of HMG-funded projects to increase their accountability and effectiveness. The information collected aims to support HMG implementing partners (IPs) in assessing and where necessary readjusting their activities. To this aim, this TPM exercise provides regular, predictable, evidence-based and independent information to HMG.

From September 2016 to June 2017, IMPACT has completed the first workplan of this TPM. During the first workplan, monitoring cycles<sup>2</sup> of the following projects have been completed: Taallum (North<sup>3</sup>), Tamkeen, Ciheam Bari and Aman Network. The most relevant findings derived from the primary data collected by IMPACT monitors are presented in this report. Key observations are outlined below:

- **Tamkeen:** Tamkeen was found to have contributed to increase the capacity of local governance actors to deliver services and make an effort to involve civil society in decision-making processes, although women's participation was limited to the completion of questionnaires rather than participation in public meetings.
- **Taallum North:** Trainings provided by Taallum North were found to have increased Education Assembly (EA) and Education Directorate (ED) staff's capacity to deliver education services. However, some interviewees have stated that their workload has increased and that additional personal expenses occurred due to their participation in the project. Support provided to EA/ED offices and schools was found to respond to the major needs reported by interviewed staff: lack of resources such as heaters and furniture.
- **Ciheam Bari:** The subsidized agricultural inputs provided by Ciheam Bari were identified as crucial by farmers and livestock breeders in the monitored locations in Afrin, Batabo (Aleppo Governorate) and Maaret Misrin (Idleb Governorate). Yet, across all locations, the quantity of inputs provided was identified as insufficient by most beneficiaries. The selection procedure for beneficiaries, which requires Local Councils to verify information submitted to Ciheam Bari by potential beneficiaries, was considered fair by most interviewees. However, the FGD in Batabo pointed at favouritism of Local Council members towards acquaintances.
- **Aman Network:** Aman network, a group of 50 volunteer community leaders who work to manage local conflict to be non-violent, has contributed to communities having adopted a more inclusive dialogue based approach to resolving conflict. According to the TPM conducted across five districts in Aleppo and Idleb Governorates, trust of local communities in public institutions has increased but space for improvement exists.

<sup>1</sup> Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> For a monitoring cycle to be completed the following steps have to be taken: data collected, data cleaned, data analyzed, draft output report submitted to DFID.

<sup>3</sup> Taallum North and South are the same project. However, due to geographical distance, TPM was conducted at different times, which is reflected in two reports having been published on this project, i.e. Taallum North and Taallum South.

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## Geographic Classifications

<b>Governorate</b>	Highest form of governance below the national level (admin level 1)
<b>District</b>	Sub-division of a governorate in which government institutions operate (admin level 2)
<b>Sub-district</b>	Sub-division of a district in which government institutions operate (admin level 3)
<b>Community</b>	Bounded clustering of population in the form of a city, town or village (admin level 4)
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	Lowest administrative unit within a city (admin level 5 or 6)

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>AN</b>	Amman Network
<b>Ciheam Bari</b>	Support to Agricultural Livelihoods Programme
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSSF</b>	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>DO</b>	Direct Observation
<b>EA</b>	Education Assembly
<b>ED</b>	Education Directorate
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>HMG</b>	Her Majesty's Government
<b>FDG</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IP</b>	Implementing Partner
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>KI</b>	Key Informant
<b>LAC</b>	Local Administrative Council
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>PCI</b>	Peaceful Change Initiative
<b>SDR</b>	Secondary Data Review
<b>TC</b>	Tamkeen Committee
<b>TPM</b>	Third Party Monitoring

## Introduction

The situation in Syria has significantly deteriorated in 2015 and it is estimated that approximately 250,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict and 6.5 million are internally displaced. An estimated 13.5 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including 4.49 million in hard to reach areas, and some 360,000 in besieged areas. A significant proportion of those in need are children, now estimated at 6 million<sup>4</sup>. According to UNICEF, 8.7 million people are unable to meet their basic food needs and 70% of the population lack access to safe drinking water. Community vulnerability has worsened as many essential services, such as health facilities and schools have been closed or are operating at reduced capacity.

### The key stakeholders of this independent monitoring programme

- Donor: Her Majesty's Government (HMG), represented by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- Third Party Monitoring agency: IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT).
- Implementing Partners and programmes: Adam Smith International (Governance through Education Programme; Syria Stabilization Response Mechanism, Tamkeen), Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (Support to Agricultural Livelihoods Programme), ARK (Grassroots Programme), Peaceful Change Initiative and CCSD (Improving Human Security and Building Peace Capital in Syria Programme).

### The structure and the rationale of this independent monitoring programme

HMG supports a variety of programmes through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). The intended impacts of these programmes are: Effective, legitimate and credible local government and security actors; an inclusive political process and approach to reconciliation; community and individual resilience to extremism; and erosion of the influence of violent extremist organizations<sup>5</sup>.

It is expected that the development and inclusion of a systematic third party monitoring (TPM) in support of HMG-funded programmes will contribute to increase the accountability and effectiveness of such programmes and related projects by providing regular, predictable, evidence-based and independent information. This information intends to support HMG's IP's in assessing their performance and where necessary adjust their activities.

IMPACT started to work with all stakeholders on developing research questions, indicators and assessment tools required for this TPM exercise in June 2016. The TPM is set to end in March 2019. The TPM is divided into five workplans, workplan 1 has been finalized on 15 June 2017.

This report provides a detailed summary on research methods used, findings reported and challenges observed by IMPACT assessment and monitoring teams for the following projects: Taallum North, Tamkeen, Ciheam Bari and Aman Network. Output reports for these four monitored projects have been submitted by IMPACT to HMG. This report does not present information on the following projects: Taallum South, Syria Stabilization Response Mechanism (SRM) and Grassroots. Findings of the latter three will be presented in the next bi-annual report, which is due in November 2017. Please see Table 1 for an overview on all IPs, HMG funded programmes, projects monitored and services provided by these projects.

<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Syria CSSF Theory of Change.

Table 1: Overview IPs, programmes, projects and services delivered<sup>6</sup>

IP	HMG-funded Programme	Projects monitored by IMPACT	Services delivered
Adam Smith International	Governance Through Education Programme	Taallum (North and South)	Institutions prepared to deliver quality education services in the long term.
	Syria Stabilization Response Mechanism (SRM)	SRM004	Hospitals reinforced to increase protection of staff and patients.
	Syria Stabilization Response Mechanism	SRM003	Fuel and food for the civilian population sufficient for at least one month stored.
	Syria Stabilization Mechanism	SRM026	Support to teachers and administrative staff of schools through stipends provided.
	Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria	Tamkeen	Support to communities to identify and address key needs provided. Support for education, healthcare, infrastructure.
Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari	Support to Agricultural Livelihoods Programme	Ciheam Bari	Subsidised agricultural inputs to farmers distributed.
ARK	Support to Grassroots Media Activism in Syria <sup>7</sup>	Moubader	Strategic Communication (magazine, social media) to support civil society initiatives.
Peaceful Change Initiative (PCI) & CCSD	Improving Human Security and Building Peace Capital in Syria	Amman Network	Development of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms between individuals supported.

<sup>6</sup> Projects indicated in grey are not reported on in this report. For Taallum, only projects in Northern Syria are reported on.

<sup>7</sup> Further referred to as "ARK-Grassroots".

