



FCO independent monitoring programme

Bi-annual Findings Report

Syria

Reporting period: Workplan 2, June – November 2017

Cover photos from top left clockwise: Primary school monitored in Western Tal Aar; hospital monitored in Duma; Moubader Magazine readers monitored in Idleb city; fuel warehouse monitored in Duma. © IMPACT, 2017

About IMPACT

IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT) is a leading Geneva-based think-and-do-tank. The organization implements 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 19 countries. IMPACT's team is composed of over 400 staff, including 100 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, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean.

Executive Summary

The situation in Syria has significantly deteriorated in 2015 and it is estimated that approximately 470,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict.¹ 6.3 million people are internally displaced. An estimated 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including 4.9 million in besieged and hard to reach areas.² In addition, 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 in 2016.³ Sixty-nine percent of the population in Syria are living under extreme poverty.⁴

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 in assessing and, where necessary, adjusting their activities. To this aim, this TPM exercise provides regular, predictable, evidence-based and independent information to HMG.

From June 2017 to November 2017, monitoring cycles⁵ of the following projects have been completed: Taallum (South),⁶ Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader), SRMS003 (Stockpiling),⁷ SRM004/5 and SRM026. The most relevant findings derived from the primary data collected by IMPACT monitors are presented in this report. Key observations are outlined below:

- Taallum Initiative (South):** Overall findings indicate that the Taallum Modules improved the school's capacity to deliver education services despite some shortcomings. Education Directorate (ED) and Education Assembly (EA) staff reported that the Modules developed their computer skills and project management skills, which helped them improve their daily work. This includes areas such as improved management capacity to set up a database of school teachers in Dara'a, and promoting strategic decision-making that led to the creation of a Procurement Committee within the EA in Rural Damascus. Action plans⁸ in school reparations, refurbishments, and the distribution of learning materials was partially completed, in which challenges such as the lack of suppliers and material shortages remain. With Taallum's support in providing teaching materials and equipment, learning conditions have improved significantly in Dara'a and to a lesser extent in Rural Damascus. Additional barriers that prevent parents from sending their children to school include security risks, family displacement and the long distance to school.
- SRMS003 (Stockpiling):** Staple goods and fuel provided to the Provincial Council by SRMS003 were observed to be purchased, delivered and stored to enhance opposition-held Eastern Ghouta's resilience to the siege by the Damascus-based government's army. However, the amount of fuel provided was

¹ ACAPS: [Syria Overview](#). The United Nation's official number was 250,000 deaths as of mid-2014, when it stopped counting due to the lack of confidence in the data.

² [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017](#).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For a monitoring cycle to be completed the following steps have to be taken: data collected, data cleaned, data analysed, draft output report submitted to DFID.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Data collection for the second monitoring round of SRMS003 (distribution) is ongoing, and will be included in the next Key Findings Report.

⁸ Action plans were submitted by EDs to the Taallum Initiative Committee for approval.

observed to be sixty percent less than what had been indicated in the project proposal due to fuel price increase and internal challenges.⁹ Both staple goods and fuel were adequately documented with receipt notes available. Storage conditions were adequate, though there was an absence of handling equipment in staple food warehouses and key informants suggested adding security equipment in all warehouses.

- **SRM004/5:** Monitoring exercises were conducted to verify the construction work in linking the Rural Damascus Specialist Hospital to an alternative hospital in Duma. Findings revealed that the alternative hospital was fully rehabilitated by the end of project Phase II. There was no evidence of internally displaced persons using hospital facilities as shelters. The project's completion implies that the hospital was able to continue providing medical services in the event of intensive shelling with a potential targeting of medical facilities.
- **SRM026:** The EA of Akhtarín was observed to have acquired expected office equipment items in their pre-defined quantities, utilising 71% of the funds provided through SRM026 for equipment purchase. Both EA and school staff were observed to have been provided with expected stipends. School staff stipends were adjusted to the overall period of employment of each individual staff. Remaining stipend from staff not having worked for a full month period was reported to have been used to cover the stipend of alternative school staff.
- **Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader):** Findings indicate that Moubader Magazine was a useful source of information on civil society initiatives and services. Respondents reported that they felt inspired to launch initiatives similar to those covered by Moubader in their own communities. They considered the Magazine unique due to its emphasis on local initiatives and because it does not cover politics and war. Findings also reveal that a majority of readers surveyed have a positive opinion on local initiatives, and most said their perception was positively influenced by the Magazine. Finally, staff members of initiatives covered by Moubader reported an increase in civil society interest in their initiatives and improved possibilities for connecting with other institutions.

⁹ No further information provided on what the internal challenges are.

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Geographic Classifications

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

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASI	Adam Smith International
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
DO	Direct Observation
EA	Education Assembly
ED	Education Directorate
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IP	Implementing Partner
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoD	Ministry of Defence
PC	Provincial Council
SDR	Secondary Data Review
SRM	Stabilisation Response Mechanism
TPM	Third Party Monitoring
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

The situation in Syria has significantly deteriorated in 2015 and it is estimated that approximately 470,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict.¹⁰ 6.3 million people are internally displaced. An estimated 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including 4.9 million in besieged and hard to reach areas.¹¹ In addition, 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 in 2016.¹² Sixty-nine percent of the population in Syria are living under extreme poverty.¹³

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.

Overview of programmes and projects monitored

In response to the Syria crisis, HMG supports a variety of programmes through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). The intended impact of these programmes is:

- Effective, legitimate and credible local government and security actors;
- An inclusive political process and approach to reconciliation;
- Community and individual resilience to extremism;
- Erosion of the influence of violent extremist organisations.¹⁴

It is expected that the development and inclusion of a systematic third party monitoring (TPM) in support of HMG-funded programmes will increase the accountability and effectiveness of such programmes and related projects by providing regular, predictable, evidence-based and independent information aiming to support HMG's implementing partners (IPs) in assessing their performance and where necessary adjust their activities. Monitoring is the product of close collaboration between stakeholders, including HMG, local IPs and IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT).

IMPACT started to work with all stakeholders on developing research questions, indicators and data collection tools for the TPM in June 2016. The TPM is set to end in March 2019 and is divided into five workplans over the three year monitoring period. Each workplan spans over six months¹⁵ and includes a number of projects to monitor, as agreed upon at the start of each workplan. This Key Findings Report refers to Workplan 2 from June to November 2017.

This report provides a summary of key findings for the following projects: Taallum (South), SRMS003 (Stockpiling), SRM004/5, SRM026, and Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader).¹⁶ Research methods used and challenges encountered by IMPACT monitoring teams are also outlined. See Table 1 for an overview on HMG-funded programmes, projects monitored and services delivered.

¹⁰ [ACAPS: Syria Overview](#). The United Nation's official number is 250,000 deaths as of mid-2014, when it stopped counting due to the lack of confidence in the data.

¹¹ [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017](#)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Syria CSSF Theory of Change.

