

HMG independent monitoring programme

Report for Syria Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
(CSSF) - *Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria*

Syria

Reporting period – First Monitoring Round – Tamkeen Project

Introduction and Background

IMPACT Initiatives was requested by Her Majesty Government of Britain (HMG) to monitor the HMG-funded *Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria* project (hereby referred to as “Tamkeen project”).

The purpose of the monitoring was to independently collect and analyse data to understand the handover of the Tamkeen project to local councils, and give beneficiaries an opportunity to provide feedback on the intervention. Based on this, the information gathered can be used to identify areas of change and improvement within the project.

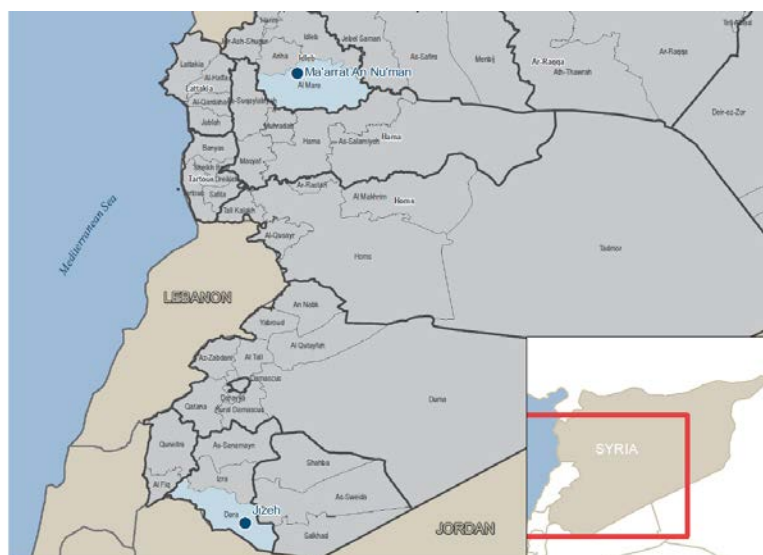
Due to the Syrian context and its security environment, the monitoring exercise is extremely challenging. The general lack of information, notably concerning population figures, does not allow representative sampling for data collection. Access constraints mean that contact between monitors, partner field teams, and beneficiary communities has to be organised and coordinated by the implementing partner (IP) in order to guarantee a safe environment where participants feel secure and comfortable to share information that supports the monitoring evidence.

Presentation of the programme monitored

Launched in November 2013, the *Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria* project (hereby referred to as “Tamkeen project”) was designed to build long-term good governance practices in opposition-held areas in Syria through the delivery of basic services with community involvement. The Tamkeen project aims to support and preserve space for the moderate opposition in preparation for a higher-level political settlement. Implemented by Adam Smith International, Tamkeen Committees work in partnership with Syrian communities and Local Councils (LAC) to deliver essential services and to foster open governance. The Tamkeen project increases communities’ resilience and self-sufficiency by including community representatives in the selection process of projects to be implemented. These projects focus on rehabilitating service delivery in each of the communities based on needs identified by the committees.

Methodology

The monitoring methodology was designed in cooperation with HMG teams and the Tamkeen programme team. Research questions, indicators, and tools were designed and discussed among all key stakeholders prior to their implementation.



The monitoring was conducted by IMPACT staff from 31 October 2016 to 2 November 2016. In order to capture the full range of the IP’s activities in the governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, and Dara’a, the following locations were chosen: Ma’arat Al Nouman (Idlib) and Jiza (Dara’a). Monitoring in Aleppo could not take place due to security risks. In each community, the monitoring took place for a period of three days. IMPACT implemented both Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in Ma’arat Al Nouman (Idlib) and Jiza (Dara’a).

Map 1. Locations assessed for Tamkeen program

In Ma'arat Al Nouman, IMPACT implemented a total of 8 KIIs, - with LAC members and with TC members – and 3 FGDs – wich combined LAC members, Tamkeen Committee (TC) members, and Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives.

The following table summarises the Research Questions, the outputs/outcomes monitored and the indicators.