## Methodology

### Objective

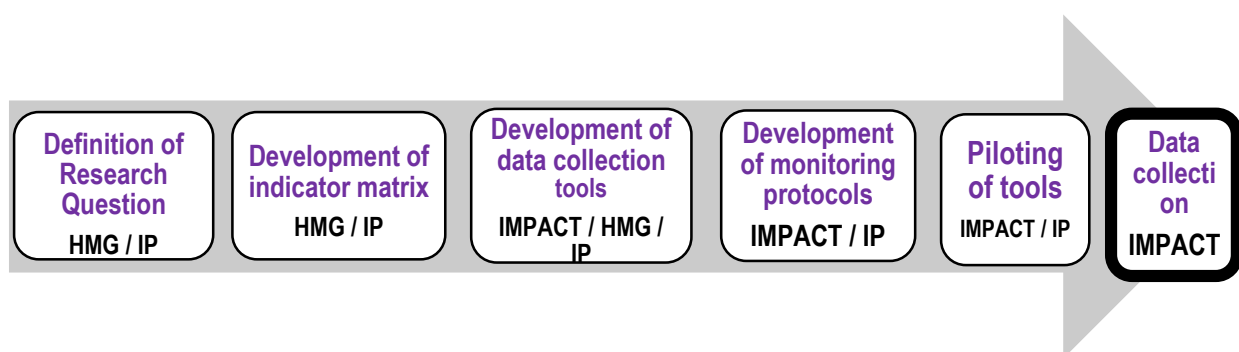
IMPACT provides information that will help assess the effective delivery of projects, contribute to improved project design and contribute to the evidence base of what does and does not work in the context of Syria. This TPM is designed to add value to IP's own monitoring, verifying output delivery, triangulating IP reporting, and obtaining user/beneficiary perspectives on project performance. Monitoring is the product of close collaboration between stakeholders, including HMG, local IPs and IMPACT.

### Monitoring cycle

As outlined in Figure 1, monitoring cycles for this TPM began with the definition of research questions. These were defined by HMG in consultation with individual IPs and IMPACT. Following this, IMPACT engaged closely with HMG and the individual IPs to develop suitable indicators. These indicators were developed to address the research questions. The indicators used were based on information obtained from project documents, which were shared with IMPACT by HMG and individual IPs ahead of each monitoring phase. Once indicators had been approved by HMG and IPs, IMPACT proceeded with the technical design of the assessment tools. For all indicators, data collection tools were developed and corresponding data collection methods were selected.

An initial draft of the data collection tools in English was submitted to HMG for feedback. Once a final version had been validated by HMG, IMPACT translated the tools from English to Arabic. The Arabic version was shared with the IPs for verification of translation and correct use of terminologies. In order to outline data collection procedures and facilitate the communication between IMPACT and the IP field teams, IMPACT developed specific monitoring protocols to guide all stakeholders, including enumerators, during the data collection process. IMPACT enumerators then proceeded to piloting the assessment tools and collecting the data.

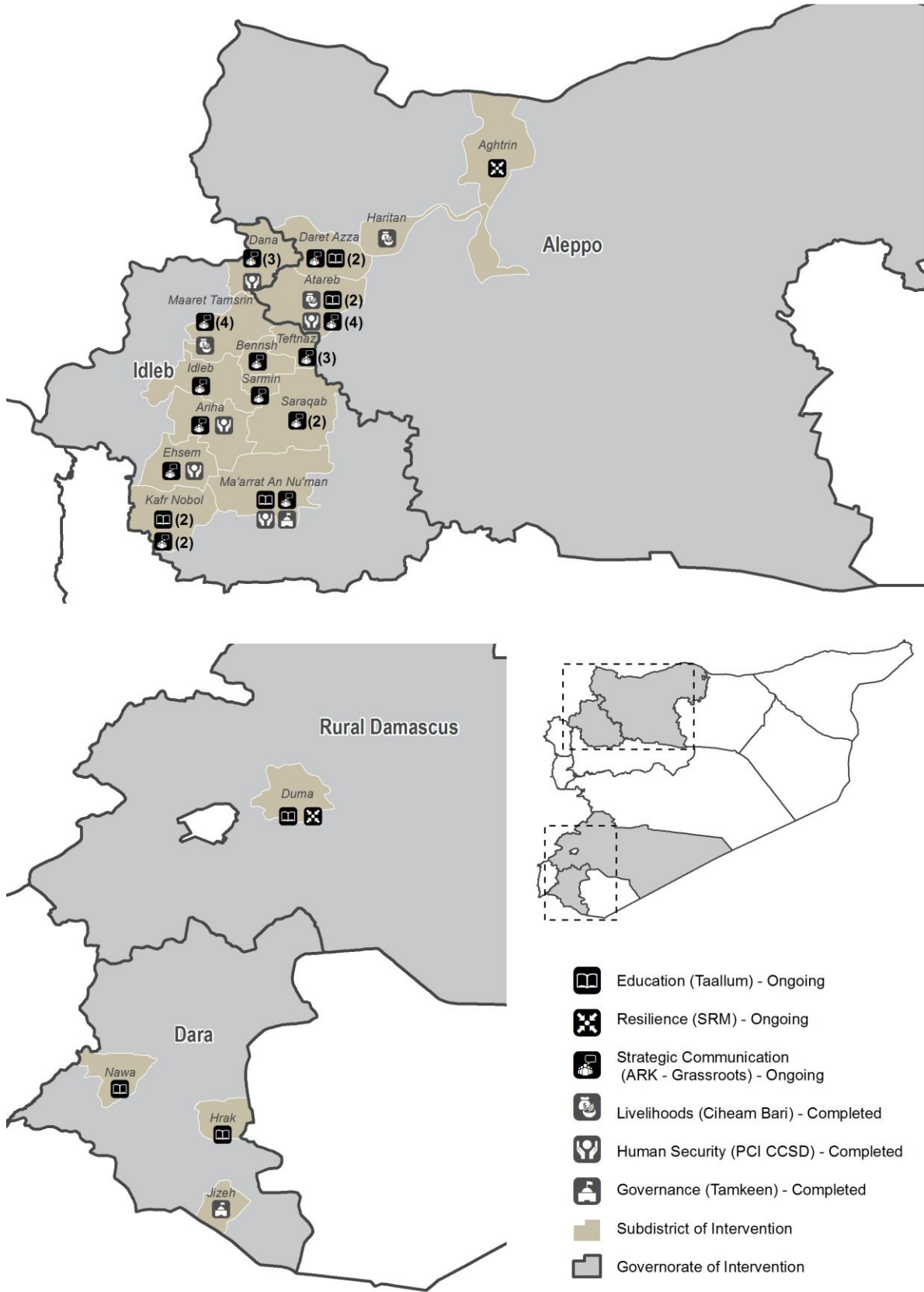
Figure 1. Research design steps and actors involved



### Area of Study

This TPM focused on project activities implemented in moderate opposition held areas in Syria. Locations monitored in this exercise have been selected by the IPs based on implementation status of activities and access to the location. Please see Map 1 for detailed information on the projects monitored. To note, Map 1 contains information on completed TPM exercises, i.e. Taallum (North), Tamkeen, Ciheam Bari and Aman Network. In addition, Map 1 also includes information on HMG funded projects, for which the TPM is currently being conducted by IMPACT, i.e. SRM, Grassroots, Taallum (South).