¹⁵ With the exception of Workplan 1 that extends over a period of seven and a half months.

¹⁶ Output reports for these five monitored projects were submitted by IMPACT to HMG.

Table 1. Overview HMG-funded programmes, projects, IPs, and services delivered

HMG-funded programmes	Projects monitored by IMPACT	IPs	Services delivered
Governance Through Education in Syria	Taallum Initiative (South)	Adam Smith International	Institutions prepared to deliver quality education services in the long term.
Syria Stabilisation Response Mechanism	SRMS003 (Stockpiling)	Adam Smith International	Stockpiling of fuel and food for the civilian population sufficient for at least one month.
Syria Stabilisation Response Mechanism	SRM004/5	Adam Smith International	Hospitals reinforced to increase protection of staff and patients.
Syria Stabilisation Response Mechanism	SRM026	Adam Smith International	Support to teachers and administrative staff of schools through stipends provided and budget disbursement for the purchase of pre-defined office equipment.
Support to Grassroots Media Activism in Syria	Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader)	ARK	Strategic Communication (magazine, social media) to support civil society initiatives.

Key stakeholders of the independent monitoring programme

- Donor: Her Majesty's Government, represented by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- Third party monitoring: IMPACT Initiatives.
- Implementing partners and programmes: Adam Smith International (Governance through Education in Syria, Syria Stabilisation Response Mechanism), ARK (Support to Grassroots Media Activism in Syria).

Findings by Project

This section summarises the key findings of the TPM of the following projects:

1. Taallum Initiative (South)
2. SRMS003 (Stockpiling)
3. SRM004/5
4. SRM026
5. Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader)

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

Taallum Initiative (South)¹⁷

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, designed and implemented by Adam Smith International (ASI), is one of the projects supported by HMG under the 'Governance through Education' programme. It works predominantly with officials from provincial Education Directorates (EDs) and local Education Assemblies (EAs) in four Governorates in Syria (Aleppo, Idlib, Rural Damascus and Dara'a).

The project delivers capacity building support to ED/EA 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 trained, coached and mentored key ED and EA

¹⁷ Findings presented here refer exclusively to Taallum Initiative activities implemented in Southern Syria. Activities in Northern Syria were assessed in a separate monitoring cycle and findings have been shared in the Key Findings Report of Workplan 1.

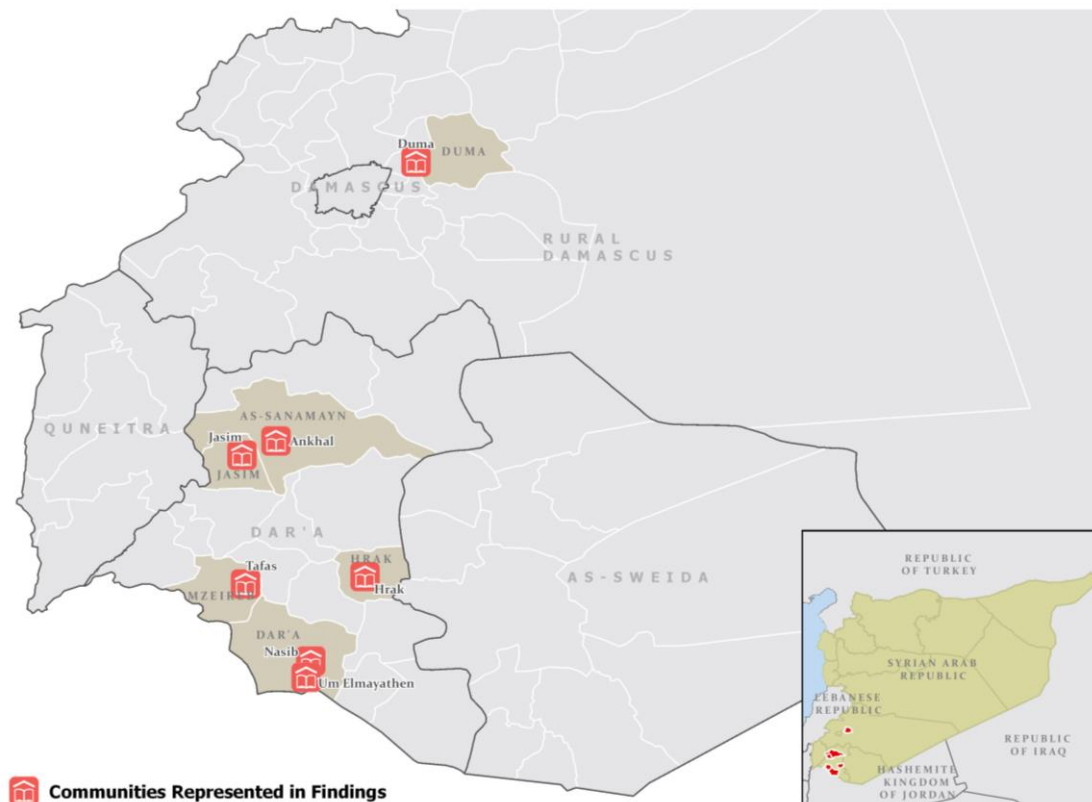
staff to design suitable and sustainable responses to the complex barriers to education, enhancing conditions for teaching and learning. Between each module, participating institutions produced action plans and a corresponding budget. Once these were validated by the Taallum Initiative Committee,¹⁸ funds were released and ED/EA 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 Southern Syria. Monitoring Round 1 was conducted between January 30th and April 11th 2017 in Dara'a, Jasim and Hrak sub-districts (Dara'a Governorate) and Duma sub-district (Rural Damascus Governorate). Monitoring Round 2 was conducted between May 2nd and June 21th 2017 in Duma sub-district (Rural Damascus Governorate), and As-Sanamayn, Mzeireb and Dara'a sub-districts (Dara'a Governorate). In total, IMPACT conducted two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with ED/EA's representatives, six FGDs with parents of children attending schools supported through the project (three male and three female FGDs), 24 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with different target groups (eight with Taallum staff, eight with ED/EA representatives, and 16 with teachers/school leaders) and two Direct Observations (DOs) in schools. See Map 1 for a visual overview of locations monitored during these two rounds. Overall findings have been presented at the Governorate level. Overarching research questions addressed were:

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

¹⁸ This committee is convened by Taallum and is comprised of a Team Leader (technical), a Programme Manager (contractual), and a Finance Manager (budget). It also includes additional technical experts as appropriate to the Module under question (e.g. pedagogical specialists for Module 3), while the Syrian Interim Government's Ministry of Education is invited to take part in an observing capacity.

Map 1. Taallum Initiative (South) locations assessed by TPM activities



Key finding # 1: Modules contributed to improve ED/EA staff's work skills although some procedures within the Taallum framework were reportedly incompatible to a conflict affected context.