Research Questions	Outputs and Outcomes monitored		Indicators	
Is capacity being built in the LAC and how? Is there improved capacity evidence in the planning and management of services/projects? What are the obstacles to building capacity?	<i>Outputs monitored</i>	Creation of participatory bodies for administering	<i>Quantitative Indicators</i>	Number of proposed and approved projects by LAC as per identified priorities
				Existence of MOU signed between LAC and Tamkeen
		Tamkeen Committees (TCs) able to assess, plan, budget, provide oversight of funds	<i>Quantitative Indicators</i>	Type and use of guidelines, templates and forms
				Evidence of LAC using procurement standards
		Tamkeen Committees (TCs) better able to monitor and evaluate their service delivery	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Satisfaction rate of the LCA and Tamkeen members concerning the handover process including the management of the MOU process
				Perception of CSOs concerning the relevance of proposed projects by LAC to the identified priorities
Relevance of training received by LC members delivered by Tamkeen and evidence of use of training				
How are the handover LAC consulting the community and civil society? Does this consultation have an effect on the projects? What role are women and minorities playing?	<i>Outputs monitored</i>	Improve women's meaningful participation	<i>Quantitative Indicators</i>	Level of women participation in LAC public meetings
				Number and type and level of participation in community engagement activities organized by LAC since the Tamkeen handover
				Number and type of site visits to the projects with active participation of the community on a monthly basis

			<i>Qualitative indicators</i>	Type of information from the site visits communicated to the LAC for its consideration in decision making on a regular basis
				Degree of active participation in the decision making process of CSOs during LAC public meetings.
What role is the Tamkeen Committee playing in the community post transition?	<i>Outputs monitored</i>	Increasing levels of coordination with Provincial Councils	<i>Qualitative indicators</i>	Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the Tamkeen's committee's status (and its current role) and the nature of its relation with LCA after the handover
	<i>Outcomes monitored</i>	Tamkeen Committees demonstrate improved governance practices	<i>Qualitative indicators</i>	Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the Tamkeen's committee's status (and its current role) and the nature of its relation with LCA after the handover
				Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the future of the TC, and what future role it would best serve
		Services are improved and access is provided to vulnerable groups	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the Tamkeen's committee's status (and its current role) and the nature of its relation with LCA after the handover
				Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the future of the TC, and what future role it would best serve
	Beneficiaries perceive services are delivered by entities practicing good governance	<i>Qualitative Indicators</i>	Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the Tamkeen's committee's status (and its current role) and the nature of its relation with LCA after the handover	
			Perception of the (i) LAC, (ii) TC, and (iii) CSO on the future of the TC, and what future role it would best serve	

The next table provides some information on the monitoring exercise per community.

Location	Day 1	Activity	Day 2	Activity	Day 3	Activity
Idleb Governorate						
Ma'arat Al Nouman	31.10.2016	4 KII with LAC members 1 FGD with LAC and TC members ¹	01.11.2016	4 KII with TC members DO spotcheck of LAC project	02.11.2016	1 FGD with female representatives of local CSO 1 FGD with representatives of local CSO ²
Dara'a Governorate						
Jiza	31.10.2016	4 KII with LAC members 3 KII with female representatives of local CSO	01.11.2016	3 KII with TC members DO spotcheck of LAC project	02.11.2016	2 KII with representatives of local CSO 1 FGD with LAC and TC members

Challenges:

During the implementation of the monitoring, teams experienced some challenges which are mostly linked to remote management and the context inside Syria:

- The monitoring was delayed due to communication difficulties related to the final number of participants needed for a given activity and the necessity to have different participants for KII and FGD. This caused delays in the workplan, as well as challenges during the days in which the monitoring was taking place (for example, delays waiting for the participants to arrive to the site, absence of participants on the site).
- The monitoring plan initially also included eastern Aleppo. Due to the evolving conflict situation in the city, and after consultations with the field teams and the security management team, and HMG management, the monitoring was cancelled in this area.

¹ LAC: Local Administrative Council
TC: Tamkeen Committee

² These activities were planned and agreed upon with the IP. However, they had to be cancelled on the day due to a no-show of participants.

Findings

Key Findings³

Findings suggest that both TC and LAC members in Ma'arat Al Nouman and Jiza are overall satisfied with the handover process in the locations monitored, although there is room for improvement on aspects such as the lack of cooperation or the delays in provision of funds. A total of seven TC members and eight LAC members (in both locations combined) mentioned they are satisfied with the way the handover is being implemented.