Map 1: Project locations at sub-district level and status of monitoring activities



## Data collection strategy

A combination of different qualitative methods has been employed during the TPM of Taallum South, Tamkeen, Ciheam Bari and PCI. The identification of suitable methods has been based on the nature of the individual project to be monitored, the information to be collected, the research question to be addressed and indicators to be measured. Consequently, data collection strategies were established on a project-by-project basis. Data collection methods, including direct observation (DO), key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) employed during Workplan 1 are listed in Table 2 and are further elaborated on in the following sub-sections. Table 2 provides an overview of completed and on-going monitoring activities, per project. In addition, information on cancelled activities as well as reasons for cancellation is provided.

**Table 2. Number of data collection activities implemented and cancelled per project and per type of data collection method<sup>8</sup>**

Project	Status	DO	KII	FGD	Individual Surveys <sup>9</sup>	Cancelled Activities	Cancellation reason
Aman Network	Completed	0	37	5	0	0	-
Tamkeen	Completed	2	20	2	0	2	Participants not collaborating
Taallum North	Completed	3	26	10	0	0	-
Taallum South	Ongoing	2	32	8	0	0	-
Ciheam Bari	Completed	0	29	6	0	8	Security
SRM003	Ongoing	27	1	0	0	3	Security
SRM004	Ongoing	6	0	0	0	0	-
SRM026	Ongoing	0	24	0	0	0	-
ARK-Grassroots	Ongoing	62	9	0	327	1	Participants not collaborating
<b>Total</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>14</b>	

## Direct observation

Direct observation (DO) was used with the purpose of obtaining descriptive information from a neutral third party of the environment/context of a particular intervention. The focus of the DO in each individual monitoring exercise was centered on particular aspects agreed on and central to the monitoring exercise.

This method was used in more than half of the monitoring cycles implemented during this reporting period (five out of eight). IMPACT enumerators were thoroughly trained in direct observation techniques. Enumerators were provided pre-designed observation forms that guided the field activities and allowed them to proceed in a more systematic and structured manner in recording relevant information at the monitoring site.

<sup>8</sup> Status 11<sup>th</sup> July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017.

<sup>9</sup> This method has been used for ARK-Grassroots and will be described in detail in the next bi-annual key findings report.

Despite the advantages of DO, this method is susceptible to the monitors' bias. In order to reduce this risk, DO conducted in the field included, whenever possible, visual evidence (for example pictures and videos) and were combined with additional qualitative methods.

### Key Informant Interviews

Throughout workplan 1, KIIs have been the most recurrent data collection method employed – used in seven out of the eight monitoring cycles presented in this report. This method is proven to be effective in providing in-depth information in context such as Syria where lack of accessibility and a highly volatile and dynamic context impede probability sampling.

A purposive sampling strategy was applied in the selection of KIIs, based on their level of knowledge of the particular monitoring activity, location and topic being assessed. KIIs to be interviewed were selected by the IPs. In the context of this TPM exercise, key informants included:

- Beneficiaries: those who benefited directly and indirectly from the activities implemented.
- IP staff that implemented the projects: managers, officers and technical experts.
- The representatives of the moderate opposition and/ or civil society: Local Councils and affiliated Committees and Civil Society Organisations.

### Focus Group Discussions

In the context of this TPM, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method helped to explore the dynamics and individual viewpoints and interests within the community. FGDs were used in more than half of the monitoring cycles initiated to date (five out of eight). Trainings of the enumerators, on the questionnaire and the topic is conducted in the week prior to the implementation of the FGD to ensure that useful information is collected. A particular focus is given to the probing questions and to the mediation role of enumerators within the activity, to ensure fruitful and relevant discussions that produce insightful information.

A purposive selection is done by IPs to have FGD participants who are the most adequate to answer the questions. Sampling also follows a homogeneous strategy, bringing together people of similar backgrounds and experiences in order to mitigate potential power dynamics which may prevent some of the participants from speaking freely. All FGDs conducted by IMPACT during the TPM had between 5 and 10 participants, who were older than 18 years. To the extent possible and whenever relevant, both male and female were mobilised, in separate sessions, to ensure gender balance representation in findings. The number of FGDs per location and type was decided in the framework of each programme and in each location.

### Secondary Data Review

For the purpose of this TPM, IMPACT has used secondary data review (SDR) in order to understand the scope, scale, objectives and activities of the projects monitored. The SDR information used in the monitoring cycle included programme documents; beneficiary lists, supply delivery lists, procurement lists, and equipment lists. When relevant, internal documents of IPs were also incorporated into the analysis process for triangulation with evidence gathered in the field.

### Piloting of tools

Prior to the implementation of the monitoring questionnaires in the field, one day of fieldwork has been conducted to pilot the tools. This piloting was done both at the IMPACT office and field level to make sure that potential issues with the tools (poor terminology, misunderstandings, errors in translation, etc.) were addressed prior to the official data collection process. The piloting of the tools at field level has been done

with individuals that did not take part in the actual data collection activities but have the same profile as the target groups.

In the case of all monitoring activities presented in this report, final findings do not include data collected throughout pilot activities. However, due to the potential challenges in data collection in a highly volatile setting, such as the cancelation of data collection activities due to the security conditions, this data could be added to the final analysis of future monitoring activities. This should be done exclusively in cases where no or only minor modifications have been done in assessment tools between pilot and actual data collection.

## Analysis

After each data collection session, monitors were debriefed by the IMPACT field coordinators. These debriefing sessions, done over the phone or on Skype, consisted in reviewing the questionnaire and ensuring notes collected during FGDs and KIIs were forwarded to IMPACT Field Coordinators as comprehensively and understandably as possible. Debriefings also served the purpose of identifying any mismatching or confusing information, lack of accuracy and helped to identify data that required further triangulation. Once this process has been finalized, primary data was translated by IMPACT field coordinators or by external translators.

The analysis of the data collected in the qualitative text notes (FGDs and KIIs) relied on field notes taken by monitors during the interview/discussion, as well as on the monitors' post-FGD debriefing<sup>10</sup>. Primary qualitative data is coded using Atlas TI software, being split into sentences (quotations) and divided according to the research question and indicators that the research addresses. Primary data analysis is done considering the following elements:

- **Frequency:** how many times issues were reported by FGD and KII participants.
- **Specificity:** when topics are not frequently referred to but are particularly emphasized by individual respondents.
- **Emotions and behaviours:** more weight was given to themes and comments for which participants showed enthusiasm, passion or intensity. Indifference to certain topics and issues has also been noted.

IMPACT assured respondents that anonymity is preserved during all stages of the TPM process, associating a code to each respondent that replaced their name in the questionnaire and in the database. To further assure the confidentiality of the data, primary data archives are accessible only to IMPACT and HMG staff members who have been previously granted access to the data.

## Challenges and Limitations

Key challenges and limitations faced during the data collection and analysis process are listed below:

- As shown in Table 2, a number of data collection activities had to be cancelled due to security concerns in assessed areas. On most occasions activities have been rescheduled. Where it was not possible to re-schedule monitoring activities, the robustness of findings has been reduced.
- On certain occasions, IMPACT enumerators were confronted with KIs unwilling to respond<sup>11</sup> and/or poorly informed on monitored activities. This risk can be minimized by a thorough selection of KIs participating in

<sup>10</sup> These documents are available in both their Arabic and English versions upon request.