Taallum has contributed to institutional capacity building in ED/EA through trainings provided to staff on budgeting, planning, needs assessment, prioritising, operations, management, monitoring and evaluation. TPM revealed that these trainings were perceived by interviewed ED/EA staff as having improved their capacity to conduct their daily work. ED/EA staff in Dara'a Governorate reported that their work was previously conducted in a "random manner" and the Modules generated a better structuring of work procedures. Participation in the Modules reportedly led to the development of a database of schools and teachers, increasing ED/EA's management capacity. ED/EA in Rural Damascus staff stated that the Modules promoted strategic decision-making based on essential priorities within the ED/EAs and led to the creation of a Procurement Committee within the Education Assembly.

Although agreeing on the added value of the Modules, participants (mostly in Rural Damascus) expressed perceiving some procedures employed within the framework provided by Taallum as being disconnected from the reality of conflict affected contexts. The only concrete example provided to support this allegation was the case of second-hand goods.¹⁹ The purchase of second-hand goods was reportedly not allowed under the procedures followed by Taallum.²⁰ Nonetheless, new materials were often unavailable in conflict affected

¹⁹ Second-hand (or used) items refer to a good that is being purchased or transferred to a second or later end user. Whereas a first-hand item refers to a good acquired new (without having been previously used). No reference was made to any specific material to be purchased. Although no example was provided, other monitoring activities conducted by IMPACT revealed that electronic equipment (such as printers) are often unavailable in Syrian conflict affected markets.

²⁰ No further information on how or from whom the interviewee obtained knowledge of this procedure.

context and lack of good suppliers was reported by both Taallum and ED/EA staff as a major challenge faced in implementing the action plans developed during each Module.

Key finding # 2: Taallum has contributed to the improvement of learning conditions in school although conflict related factors continue to prevent parents from sending children to school.

With respect to the school activities supported by Taallum, all interviewees (ED/EA staff, teachers and parents) indicated that Taallum's intervention contributed to improving the overall teaching and learning conditions in schools. In Dara'a Governorate, Taallum was reported to have created an "appropriate classroom setting for teaching" through the provision of computers, copiers and a projector in addition to overall reparations done to school facilities. These improvements were reported to have generated an increase in student attendance rate as well as an increase of teachers willing to teach within these schools. Although less significant than the improvements reported in Dara'a, Taallum also contributed to improving the learning and teaching environment of schools in Rural Damascus Governorate. In Rural Damascus, schools reportedly benefited from the provision of firewood (although described as moist and insufficient), LED lights with battery supply, desks, drinking water and stationeries.

Nonetheless, findings revealed remaining barriers preventing parents from sending children to school. These were namely the fear of security risks and bombardments, family displacement, the dire financial situation of family, the far distance to reach school and the lack of heating during winter time (partially addressed by Taallum). Findings in Dara'a indicated that parents were also concerned with the non-recognition of diplomas given out by moderate opposition-administered schools by other national or international education institutes. Because of this, parents were said to prefer children develop skills in crafting activities that could represent a source of livelihood in the future rather than being sent to school – a concern likely to affect family decision making in regards to education in a post-crisis setting. However, it is worth noting that the diploma itself, whether it was accepted or not, is generally perceived to be important in Syria's context.

Concluding remarks

Modules provided by Taallum in monitored locations reportedly increased ED/EA staff's capacity to deliver education services. The support provided by Taallum contributed to improving the working conditions in ED/EA as well as the learning and teaching environment in schools. However, interviewees pointed out that some procedures employed within Taallum's frameworks can be further adapted to a conflict-affected context. Due to the volatile security situation in Rural Damascus Governorate, the data collection period was delayed by a month. As a result, no DOs were conducted in Duma due to school holidays. To better evaluate the impact of Taallum's intervention on staff capacity building and school conditions, conducting a baseline study could have been useful to compare results. Nevertheless, findings proved to be useful in identifying the positive outputs of the programme to schools monitored.

SRMS003 (Stockpiling): Pre-positioning Supplies in Eastern Ghouta ²¹

Intervention background

The HMG-funded project 'Pre-positioning Supplies in Eastern Ghouta' (referred to as SRMS003) was implemented by ASI co-jointly with Integrity Global. The project was conducted under the Stabilisation Response Mechanism²² (SRM) programme, and aims to support the Provincial Council (PC) of moderate

²¹ SRMS003 (Stockpiling) refers to the purchase, delivery and stockpiling of food and fuel to warehouses, and SRMS003 (distribution) refers to the distribution of food and fuel to the public. SRMS003 (distribution) will be presented in the Key Findings Report of Workplan 3.

²² The purpose of SRM is to plan and implement short-term stabilisation measures in moderate-opposition held Syrian sub-districts no longer under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Damascus-based government. SRM interventions aim to

opposition-held Eastern Ghouta (Rif Damascus Governorate) to pre-position fuel and food for the civilian population and enhance its resilience to an eventual siege by the Damascus-based government.

Between December 2015 and summer 2016, the Damascus-based government regained control of a significant area of the southern section of Eastern Ghouta (Rural Damascus Governorate). The SRM programming team expects Damascus to focus on regaining control of the remaining areas of opposition-held Eastern Ghouta. If smuggling tunnels were sealed, this may result in shortages and significant price hikes as observed in besieged western Aleppo.²³

SRM anticipates that if Eastern Ghouta were to be resilient to a siege and attempt to negotiate a political settlement to the fighting, staple goods would eventually be exhausted entirely. For this reason, SRMS003 aims to support the moderate opposition-led PC of Rural Damascus (hereby referred to as PC) to pre-position a two-week supply of food items and a one-month supply of fuel for the civilian population, with the purpose of enhancing their resilience to a siege and of increasing their capacity to negotiate a political settlement with greater leverage.

Food quantities were calculated according to the World Food Programme's (WFP) standard food basket (dry goods) for a five-person household.²⁴ The amount of fuel to be stockpiled was calculated to assure functioning for one month for five active water desalination stations and 12 bakeries (all private) existing in Eastern Ghouta.²⁵ SRM estimated the need to stock (i) benzene, for vehicles to transport materials, and (ii) diesel, for bakeries and water stations.

The objective of the monitoring was to verify if goods purchased by the PC through the IP's funds were delivered as planned, and to obtain feedback from stakeholders at field level on the process of project implementation. Research questions addressed were:

1. *Were staple goods purchased, delivered and stored adequately?*
2. *Was fuel purchased, delivered and stored adequately?*

Due to the limited access to areas covered by the project, data collection for this monitoring exercise was designed to be complement ASI's internal monitoring activities. Therefore, IMPACT and ASI engaged in a joint monitoring of the eight existing storage sites. Warehouse spot-checks were done every two weeks, in which IMPACT field team visited a set of storage sites one day, and the ASI team visited the remaining storage sites the following day.²⁶ All spot-checks were conducted in the presence of a member of the PC Financial Committee - a unit within the PC responsible for the management of the warehouses. The findings below relate exclusively to data collected by IMPACT.