Also, the rotation of LAC staff every six months is an impediment to capacity training as it represents a loss of institutional knowledge and implies that new members of staff have to be retrained.

The Tamkeen project has contributed to building the capacity of local council administration through various means. TC developed forms and guidelines for LAC to use, and provided training on various topics, such as management, procurement, financial management, budgeting/planning and project proposals. In order to ensure that projects implemented/financed by TC are relevant to the community, LAC (and previously TC) closely consult civil society and involve the community in the decision-making process. LACs consult their representatives in public meetings, organise voting procedures in order to determine the communities' priorities, and conduct site visits to projects where project implementation is supervised. They also discuss concerns expressed by the communities and take them into consideration in the future planning procedures.

Concerning the consultation of the community and the civil society, there is room for improvement when it comes to the inclusion of women. Women are still marginalised in the decision-making process and experience difficulties in making their voices heard.

Finally, TCs role has evolved from being the identifier of projects as well as the project implementer to one in which TC is focusing on just the supervisory role. In the future, the LAC as well as the CSO representatives in both assessed communities would like TC to supply more funding in order to implement new projects.

Relevance:

- Tamkeen Committees are building relevant capacity through the provision of various trainings (management skills, procurement, finance, project proposals, etc.) for LAC members.
- An obstacle for the Tamkeen project's goal of building capacity in the local administrative council (LAC) is the current system of rotating LAC members every six months. Working with new LAC partners every six months means loss of institutional knowledge and skills in each rotation period. This poses challenges for the transfer of information and knowledge in each rotation.

Process:

- TC and the LAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that guided the handover process. Both TC and LAC members in Ma'arat Al Nouman and Jiza are satisfied with the MOU process as well as the handover process, but the majority of them see room for improvement concerning the following points:
 - LAC to hire more qualified personnel
 - Assignment of clear roles and responsibilities per person during the handover process
 - More commitment on the process from LAC members
 - Cooperation between LAC and TC in handover process
 - Provision of funding and project implementation delays

³ These findings are only limited to the sites that have been monitored.

Effectiveness:

- All interviewed stakeholders reported TC to be effective and as having a tangible effect on the community through the capacity-building in the local administrative council.
- The TC has shifted its role from identifying and implementing projects to a supervisory role only. These responsibilities have been transferred to the LAC.

Findings by Research Question

Research question 1: Is capacity being built in the LAC and how? Is there improved capacity evidence in the planning and management of services/projects? What are the obstacles to building capacity?

TC built capacity in the LAC through the provision of various trainings for LAC members. These trainings include management skills, procurement standards, financial standards and project proposals. Furthermore, TC developed guidelines as well as templates and forms which the LAC uses in their daily work. The handover process between TC and LAC went smoothly, without challenges, according to both TC and LAC members.

Another goal of the Tamkeen project was to build capacity in the LAC, so that the LAC is able to propose programmes in their community based on Tamkeen project principles which had been defined within the programme. IMPACT compared the number of projects that have been proposed by the LAC to the number of projects approved and financed with Tamkeen project funding.

In Ma'arat Al Nouman, according to TC and LAC members, between six and 30 projects have been proposed and between five and ten of those projects have been implemented. This represents one third of the projects initially proposed have been implemented.

Ma'arat Al Nouman	Range of projects proposed by the LAC since the TC handover with TC funding	Range of projects proposed by the LAC and supported with Tamkeen funding since the TC handover
TC members	14-15 (detail of answers - 15,15, refuse to answer, 14)	Between 5 and 10
LAC members	6-30 (details of answers 6,6,30,18)	5

In Jiza, between six and 45 projects were proposed, out of which between four and seven have been approved to be financed.

Jiza	Range of projects proposed by the LAC since the TC handover	Range of projects proposed by the LAC and financed with Tamkeen funding since the TC handover
TC members	36-45 (detail of answers 45, 36, 36)	Between 5 and 7
LAC members	6-25 (detail of answers 25,20,9,6)	Between 4 and 5

Another element monitored to assess the capacity being built in the LAC was to evaluate the handover process. All TC and LAC members (seven TC members and eight LAC members in both locations together) confirmed the existence of a MOUs between Tamkeen committees and local council administrations. These MOUs were designed to organise the handover process and clearly assign responsibilities. According to the TC and LAC members, the handover process was implemented without any challenges and both were satisfied with the

handover and MOU process. However, one TC member interviewed in the FGD in Ma'arat Al Nouman mentioned that *“the handover process made the local council staff careless and uncommitted to deadlines.”* No other respondent reiterated this impression.