<sup>11</sup> Taallum North, the KI, who has been selected by the IP, was paid for by the Syrian Regime and had instructions from his superior not to respond. The monitor only learned about the affiliation of the KI during the interview. The interview was not completed.

data collection activities and the inclusion of additional KIs in the list provided by the IP to ensure the expected number of interviews be obtained in case of KIs unable/ unwilling to cooperate.

- FGD participants have also been unwilling to collaborate at few occasions. Organizing more FGDs per location and surveyed group, where possible, could help to address resulting data shortages in the future
- Ideally, when combined methods (e.g. KIIs and FGDs in the same location) are used, interviewees should take part in one data collection activity only in order to maximize the availability of diverse information and points of view. However, this was not always possible during this TPM where the number of individuals with required profiles to participate in FGDs and KIIs was sometimes insufficient. This was the case in the Ciheam Bari monitoring exercise. Due to the limited number of Ciheam Bari technicians working in visited locations, IMPACT interviewed the same technicians in FGDs and KIIs. This limited both the range of perspectives included in the analysis and the possibility of triangulation between responses.
- For reasons linked to the volatile operating context in Syria, IMPACT security focal points have advised IMPACT against the use of mobile data collection devices in the field. Consequently, data collection was done exclusively with paper forms reducing quality control mechanisms available to assure data quality. This also causes delays in data analysis due to the time-consuming process of data entry.
- The dates during which activities were implemented by IPs have often been subject to changes due to the rapidly changing security environments. As a “third party”, IMPACT did not always receive the information in time to adjust the planning of activities. This has been the case for the monitoring activities for SRM004 (food and fuel stockpiling) and SRM026 (stipend distribution to teachers), where IMPACT field teams arrived at the monitoring site to be informed that the activities had not been finalized and thus the monitoring activities could not be conducted. These activities were later rescheduled and thus no impact on the final findings occurred. Nonetheless, these incidents had a negative impact on the cost efficiency of this TPM, increasing the cost of activities as enumerators are payed on a daily basis.
- Communication between HMG, IPs and IMPACT will ideally be increased for future monitoring cycles to ensure that IMPACT collects results most relevant to HMG. Insufficient communication between all stakeholders has caused misinterpretation of how to direct research questions by IMPACT. To note, list of beneficiaries and stakeholders forwarded by IPs to be interviewed should also be connected to the research questions. Mismatches have been observed for Taallum North and Ciheam Bari.

## Findings by Implementing Partner

This section summarizes the key findings of the TPM of the following IP's projects:

1. Adam Smith International (Tamkeen);
2. Adam Smith International (Taallum North);
3. Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (Ciheam Bari); and
4. Peaceful Change Initiative & CCSD (Aman Network).

Findings presented per project and IP are not generalizable and are strictly connected to the monitored locations. Further, findings per monitored location represent the opinions and perceptions of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Consequently, results are indicative of the projects' overall performance.

### Adam Smith International

#### Tamkeen

##### Intervention Background

The Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria project (referred to as "Tamkeen") was designed to build good governance practices in opposition-held areas in Syria through the participatory delivery of basic services. Tamkeen convened groups of local stakeholders at the community level (known as Tamkeen Committees) to plan and facilitate the delivery of projects from pre-defined "menus" of projects called Basic Packages of Services (BPSs). Members of Tamkeen Committees (TCs) come from emerging governance structures that represent the moderate opposition (generally the Local Council), members of civil society groups and other members of the community.

Targeting four Governorates in Syria (Aleppo, Idlib, Rif Damascus and Dara'a), the project provided training in good governance principles and practices, and provided grants which the Tamkeen Committees used to plan and implement projects. These projects focused on rehabilitating service delivery in each of the communities based on needs identified by the committees. The monitoring was conducted by IMPACT from 31 October 2016 to 2 November 2016 in the Governorates of Idleb, Aleppo, and Dara'a. However, monitoring activities in Aleppo could not take place due to security risks. In total, IMPACT implemented two FGDs with members of the Local Administrative Council (LAC) and from the Tamkeen Committee (TC), 20 KIIs with LAC and TC members as well as with male and female representatives of local civil society organisation (CSO), and two Direct Observations of LAC projects. Overarching research questions addressed were:

- *Is capacity being built in the LAC and how?*
- *How are the handover LAC consulting the community and civil society and what role are women and minorities playing?*
- *What role is the Tamkeen Committee playing in the community post transition?*

##### **Key finding # 1: Tamkeen project contributed to increased capacity amongst local actors**

The Tamkeen project has likely contributed to building the capacity of local council administration through two means: developing forms and guidelines for the LAC to use, and provided training on various topics, such as management, procurement, financial management, budgeting/planning and project proposals. All four key informants LAC members in Jiza agreed that the trainings delivered by TC were useful, indicating trainings on procurement, management skills and project proposals as having been particularly helpful to their work. In Ma'arat Al Nouman, three out of four LAC members interviewed reported TC trainings to have increased the affectivity of their work.

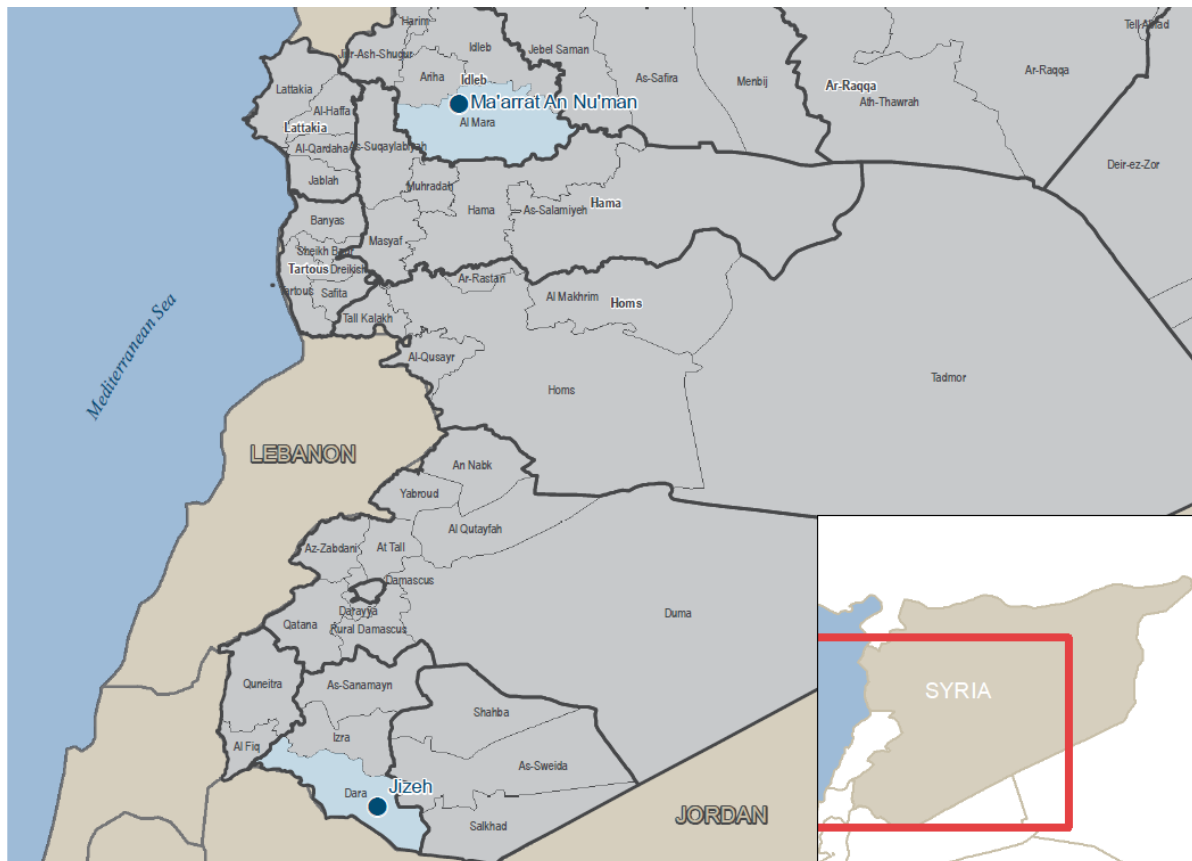
In addition, findings suggest the current system of rotating LAC members every six months to be an obstacle for the Tamkeen of working with the local administrative council in implementing projects. This rotating system can pose a challenge to the transfer of institutional knowledge given that members have to be trained with each new rotation.