The monitoring exercise was conducted in all three communities in which the warehouses were located – Duma (Duma District), Hammoura and Kafr Batna (Rural Damascus District).

prevent security and services vacuum through a vast range of activities, including inter alia stipend provision, operational budgets, equipment supply, capacity building and/or technical assistance.

²³ Although prices of staple goods over the months of May and June 2017 in Eastern Ghouta were reported to be relatively stable, the cost of the WFP standard food basket in the area was reported to be on average 173% higher than that reported in nearby communities not considered besieged, thus confirming the vulnerability of Eastern Ghouta's population with regard to food security.

²⁴ This includes 37 kg of bread, 19 kg of rice, 19 kg of lentils, 5 kg of sugar, and 7 kg of vegetable oil per month. Based on the assumption of the PC that sources of protein would be locally available in the event of a full siege, and that other local actors would secure the needed flour stock, the project defined the staple goods to be purchased and stockpiled to include: rice, sugar, milk and vegetable oil.

²⁵ These water desalination stations and bakeries are currently assisted by the PC in terms of fuel provision.

²⁶ The set of warehouses to be visited in one day was defined by ASI, based on the geographic proximity of the storage sites for easier movement.

Map 2. SRMS003 (Stockpiling) locations assessed by TPM activities



The monitoring visits (spot-checks) were conducted from April 9th to July 15th 2017. A total of six monitoring rounds were conducted during this period, out of which rounds 1 and 4 consisted of a full coverage of all eight warehouses by IMPACT field teams, and rounds 2, 3, 5 and 6 covered a sample of the warehouses each, as agreed upon with ASI. In total, IMPACT field teams conducted four spot-checks of each warehouse. For each warehouse spot-check conducted, one DO form was filled and a set of pictures was taken for visual evidence.

In addition to the warehouse spot-checks, IMPACT conducted one KII with the project manager of the PC of Rural Damascus and one DO to verify purchase and delivery invoices. This activity was conducted on April 7th 2017, prior to the beginning of warehouse spot-checks, and data collected was later used to cross-reference information obtained through warehouse DOs. A total of nine monitoring working days were used in this activity.

Key finding # 1: All staple goods items listed in the project proposal were purchased, delivered and adequately documented with invoices seen by IMPACT enumerators in the field.

All staple goods items listed in the project proposal were purchased, delivered and adequately documented with invoices seen by IMPACT enumerators in the field. IMPACT field teams also verified documents signed by the PC and members of their internal Financial Committee indicating the amount of goods delivered to each warehouse, later confirmed by DOs.

Damaged goods were found in one of five warehouses. Vegetable oil containers were the only delivered items observed to have been damaged, and this was said to be due to the lack of handling equipment and manufacturing defects of the metal containers. A total of 11 containers were fully damaged and 12 were partially damaged, representing an estimated loss of 196 litres of vegetable oil equivalent to a monetary value of 362.6 USD in total.

Warehouses were observed to be in proper sanitary conditions and items observed to be stored adequately. Findings also indicate that a surveillance system was in place to ensure warehouses were secure. This was

done by locals being paid to act as security focal points, keeping a look out in the area in case of suspicious incidents.

Key finding # 2: Due to the increase in fuel prices and other complications, the actual amount of fuel purchased and delivered was 60% less than the amount initially planned.

Findings confirm that 50,000 litres of diesel were purchased by the PC at the unit price of 3.5 USD/litre, for a total of 175,000 USD. Due to complications²⁷ and the increase in fuel prices, the actual amount of fuel purchased and delivered was 60% less than the amount initially indicated in the project proposal. The project proposed to purchase and deliver 25,000 litres of benzene and 100,000 litres of diesel – and findings confirm that no amount of benzene and 50,000 litres of diesel were purchased and delivered. Purchase and delivery of items to three existing warehouses was observed to be adequately documented, including receipt notes of fuel purchased and delivered.

Regarding the storage conditions, only one of the three fuel warehouses assessed was underground (as recommended for storing flammable liquids) due to the lack of available storage locations. However, additional measures had been taken in the remaining two warehouses to reduce the risks and impact of unintended combustion. Findings indicate the absence of security equipment within the warehouses, such as smoke alarms and fire extinguishers.

Warehouse surveillance was reported to be ensured through the same “neighbour watch” system as that for staple goods warehouses, and no goods were reported having been damaged or removed from warehouses.

Concluding remarks

Overall, findings revealed that staple goods and fuel provided to the PC by SRMS003 were purchased, delivered and stored to enhance opposition-held Eastern Ghouta’s resilience to an eventual siege by the Damascus-based government’s army. However, the amount of fuel provided was observed to be 60% less than what had been indicated in the project proposal due to internal (no further information available) and external (fuel price increase) factors.

Both staple goods and fuel were adequately documented with receipt notes available. Storage conditions were adequate, though there was an absence of handling equipment in staple food warehouses and security equipment in all warehouses.

SRM004/5: Rif Damascus Specialist Hospital Reinforcement – Phases I and II

Intervention background

The HMG-funded project “Rif Damascus Specialist Hospital Reinforcement – Phases I and II” was implemented by ASI, under the SRM programme. It aims to support the PC of moderate opposition-held Eastern Ghouta (Rif Damascus Governorate) to reinforce the Rif Damascus Specialist Hospital in Duma city, ensuring the availability of medical infrastructure in the case of an intensified military campaign in the area.

Between December 2015 and summer 2016, the Damascus-based government regained control of a significant area of the southern section of Eastern Ghouta (Rif Damascus Governorate). The SRM programming team expects Damascus to focus on regaining control of the remaining areas of opposition-held Eastern Ghouta. Local activists anticipate the same tactics to be deployed by the Damascus-based government as in Aleppo in 2016, which included a large-scale ground offensive and intensive shelling with a potential targeting of medical facilities.

²⁷ In addition to the increase in fuel prices, “complications” were indicated by the IP as a reason why the fuel had not been purchased in its full amount. No further information was provided as to what these entailed.

In order to ensure the availability of medical infrastructure and protect facilities from airstrikes, many medical facilities within conflict affected areas in Syria were relocated to underground basements and reinforced using locally-available materials. These solutions have helped to significantly reduce the potential impact of artillery fire and airstrikes.

There is currently an estimated 50 medical facilities operating within Eastern Ghouta which have been observed to be a target of Damascus-led airstrikes throughout the course of the last year. In response to this risk, SRM proposed to work through the PC to reinforce the Rif Damascus Specialist Hospital in Duma city (already installed underground), linking it to an alternative underground hospital to ensure that critical medical infrastructure continues to function even in the event of an intensified military campaign.