Additionally, to build capacity in the planning and management of services/projects in the LAC, TC developed planning/budgeting forms and guidelines, as well as procurement templates and financial standards. LAC members in both locations explained that these forms significantly improved their daily work. However, there was some disagreement among the respondents concerning the existence of these forms. For example, one LAC member in Jiza affirmed they were only using planning and budgeting forms, but had no financial templates, whereas according to the three other LAC members interviewed, they also used financial templates. Two LAC members in Ma'arat Al Nouman said they have no templates, guidelines or forms of any sort, whereas according to the other two LAC members planning/budgeting forms, as well as financial templates and procurement forms are in use.

An obstacle to the capacity building through procurement standards were delays in TC's provision of funding. An example of this is the procurement of a generator for the hospital in Jiza, where the LAC followed TC's standards for procurement, asked for tenders and finally identified a product with a suitable price and of good quality. However, LAC was unable to obtain it due to a delay in the Tamkeen project's financing. Therefore a generator of lesser quality had to be procured eventually. This generator did not remain functional and is not being used anymore, as IMPACT monitors confirmed through Direct Observation (DO).

In Ma'arat Al Nouman, IMPACT did spot-checks of three different Tamkeen projects in order to look at improved capacity in the provision of services. One of the spot-checks focused on the support to the Zat Alnitakeen School. At the time of the monitoring, twelve classrooms had already been refurbished. Unfortunately, the school was damaged in an airstrike, therefore cannot be used until it is rebuilt again. Additionally, the minibuses planned to be purchased in order to support the transportation system had not been purchased yet. Finally, IMPACT also implemented monitoring activities in the Tamkeen project's bakery-project, which has successfully hired workers who have fulfilled their role in the past month, i.e. in October. These spot-checks were successful in assessing the status of the implementation of these three programmes, which were selected in cooperation with Tamkeen team. However, the active conflict in those areas have impacted a posteriori these assets and the implementation of activities in relation of these projects. These circumstances are out of the control of the partner and directly linked to the context in which they operate.

All four key informants LAC members in Jiza agreed that the trainings in management skills, procurement standards, financial standards, budgeting and planning, and proposal writing delivered by TC were extremely useful. Mentioned as especially helpful were trainings on procurement, management skills and project proposals. The majority of LAC members in Ma'arat Al Nouman (three out of four KIs) experienced TC trainings to be very useful and increasing the effectivity of their work. One LAC member indicated that he had not received any trainings from TC

Research question 2: How are the handover LAC consulting the community and civil society? Does this consultation have an effect on the projects? What role are women and minorities playing?

This research question was measured through the count of community engagement activities organised by LAC since the handover and the number of attendees, as well as the number of site visits to projects, the degree of active participation of CSOs during LAC public meetings and the number of women participating in LAC public meetings.

The collected data shows that TC makes an effort to involve the community and CSOs in decision-making. However, women play a minor role in decision-making in the communities monitored, but IMPACT's monitors noted that women respondents are extremely motivated to make a difference in their community and to challenge the social norms.

The LAC in Ma'arat Al Nouman organised between three and 15 community engagement activities since the handover which were on average attended by 20 to 50 people. In Jiza, the LAC organised between three and 30

community engagement activities with an average attendance of 30-100 people. These community engagement activities allowed the LAC to engage with the community and consult civil society on several aspects related to project implementation and community satisfaction with project selection. A possible explanation for the range of community engagement activities is that it may not be clear to participants how to define community engagement activities, or that participants were unable to recall the exact number as their responses are based on reminiscence. Similarly, they may have not been able to recall the exact number of attendees.