**Key finding # 2: Selection of projects has to some extent been done through collective decision-making mechanisms**

Findings suggest that the LACs make an effort to involve the community and civil society in decision-making processes. According to KIIs with CSO representatives and FGDs with LAC members, the LAC consults CSO representatives in public meetings and in community engagement activities in order to ensure that projects implemented/financed by TC are relevant to the community. During these activities, community participants can express their concerns that are later taken into consideration for the future service delivery planning. LACs also organise collective voting procedures to determine the communities' priorities and select projects to be implemented.

However, results indicate LACs in visited locations did not keep records of either the number of community engagement activities they had organised, or the numbers of participants at each one. For example, in the case of the LAC in Ma'arat Al Nouman, one key informant stated the LAC had organised 3 community engagement activities, whilst another estimated this to be 15. In Jiza, informants' response varied from 3 to 30 when asked about the number of community engagement activities the LAC had organized. With regard to the number of people attending, responses ranged from 30 to 100 people. The divergent answers given point towards a lack of record keeping of these activities that could limit the results of these participatory mechanisms and reduce LAC's ability to be accountable towards participants and towards the community.

Map 2. Tamkeen locations assessed by TPM activities



### Key finding # 3: Female participation in decision-making processes has improved through consultation via questionnaires

Women's involvement in the consultation process was planned to be assessed through their level of participation in LAC public meetings. Overall women participation in public meetings seems to be limited and almost inexistent. This can be observed through the answers given to the question regarding the number of women attending the last LAC meeting. For example, in Ma'arat Al Nouman, responses varied between 1 and 12 women said to have attended the last LAC public meeting, whereas in Jiza responses vary from 0 to 15. The limited participation of women in public meetings was confirmed by a female representative of the civil society interviewed that explaining that "women (would) need to engage with men all the time and this goes against the traditions in this community".

Although apparently not present in public meetings, women interviewed affirmed they participate in decision-making processes through a questionnaire system initiated by TC and continued by the LACs. In this system, questionnaires are handed out to the community by the LAC to consult on suggested projects as well as to vote on most relevant projects to be implemented, enabling women participation despite their absence in the public meetings.

### Concluding remarks

The procedures set in place by Tamkeen have likely caused the LACs in monitored locations to consult with the community in public meetings and in community engagement activities. These activities contribute to ensure that projects financed by TC are relevant to the community. Although women do not participate in

public meetings due to the existing cultural norms, alternative mechanisms – such as distribution of questionnaires – were put in place to enable them to take part in collective decision-making processes. Overall, the dynamics created by Tamkeen have likely positively fostered collective decision-making mechanisms within targeted communities, contributing to assure essential services delivery is aligned with community needs.

## Taallum Initiative<sup>12</sup>

### Intervention Background

Taallum Initiative (referred to as “Taallum”) is a pilot project launched in February 2016 that seeks to strengthen governance structures to deliver education services to people in areas of Syria controlled by the moderate opposition. Taallum is one of the projects supported by HMG under the ‘Governance through Education’ programme, working predominantly with officials from provincial Education Directorates (EDs) and local Education Assemblies (EAs) in four Governorates in Syria (Aleppo, Idleb, Rif Damascus and Dara’a).

The project delivers capacity building support to EA/ED staff through three modules: (i.) operations and maintenance; (ii.) improving the learning environment for teachers and children; and (iii.) strengthening opportunities to learn. Through these three modules, Taallum trains, coaches and mentors key ED and EA staff to be able to design suitable and sustainable responses to the complex barriers to education, enhancing conditions for teaching and learning. Between each module, participating institutions produce action plans and a corresponding budget. Once these are validated by a committee within Taallum, funds are released and institutions proceed to deliver services following the set of procedures and know-how introduced during the modules. In this context, Taallum seeks to build system level capacity to support the long-term, moderate opposition led development of education in Syria, replicating, as much as possible, a standard government planning process and cycle.

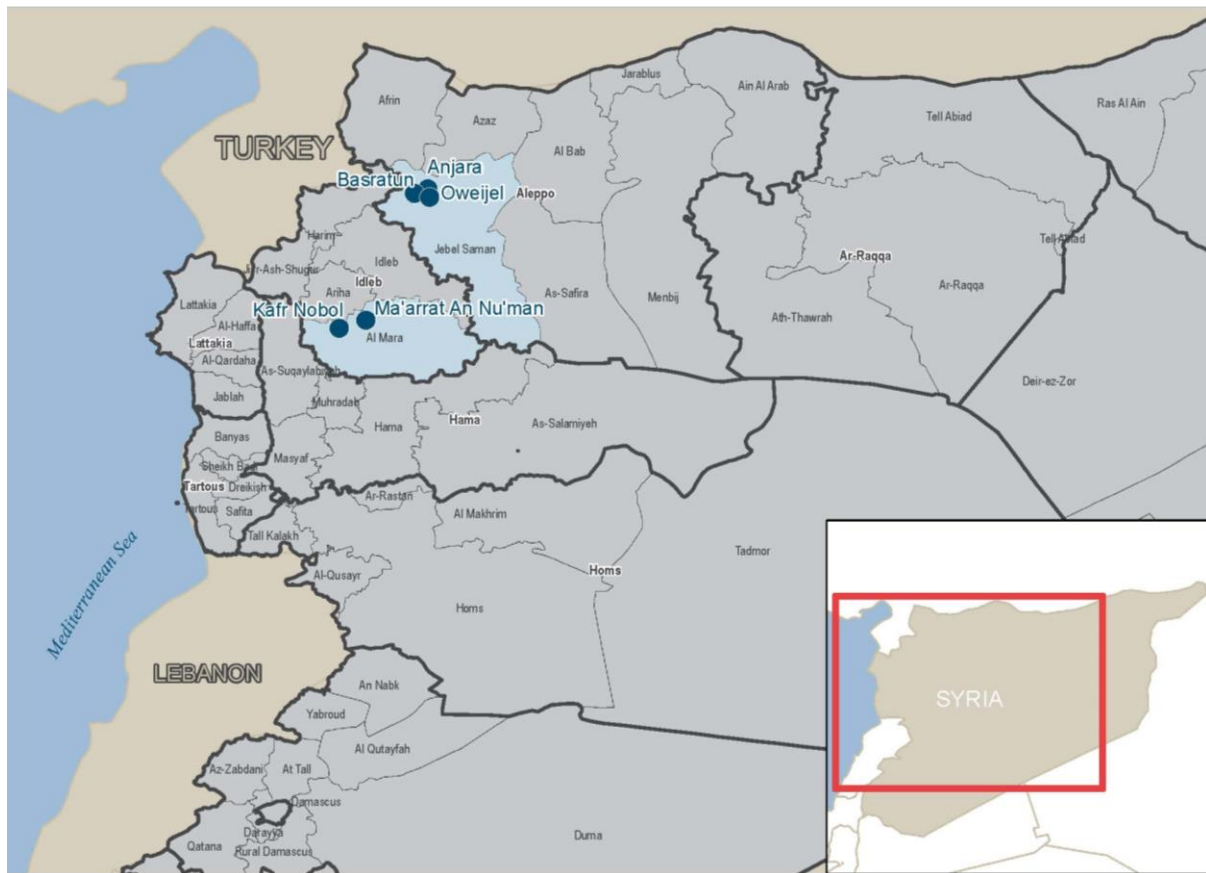
The monitoring exercise was conducted in two rounds in Northern Syria. The first round was conducted from 7 to 15 November 2016 in Anjara (Aleppo Governorate), Kafr Nbol (Idleb governorate) and Ma’arat Al Nouman (Idleb Governorate), and the second round was conducted from 10 January 2017 to 18 January 2017 in Oweijel and Basratun (Aleppo Governorate), Kafr Nbol (Idleb Governorate) and Ma’arat Al Nouman (Idleb Governorate). In total, IMPACT implemented 2 FGDs with EA/ED’s representatives, 8 FGDs with parents from children’s attending the schools (one male and one female FGD in each location monitored), 26 KIIs with different target groups (Taallum staff, EA/ED representatives, and teachers/school leaders) and 3 DOs in schools monitored. See Map 3 for a visual overview of locations monitored during these two rounds. Overarching research questions addressed were:

- *What difference is Taallum making to the capacity of EAs/EDs to prioritise and deliver education services?*
- *What difference is Taallum making to conditions for teaching and learning in pilot locations?*

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<sup>12</sup> Findings presented here refer exclusively to Taallum Initiative activities implemented in Northern Syria. Activities in Southern Syria were assessed in a separate monitoring cycle and findings should be shared in the second semester of 2017.

Map 3. Taallum locations assessed by TPM activities



### Key findings # 1: Education Directorate and Education Assembly institutional capacity to deliver services increased

Institutional capacity building is supported through trainings provided on budgeting, planning, needs assessment, prioritising, and operations, management, monitoring and evaluation. All these trainings were perceived by interviewed EA/ED staff as having improved their ability to deliver education services.

Participants demonstrated a greater appreciation for the module addressing key challenges in their daily work. Given the limited budget availability, the budgeting module has been found most useful by interviewed staff, including the registration of assets and the quotation process. Limited financial resources have been mentioned by the majority of interviewees as a major challenge within EA/ED structures to conduct services. This is further accentuated by external factors such as high price fluctuation. Another topic positively rated by one respondent was the monitoring and evaluation, referred to as a mechanism of control against corruption.

Findings also suggest that the participation in capacity building activities can result in additional workload as well as expenses to participants (mostly linked to transportation and communication costs). This could lead to a lack of interest or demotivation of participants throughout the activities and should be addressed.

### Key finding # 2: Schools require multi-faceted support to further improve teaching and learning conditions

With respect to overall needs to improve the teaching and learning conditions in schools, all interviewees (EA/ED staff, teachers and parents) pointed towards limited resources as being a major challenge to be addressed. Schools were said to often be damaged – lack of doors, windows and functional sanitary facilities

–, to lack furniture as well as books and other supporting materials (such as maps, models or coloured printouts). Consequently, when asked about the most important components Taallum has contributed to improving learning and teaching conditions, interviewed ED/EA staff and teachers indicated that teaching materials are highly relevant. However, the provision of fuel and heating during winter time has also been highly appreciated and said to have increased student attendance rate.

Further additional elements were pointed out by both parents and teachers as being important to be addressed to improve education quality. The first element is in regard to the volatile security situation. As a result parents remain reluctant in sending their children to school. In addition, interviewed teachers reported facing difficulties in dealing with children given that the ongoing conflict impacts the psychological wellbeing of both students and teachers. The second element was in regard to the quantity and quality of teachers. According to interviewees, the number of teachers available was said to be insufficient to cover the needs and, although described as motivated, many teachers were reported to lack training and experience to provide a quality education. Although these factors may fall out of the scope of Taallum Initiatives, they could have an impact on the project's capacity to fully achieve its goals.

### Concluding remarks

Services provided by Taallum in monitored locations appear to be greatly appreciated by the vast majority of interviewed parents, teachers and administrative staff. However, as pointed out during this TPM exercise, areas for improvement exist to guarantee that education is of high quality and delivered regularly.

## Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari

### Ciheam Bari

#### Intervention Background

The *Support to Agricultural Livelihoods Programme* provides funding to the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IP) to implement the so-called Ciheam Bari project. Ciheam Bari provides subsidized agricultural inputs in moderate opposition-held areas in Syria. The inputs are delivered to farmers (also referred to as beneficiaries) to increase and improve agricultural production. In addition to supporting local food security, increasing and improving agricultural production would allow farmers to maintain and/ or even improve their livelihoods. The delivery and distribution of agricultural inputs include the active participation of Local Council members in the selection procedure of Ciheam Bari beneficiaries. The active participation of Local Council members in the selection procedure seeks to improve the moderate opposition's governance credibility.

Key stakeholders of the Ciheam Bari project include: (i.) the Ciheam Bari staff in Gaziantep, Turkey and Ciheam Bari staff in the three monitored locations inside Syria, (ii.) the beneficiaries (farmers) and (iii.) Local Council members. Within the Local Councils, the Agricultural Committees are responsible for coordinating agricultural activities. Ciheam Bari activities have been monitored by IMPACT in Afrin, Batabo (Aleppo) and Maaret Misrin (Idlib), from 23 January to 1 February 2017 (see Map 4)<sup>13</sup>. 37 KIIs and 6 FGDs were conducted across all three locations. All beneficiaries who participated in this monitoring exercise were male and farmers and/or livestock breeders. Overarching research questions addressed were:

- *What is the process for the delivery and distribution of fertiliser? What is the risk of diversion?*
- *Beneficiary selection – Are inputs going to the right people (people who match the criteria)?*
- *Development of projects in the groups and associations - how is the viability of ideas being assessed?*

<sup>13</sup> Three days in each Afrin and Maaret Misrin and two days in Batabo.

### **Finding # 1 – Agricultural inputs delivered and distributed**

The delivery and distribution of agricultural inputs appears to be well documented by Ciheam Bari staff in the monitored locations. Documentation includes warehouse receipts and photographs of delivered inputs. The risk of diversion seems to be low during delivery and distribution. The delivery of agricultural inputs, fertilizers specifically, has been mentioned as not aligning with the rhythm of the agricultural year. The delay in delivery is related to the difficulty of transporting inputs from Turkey into Syria. Both Ciheam Bari staff and beneficiaries have repeatedly mentioned the delay being a problem that needs to be addressed across all three monitored locations.