The project was split into two phases. Phase I, delivered in the month of March 2017, was planned to include the following elements (as per SRM004 project proposal):

- One underground tunnel linking the two hospitals, totalling 50 metres in length, 1.4m in width, 2m in height and dug 4-6m underground. The tunnel was reinforced with steel and galvanised steel, and was for pedestrian use.
- Earth and rubble from the tunnel used to begin reinforcement of the first and second floors of the functioning hospital site, up to 1.5 metres thick.
- Basic rehabilitation of the alternative hospital, including construction of concrete partitions and a slab.

Phase II, delivered between April and August 2017, was planned to include the following elements (as per SRM005 project proposal):

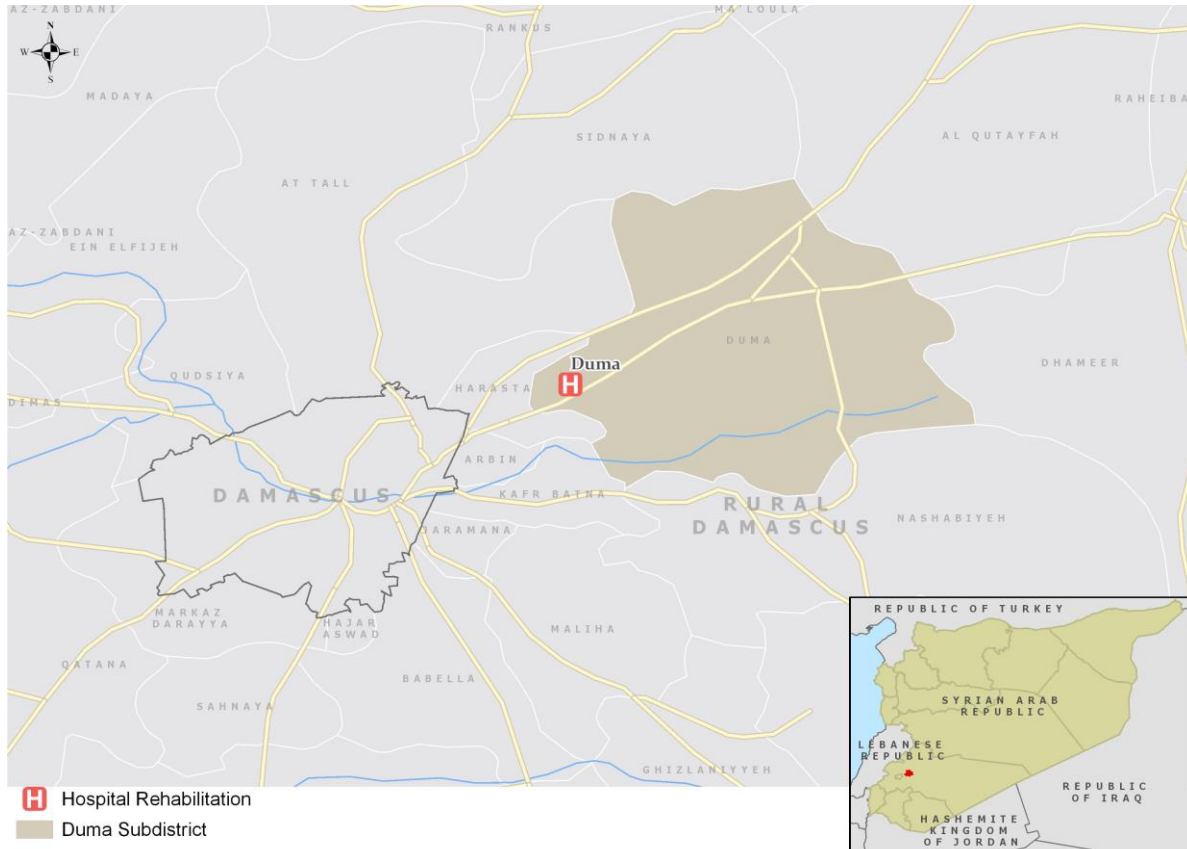
- A 1.5-metre-thick mound of earth and sand completed on each of the first and second floors of the buildings above the two underground hospitals.
- Protective walls constructed of earth, rubble and sand built around the perimeter of the buildings housing the two hospitals.
- Two emergency exit tunnels reinforced with steel in the alternative hospital, all totalling 80 metres in length.
- Basic rehabilitation of the alternative hospital, including plastering walls, tiling, and installation of electrical wiring and water and sewage systems.
- Installation of a ventilation system in the alternative hospital.

This IMPACT monitoring exercise was designed to verify if construction work funded by HMG and implemented by ASI was achieved, and to obtain feedback from stakeholders at field level on the project's implementation. The research questions asked were:

1. *Was construction work expected to be conducted during Phase I achieved as planned?*
2. *Was construction work expected to be conducted during Phase II achieved as planned?*
3. *Is the alternative hospital facility constructed being used as permanent shelter for Internally Displaced People (IDP)?*

The monitoring exercise was conducted in the city of Duma (Rif Damascus Governorate), as shown on Map 3.

Map 3. SRM004/5 locations assessed by TPM activities



The monitoring visits were conducted from March 14th to August 29th 2017. Eight monitoring visits were conducted by one field monitor during this period, including three visits during Phase I and five visits during Phase II. All monitoring visits were conducted in the presence of the PC's construction site engineer and for each visit conducted a set of pictures was taken for visual evidence.

Key finding # 1: The alternative underground hospital's basement area was rehabilitated throughout Phase I, and the alternative hospital was fully rehabilitated by the end of Phase II as planned.

During Phase I, findings confirmed that the basement area of the alternative underground hospital was rehabilitated. The 544 m² basement area was observed to have been divided into two floors using moisture-proof floorboards, later polished to create the final surface. A total of 17 room areas were constructed inside the area, to be used as operating rooms, recovery rooms, and rooms for medical staff.

Findings also revealed that the two remaining activities planned to be accomplished during Phase I had not been conducted under the SRM project framework during this phase. First, the tunnel linking the two underground hospitals had already been constructed using a different funding source. Second, the reinforcement of the buildings above the two underground hospitals was not conducted. Nevertheless, this activity was observed to have been completed during Phase II. Project supervisors reported no challenges that affected the progress of the construction work.

By the end of Phase II, the alternative underground hospital was fully rehabilitated. Findings confirm that this was done through the activities outlined in the project proposal: (i) plastering walls and tiling of floors and walls; (ii) installation of electrical wiring; (iii) installation of water, sewage and ventilation systems. Findings also confirmed that the two buildings above the two underground hospitals (functioning hospital and

alternative hospital) had been successfully reinforced during Phase II. In addition, two emergency exit tunnels for the alternative underground hospital were constructed as planned.

Key finding # 2: No evidence found that the location has or had been used as a shelter for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

During each monitoring visit the IMPACT field monitor searched for evidence that people had been living in the facilities (e.g. food or cooking devices, mattresses, blankets and covers, clothing items, human waste, etc.). Throughout the monitoring exercise (Phases I and II), there was no indication that the location was or had been used as shelter for IDPs. In addition, the IMPACT field monitor was informed that, unless accompanied by one of the hospital's employees, it was forbidden for people not working in the hospital to enter it.