Location	Range of community engagement activities organised by LAC since TC handover	Range of people attending the last community engagement activity organised by LAC
Ma'arat Al Nouman (Idleb)	Between 3 and 15	Between 20 and 50
Jiza (Dara'a)	Between 3 and 30	Between 30 and 100

According to seven LAC members from both Jiza and Ma'arat Al Nouman the site visits are used to receive feedback from the community and to discuss if there are issues with the respective projects that they are visiting. In Ma'arat Al Nouman, LAC conducted between four and 20 site visits to the different projects they implement and supervise. The LAC in Jiza conducted between four and nine site visits to projects they implement and supervise. The LAC members listened to the concerns and suggestions of the community and will use these as feedback for future projects.

Location	Number of site visits to the projects conducted by LAC
Ma'arat Al Nouman (Idleb)	Between 4 and 20
Jiza (Dara'a)	Between 4 and 9

An additional important indicator for women's involvement is their participation in LAC public meetings.⁴ In Ma'arat Al Nouman, between one and 12 women attend LAC public meetings, whereas in Jiza between none and 15 women participated in those meetings. According to a CSO male representative in Jiza, there is few presence of women due to the conservatism of the society. However, according to three CSO female representatives in Jiza, women have an influence on the LAC's work through the suggestion of projects and through their participation in the questionnaires handed out to the community by LAC to determine the relevance of suggested projects. This process was initiated by TC and continued by LAC.

Location	Number of women participating in LAC public meetings
Ma'arat Al Nouman (Idleb)	Between 1 and 12 (detail of the answers 1,4,12)
Jiza (Dara'a)	Between 0 and 15 (detail of the answers 0,15,0,0)

In general, CSO play a role mostly through voting on suggested projects. According to LAC members in both locations, the process to ensure the relevance of projects delivered to the community is the following: all community members are informed via the mosque speakers about the date of the LAC meeting and invited to suggest and discuss useful project ideas. After that the first round of voting starts. The projects with the highest number of votes are gathered in a list and the priorities are discussed. According to the priorities of the community, the projects to be implemented are chosen. Additionally, questionnaires are distributed in the community in order to allow everyone to cast their vote on projects.

Research question 3: What role is the Tamkeen Committee playing in the community post transition?

In order to gain impressions of the community's vision of the role of the Tamkeen Committee, IMPACT conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions with LAC members and CSO representatives. It also asked them about TC's current role, after the handover, and according to them, what the role of TC should be in the future.

⁴ Although the research question indicated the intention to understand the role of other minorities, there is no information available on the data collected that indicates the presence of other social groups considered minorities.

According to seven LAC members in both communities TC's role has moved from identifying and implementing projects to supervising and monitoring them. The two interviewed CSO male representatives in Jiza agreed with this statement and indicated that TC's role has changed to providing guidance and monitoring, instead of implementation. However, one of the three CSO female representative in Jiza indicated that TC's role has not changed in the past six months, and that TC is still implementing projects in Jiza. The other two CSO female representatives interviewed both said that all projects in Jiza happen under TC's control and that *"Tamkeen is everything in Jiza"*.

Regarding TC's role in the future, the respondents had various visions concerning what role TC should play in their community. According to LAC and TC members who participated in a FGD in Jiza, TCn should continue to push for women to be included although this is one of the most difficult missions due to the conservative cultural norms, according to the participants interviewed. Furthermore, TC should increase its financial support but be less involved in procurement and just supply funds. CSO representatives who participated in this monitoring agreed that TC should continue to supply funds for projects and increase those, but not interfere in their implementation. LAC members interviewed in KII think TC should increase funding, provide trainings to LAC members, and continue to raise awareness in the community.

In Ma'arat Al Nouman, LAC and TC members who participated in a FGD, when asked about TC's future role, responded that the handover was premature and the LAC does not yet have the competence to take over project identification and implementation from the TC. In their opinion, this lack of competence is further aggravated by the fact that the LAC members change every six months, which affects its work and performance, whereas the ones of the Tamkeen Committee do not change. Therefore, participants feel that the Tamkeen Committee would be in a better position to help the community by continuing to implement projects. One participant mentioned that *"there must be controls to judge bad local council staff and put them in prison if needed."* One participant indicated in the interviews that the LAC had tried to steal from one particular project but this was only mentioned in one case, in one particular area. LAC members interviewed in KII think TC should be responsible for the follow up with projects in order to make sure they go well and increase its funding as well as its flexibility in financial questions.