Overall, duration of storage in all three locations seems to be rather short, with Ciheam Bari staff in Maaret Misrin stating that they almost immediately<sup>14</sup> distribute delivered agricultural inputs to beneficiaries. Ciheam Bari staff across all three locations indicated that they are satisfied with the approach applied for distributing inputs to beneficiaries. Beneficiaries in Afrin and Maaret Misrin indicated that they are satisfied with the approach used to distribute agricultural inputs. However, beneficiaries in Batabo stated that the applied 'first come first served' approach causes over-crowding which could potentially be dangerous due to the insecure environment. A potential measure that was seen to mitigate over-crowding in Afrin was to allocate specific time-slots to beneficiaries for collecting inputs.

### **Finding # 2 – Ciheam Bari services perceived valuable by beneficiaries for supporting agricultural activities**

The vast majority of beneficiaries stated that Ciheam Bari services are crucial for conducting agricultural activities. The value of providing subsidized agricultural inputs to farmers is highly relevant to local food security and the livelihoods of those depending directly and indirectly on the agricultural sector.

Factors impeding improving and increasing agricultural activities include the reportedly insufficient supply of agricultural inputs in general and fertilizers and fodder (per farmer) in particular. In addition, several farmers emphasised that a greater variety of fertilizers is needed and that other inputs such as subsidised fuel and pesticides would be useful. In addition, the delayed delivery of fertilizers is negatively affecting agricultural production as timely application of fertilizers to the fields is key for conducting agricultural activities. Mitigation measures proposed by beneficiaries with regard to the delayed delivery of fertilizers include the proposition to deliver fertilizers for two agriculture cycles instead of for one cycle only (as currently done).

### **Finding # 3 – Perception of stakeholders on beneficiary selection processes positive overall**

Ciheam Bari staff works closely with the Local Councils in all three monitored locations. The Local Councils referred to in this report are moderate opposition-lead institutions inside Syria. The Agricultural Committees are embedded in the Local Councils and are the sub-bodies responsible for topics and issues related to agriculture.

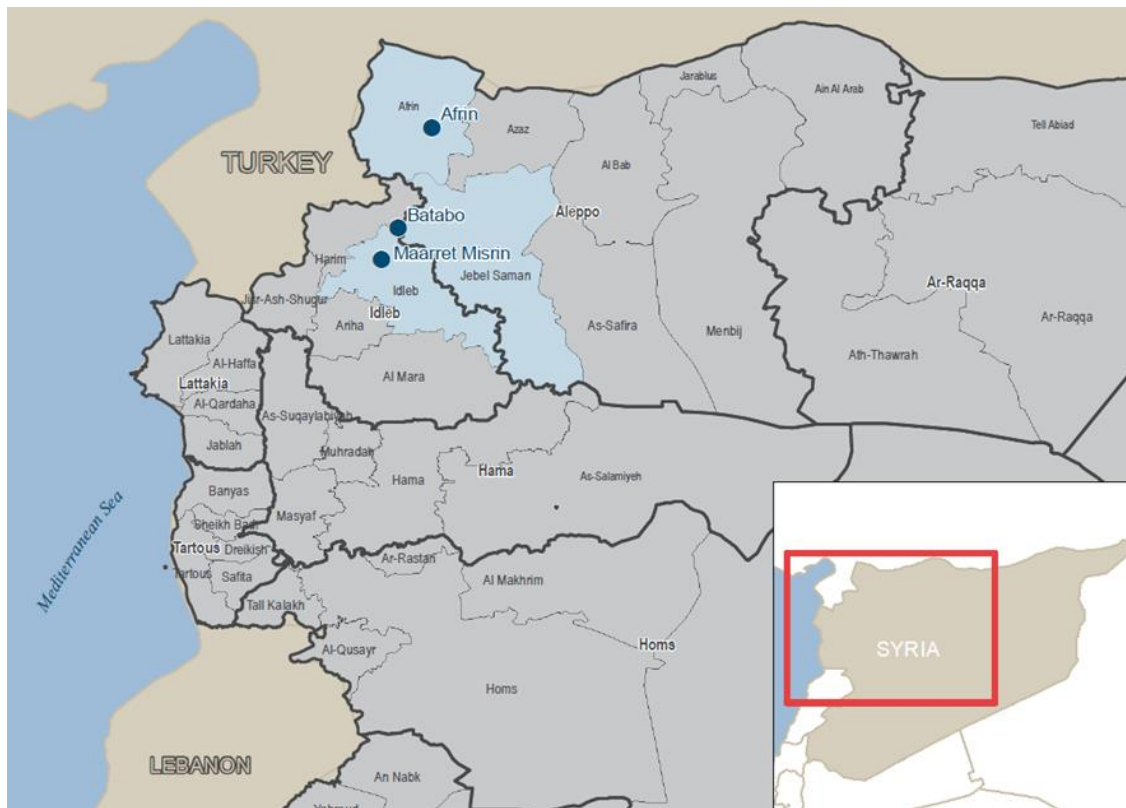
For pre-selecting beneficiaries, Ciheam Bari uses a set of criteria that helps to select and prioritize beneficiaries according to, for instance, their level of vulnerability. Potential beneficiaries can submit their applications for receiving subsidized agricultural input to Ciheam Bari. Their applications are examined by Ciheam Bari staff by using the pre-defined selection criteria. During the examination of applications, Ciheam Bari depends on the Agricultural Committees to verify the livelihood situation of farmers who apply for being selected as beneficiaries. The Agricultural Committee is therefore responsible for verifying that the information in the applications submitted by potential beneficiaries is correct.

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<sup>14</sup> Within 2-3 days at the latest after inputs have been received by Ciheam Bari staff.

Across all three locations, most beneficiaries appeared to have a limited understanding of selection criteria and processes. Nevertheless, most beneficiaries in Afrin and Maaret Misrin, stated that they believe the selection of beneficiaries to be fair and objective. On the contrary, beneficiaries in Batabo FGD expressed concerns about the selection process, stating that the Agricultural Committee members “sometimes” include close acquaintances in the selection. In that context, FGD participants provided the example that “some people do not even own a chick, yet they are registered and take feed for 100 sheep”.

Map 4. Ciheam Bari locations assessed by TPM activities



### Concluding remarks

In Afrin and Maaret Misrin, the Agricultural Committees appear to be perceived as fair and just. However, in Batabo the governance credibility of the moderate opposition has been questioned by interviewed beneficiaries. Complaints forwarded by beneficiaries would ideally be addressed. Setting up a civil society committee as proposed by the beneficiary in Batabo to serve as a checks and balances mechanism could help minimize risks of corruption within the Local Council and increase political participation of civil society.

## Peaceful Change Initiative & CCSD

### Amman Network

#### Intervention Background

The *Improving Human Security and Building Peace Capital in Syria Programme* aims to build peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms between individuals and groups in areas controlled by the moderate opposition. The IPs, CCSD and PCI jointly provide support to the Amman Network (AN), a group of 50 volunteer community

leaders who work to prevent and manage local conflict, and improve human security by fostering social cohesion and collaboration.