Concluding remarks

Overall, findings indicate that the project was implemented as planned, and there was no evidence of IDPs' use of facilities as shelters. Challenges faced during the project's implementation, as reported by the project supervisor, included the lack of construction materials due to the Damascus-based government's siege of Eastern Ghouta, and the increased prices of construction materials and fuel which reduced the purchasing power of the project's funds. Suggestions made by the project supervisor on ways to improve the project included: 1. Provision of modern medical equipment to the hospital; 2. Provision of a water filtration system; 3. Provision of solar power panels to assure the hospital's continuous energy supply, and; 4. Installation of a Hepa air filtration system.

SRM026: School Support to Akhtar Education Assembly

Intervention background

The HMG-funded project "School support to Akhtar Education Assembly" (also referred to as SRM026) implemented by ASI was conducted under the SRM programme. The project aims to assist the moderate opposition's Education Assembly (EA) in the Akhtar sub-district²⁸ (Aleppo Governorate) in being able to conduct its activities. SRM026 supported the EA – apparatus of the Syrian Interim Government's Ministry of Education in supporting schools at a local level – through the following activities:

- i. Provision of three months of stipend to school staff in 52 schools in the Akhtar sub-district (including 323 teachers, 20 headmasters, 17 administrative staff and 41 janitors);
- ii. Provision of two months of stipends to Akhtar EA staff (including 1 director and 4 project coordinators), and;
- iii. Provision of budget to the Akhtar EA for purchasing pre-defined office equipment.

The monitoring exercise consisted of two Monitoring Rounds in Northern Syria, Akhtar sub-district (Aleppo Governorate), conducted from March 29th to April 5th and from May 13th to 17th 2017 respectively. To cover a higher number of schools, data collection for this monitoring exercise was designed to be complementary to internal monitoring activities conducted by ASI. Therefore, ASI monitored over 20% (11) and IMPACT monitored over 30% (17) of the 52 schools supported by SRM026, covering over 50% of the schools targeted

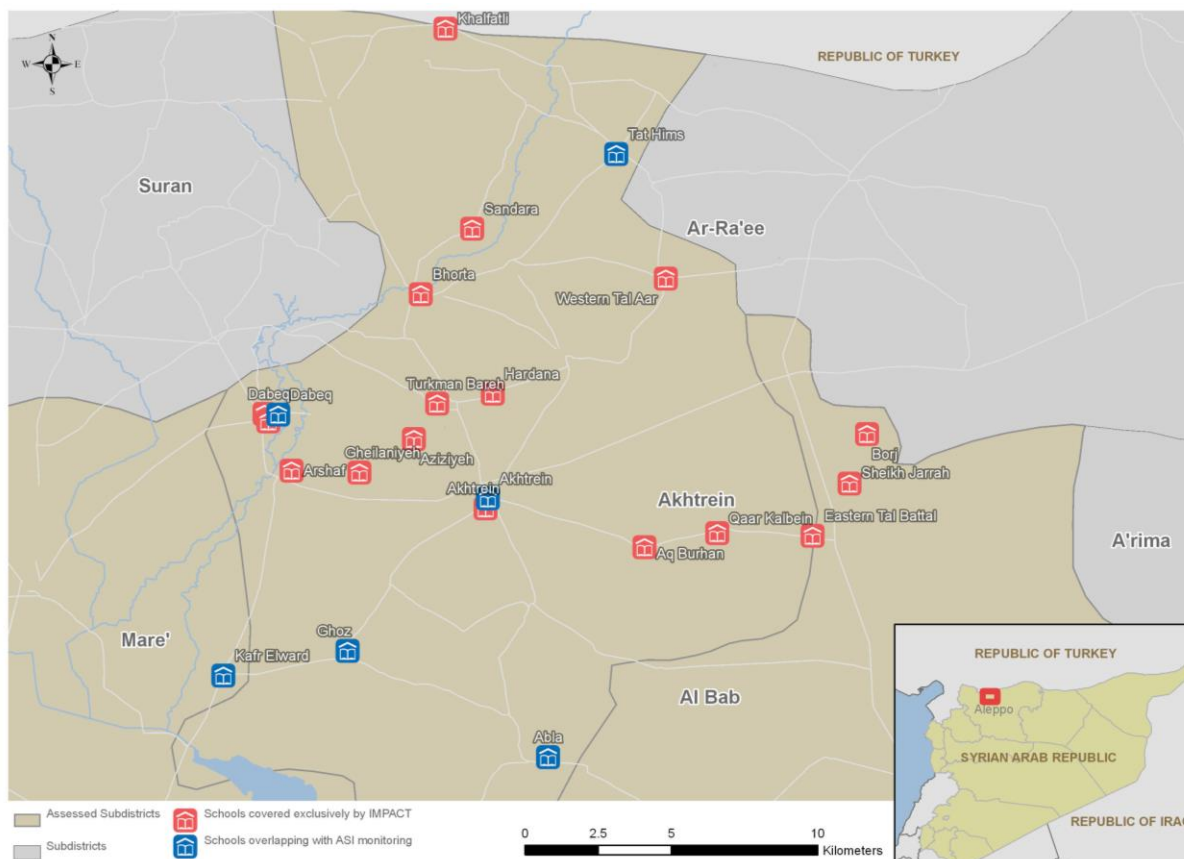
²⁸ Located 38 km northeast of Aleppo city and 13 km northeast of Marea town.

by the project. In addition to these 17 schools, IMPACT monitored six schools also monitored by ASI with the purpose of triangulating obtained results for these overlapping school,²⁹ covering a total of 23 schools.

Overall, 239 interviews were conducted throughout the two rounds of data collection, out of which 233 interviews with 159 school staff and six interviews with five staff from the Akhtarin EA. See Map 4 for a visual overview of locations monitored during these two rounds. Overarching research questions addressed were:

1. *Were Akhtarin Assembly items purchased as planned?*
2. *Were Akhtarin Education Assembly staff and school staff paid as planned?*

Map 4. SRM026 locations assessed by TPM activities



Key finding # 1: Akhtarin EA equipment purchase was mostly achieved as planned.

Findings reveal that 14 out of the 15 items listed in the SRM026 project budget document to be purchased by the Akhtarin EA with the financial resources provided by SRM026 had been procured in their pre-defined quantities. An exception was the copier, expected to be of a total cost of 1,700 USD. This item was not available in the area due to lack of supplier and was provided cost-free to the Akhtarin EA by the Education Directorate.

Key finding # 2: School staff and Akhtarin EA staff received stipends adjusted to the project's outlined salary grid and to their period of employment.

Findings confirm that Akhtarin EA staff had been paid the amount indicated in the project's revised budget document for a period of two months: 1 director for 190 USD/month, and 4 project coordinators for 150

²⁹ This report relates exclusively to data collected by IMPACT. Data collected in schools overlapping with ASI, to be used for findings triangulation, have been provided in Annex of the full monitoring report.