The TPM has been conducted by IMPACT staff during eight monitoring days between 17 October 2016 and 4 November 2016 in five districts in Aleppo and Idlib Governorates<sup>15</sup> (see Map 5). In addition, KIIs were conducted with CCSD staff in Gaziantep, Turkey (not indicated in Map 5). In total, five FGDs have been conducted with local community stakeholders. In addition, a total of 37 KIIs has been conducted: 10 with AN volunteers, 19 with AN local partners including CSO and Local Council members, and 8 with CCSD staff. Five out of eight KIIs with CCSD staff have been conducted in Gaziantep, Turkey. Overarching research questions addressed were:

- *Has greater reliance on an inclusive dialogue-based approach been built?*
- *Has AN's capacity to deliver high-impact human security, social awareness, and civil peace interventions increased?*
- *Has the acceptance of civilian-led initiatives that promote peace and/or dialogue with other sides increased in the target areas?*

### **Finding # 1 - Communities have adopted a more inclusive dialogue based approach to resolving conflict**

Greater reliance on an inclusive dialogue-based approach has been built in the assessed communities. Fourteen KIIs stated that in the past six months the way their community deals with conflict has changed for the better, with the idea of dialogue being an increasingly recognised conflict management tool by community members. When respondents were asked directly whether AN activities are having an impact on the way conflicts are addressed in the community, several interviewees from all communities mentioned that the establishment of reconciliation committees had a positive impact. Reportedly, these committees contribute to conflict resolution being more organised.

Overall, cooperation among local stakeholders has reportedly increased due to the promotion of dialogue by AN and its partners. In all locations monitored, levels of social cohesion are high, as there are no sectarian or religious differences. In relation to particular aspects that potentially bring tension to communities, such as the arrival of IDPs in host communities, it was mentioned that no difference is made between traditional communities and IDPs in Atareb Suburb.

### **Finding # 2 - Aman Network is recognized by local partners as having a positive influence with regard to conflict mitigation**

According to the number of community requests received by the AN, AN's services with regard to providing support and guidance on peaceful conflict resolution mechanism appear to be of high interest in monitored locations. Atareb Suburb, followed by Qah camps, had the highest number of community requests, with 40 and 36 respectively. According to interviewed CSO and Local Council members, AN volunteers are highly respected and their skills as qualified moderators are appreciated by all partners. Interviewed partners rated the mediation skills of all AN volunteers to be between good and very good/excellent, across all five target communities.

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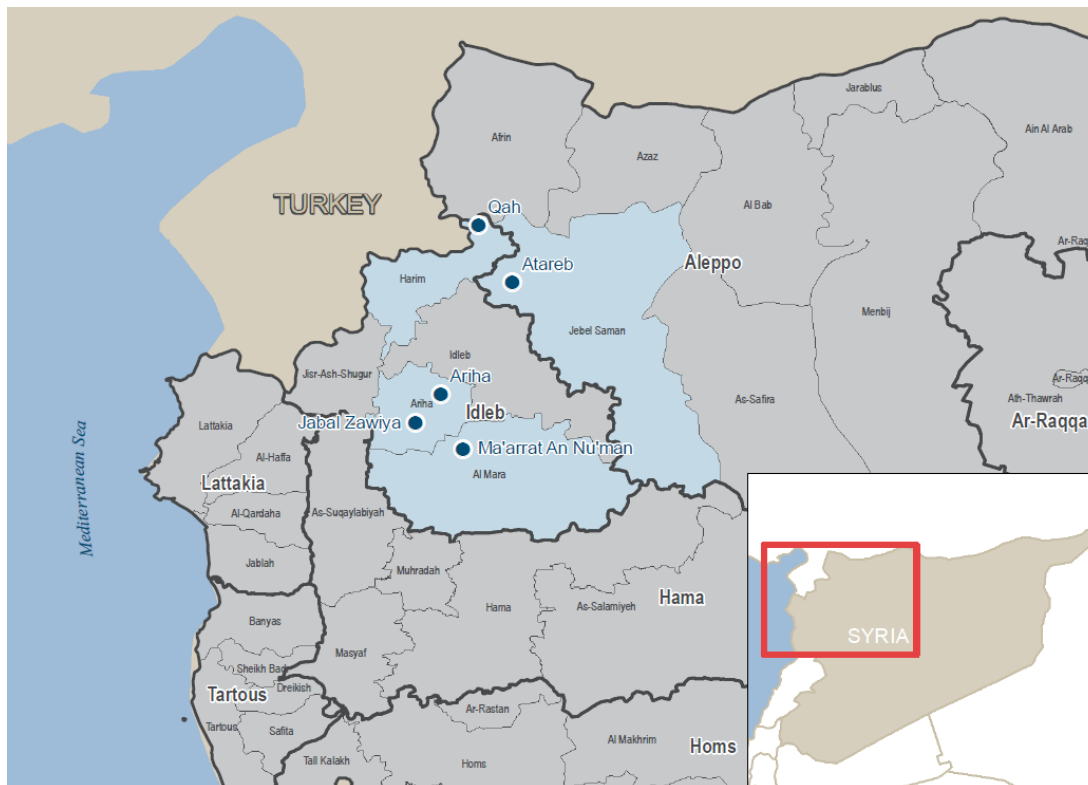
<sup>15</sup> Aleppo (Al-Atareb), Idlib (Maaret Al Nouman; Ariha, Jabal Al Zawiya; Harim).

### Finding # 3 – Trust of local communities in public institutions has increased but space for improvement exists

Interviewed CSO representatives who live in the monitored areas stated during FGDs that the degree of people's trust in local institutions has increased. The reported increased trust in Local Councils, local police and other local institutions is related to the fact that, according to CSOs, community members developed a stronger sense of being heard and supported by the Local Council and/ or other public institutions. Seminars and trainings provided to the Local Council by AN have been mentioned as being a key element in this positive development.

To note, the TPM results suggest that there is room for improvement in increasing trust in local institutions in some of the monitored locations. For example, two respondents mentioned that trust had not increased in Zawayah Mountain (Idleb), one in Maarat Al Nouman and Ariha (Idleb). In the FGD in Atarib, it was mentioned that preventing nepotism will increase trust.

Map 5. PCI and CCSD locations assessed by TPM activities



### Concluding remarks

AN is providing services that aim to create greater cohesion among the members of a community whilst (re-)creating trust of civil society into public institutions – ranging from Local Councils to local police. An improvement in the application of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms has reportedly been observed. In addition, the reconciliation committees established by the AN are perceived as valuable by the majority of KII and FGD participants and the trust in local institutions has reportedly increased during the last months. However, in almost all monitored locations, some of the interviewees stated that trust has not increased. In addition, indirect reference has been made to corruption. Reasons for why a number of participants in almost

every locations have reported that trust has not been increased would ideally be examined and addressed by the IP.

## Conclusion

Overall, the services provided by the projects monitored through this TPM exercise appear to be well received by beneficiaries and found to be useful by administrative bodies such as Local Councils and Committees. Even though expressing their overall satisfaction with most projects and related services, beneficiaries have used the opportunity provided by this TPM exercise to also point out project components that require improvement. As for example, Ciheam Bari beneficiaries in Batabo stated that the approach chosen by the IP to distribute agricultural inputs feels unsafe and should be improved. In general, interviewed beneficiaries and staff of administrative bodies stated to be satisfied with the IP responsible for implementing 'their' project.

However, in one specific location<sup>16</sup>, interviewed beneficiaries have hinted at favouritism being an issue with regard to governing bodies such as Local Councils. Reported cases of favouritism would ideally be further investigated to continuously support the development of good governance practices and governing institutions' credibility within communities. Measures to improve project activities and/or mitigate perceived cases of corruption are often provided by beneficiaries and have been and will continue to be systematically included in reports shared by IMPACT with HMG. More detailed information about the findings presented here can be found in the output reports of each project.

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<sup>16</sup> Aleppo Governorate, Batabo Sub-district (Ciheam Bari Project)

## **Annexes**

### **Annex 1: Questionnaires**