USD/month each. Findings also indicate that stipends were delivered to school staff in accordance with the salary grid outlined in the project budget: teachers and administration staff for 100 USD/month each, headmasters for 110 USD/month each, and janitors for 80 USD/month each. Ninety-six percent of the school staff interviewed by IMPACT reported having been paid for the full 3 months covered by SRM026 (January to March 2017). The remaining staff (4 teachers, 1 headmaster and 2 janitors) received stipends adjusted to their overall period of employment.

The monetary value of the stipend disbursement to the 159 staff interviewed corresponds to an estimated 46,769 USD. This amount was 211 USD less than what would have been disbursed without the adjustments made to employment period. No information was collected on what was done with the remaining 211 USD, nonetheless, remaining stipend of staff not having worked for the three month period was often reported to be used as stipend for additional school staff. This was the case in two out of the four schools in which staff were observed to have been paid less than the full month stipend.

Key finding # 3: Schools in monitored locations were affected by *inter alia* insufficient staffing and sometimes operate under the administrative influence of overlapping governing bodies.

Results revealed that schools in the area were adversely affected by high staff turnover, and the accumulation of work responsibilities and classroom activities among an insufficient number of staff. Findings also point to an overlap in areas of administrative control of the Damascus-based government and of the moderate opposition regarding the public services pay system, where some teachers in a school were paid by the Akhtarín EA whilst others in the same school were paid by the Damascus-based government. No further information was collected on implications of this on schools and school staff.

Concluding remarks

Overall, findings indicate that SRM026 successfully achieved most expected outputs. Both school staff and Akhtarín EA staff were observed to have received their stipends according to the project's outlined salary grid, and the majority of office equipment had been purchased as planned. Nonetheless, results reveal that the lack of timeliness in implementing activities in conflict affected areas can reduce project stakeholder's capacity to fully achieve the project's expected output.

Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader)

Intervention background

Through HMG's programme 'Support to Grassroots Media Activism', it provides support to a variety of strategic communication projects including the Moubader Magazine and Moubader social media platform. ARK, the IP of Moubader, was responsible for producing and disseminating print editions of Moubader Magazine. The Magazine aims to inform Syrian citizens about civil society initiatives, available services and positive non-political news.

The objective of the monitoring exercise was to independently collect and analyse data to better understand the readers' perception of the Moubader Magazine and of local initiatives, and give local initiatives featured in the Magazine the opportunity to provide feedback. Overarching research questions addressed were:

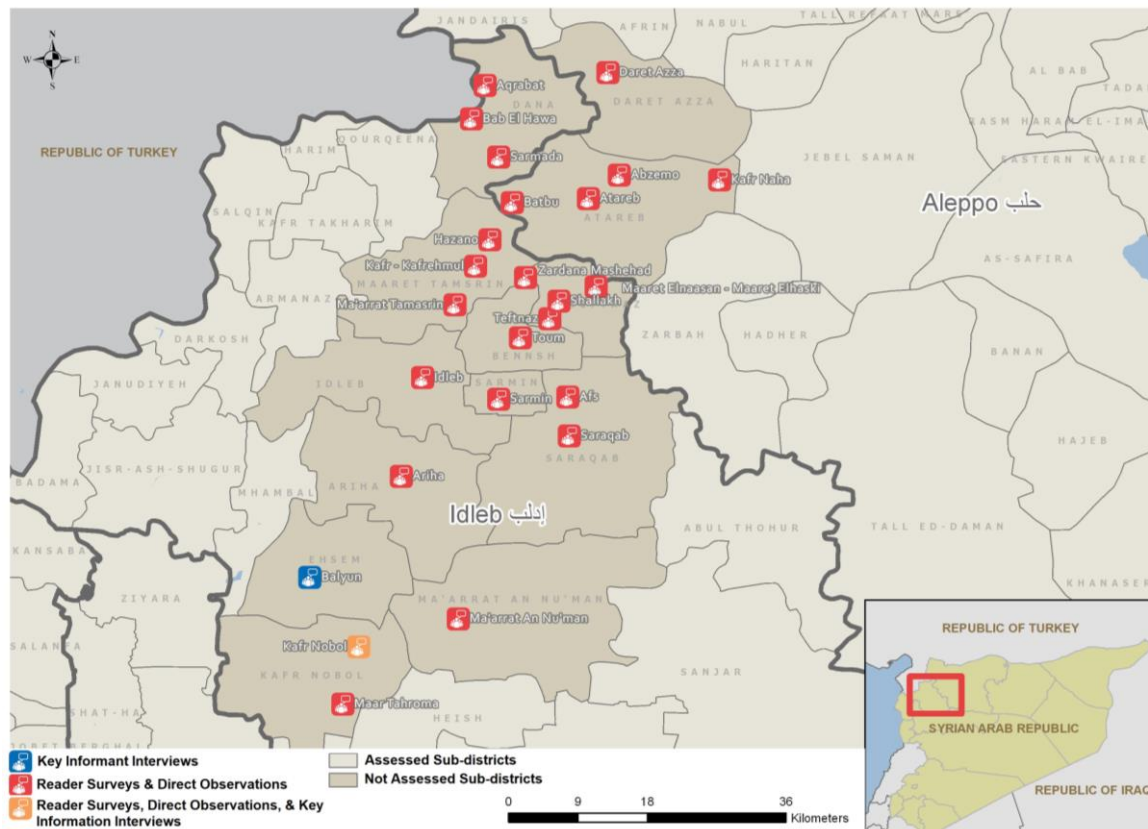
1. *To what extent do readers find Moubader useful (why)?*
2. *How has exposure to Moubader affected target audiences' perceptions of local initiatives?*
3. *How has being featured in the magazine affected featured entities?*

The TPM was conducted in moderate opposition-held areas in Aleppo, Dara'a, Idlib and Al-Quneitra Governorates in Syria (see map 5 and 6). A mixed method approach was used to collect data, which included: (i.) KIIs with staff working for civil society initiatives covered by Moubader, (ii.) Reader Surveys (RS) with Moubader readers and potential readers identified as they received the magazine during distributions, and (iii.) DO of Moubader distribution points. Monitoring activities took place in May and June 2017.

Sixty-two DOs and 326 RSs were implemented during two days in Aleppo Governorate and during five days in Idlib Governorate in May 2017. IMPACT monitors conducted DOs at each distribution point to observe the magazine's pick-up rate. In total, IMPACT conducted 313 valid³⁰ surveys: 173 surveys with readers (respondents reported to have read the magazine) and 140 surveys with non-readers (respondents that have not read the magazine before).

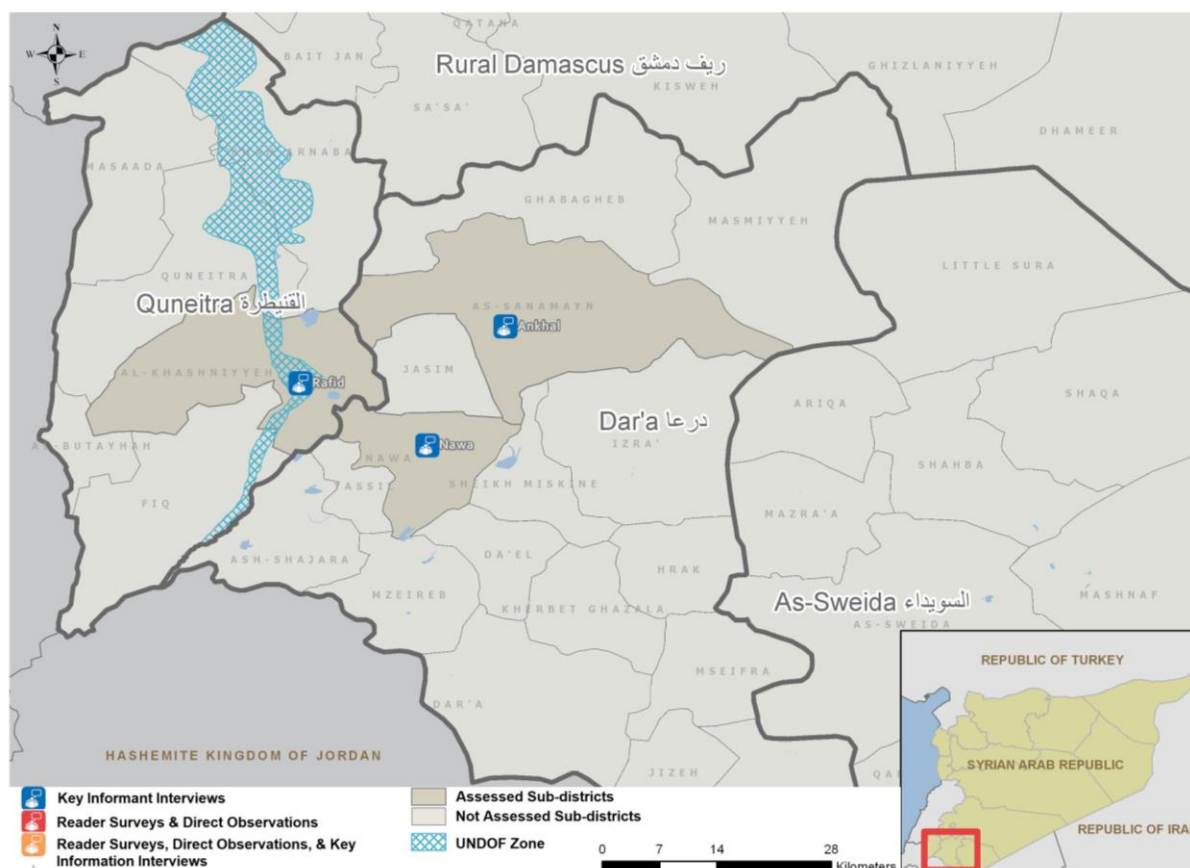
In addition, nine KIIs were conducted over the course of five monitoring days during June 2017 across three Governorates, including Dara'a, Idlib, and Al-Quneitra.

Map 5. Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader) locations assessed by TPM activities



³⁰ 13 surveys conducted were excluded from the overall findings due to insufficient responses provided throughout the questionnaire.

Map 6. Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader) locations assessed by TPM activities



Key finding # 1: Distribution included hand-to-hand and/or pile distribution methods, with a 100% distribution rate for 15 out of the 16 hand-to-hand distribution spots.

DOs were conducted to understand how the Moubader Magazine was distributed and to assess its pick-up rate. The Magazine was distributed using two different approaches: (i) hand-to-hand and (ii) placing magazines at specific distribution points for self-pick-up service. Monitors spent approximately one and two hours on average monitoring their respective stand in Idleb Governorate and Aleppo Governorate respectively.

Findings revealed that the hand-to-hand approach had a 100% distribution rate at 15 out of 16 monitored distribution points, i.e. all Magazines were distributed when monitors left the distribution point. In the hand-to-hand distribution spots, IMPACT monitors observed Magazines lying on the ground nearby in one out of 16 distribution spots monitored.

In pile distribution (stands), IMPACT monitors observed that Moubader Magazine – mostly placed on tables in entrance areas – was easily accessible. In addition, IMPACT monitors observed no copies of older editions of Moubader at most of the monitored distribution points in both Aleppo and Idleb Governorates.³¹

Although the overall efficiency of the hand-to-hand distribution appears higher than the efficiency of the pile distribution approach, only very limited research has been conducted as part of this TPM on potential disposal strategies or alternative uses of Moubader Magazine by civilians being handed the Magazine but ultimately

³¹ These observations indicate that – in most cases – Moubader Magazine editions are being taken from the piles and read while being up-to-date. However, the findings should be considered indicative as no data has been collected on how often the piles are cleaned-up by third parties such as cleaning staff working in monitored locations.

not interested in reading it. Few respondents have indicated in the RS that they were mostly interested in the paper for the purpose of, for example, wrapping-up fruits. They would therefore not throw the Magazine on the ground but keep it for alternative purposes.³² For this reason, no conclusion can be drawn on which distribution method best connects the Magazine and readers and potential readers.

Key finding # 2: 172 of 173 readers surveyed perceive Moubader Magazine to be ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’, and a majority of readers reported that their perception of local initiatives was positively influenced by the Magazine.

From the RSs, 172 out of 173 respondents found Moubader Magazine to be either very useful or useful. One hundred twenty-six respondents found the Magazine particularly useful as it provides them with new information, 56 emphasised that the Magazine equips them with ideas of small-scale local actions they could start themselves and 49 stated that reading the Magazine gives them hope for the future. No respondents indicated that Moubader Magazine was not useful.

The majority of respondents classified the content of Moubader Magazine as realistic (145), and only a minority perceived it to be idealistic (26). One hundred twenty-eight stated that Moubader was unique/different from other magazines. The rationale provided for this perspective included ‘particular emphasis of Moubader on local initiatives’, ‘no focus on politics and war’, and ‘diverse content’. On the contrary, 33 respondents stated that Moubader Magazine was not different from other available magazines. To note, no comparable magazines were named by respondents.

As shown in Table 2, the overall feelings induced by Moubader in its readers were positive. When asked how the content of the Magazine make them feel, 85 respondents indicated that reading Moubader Magazine makes them feel ‘optimistic’ and 62 stated that it makes them ‘interested’. Thirty-five reported being ‘inspired’ and 16 were ‘curious’.³³

Overall, 107 out of 173 respondents have reportedly been inspired by the initiatives covered to the extent that they wish to launch an initiative in their own community. Outlining how Moubader Magazine has contributed to their desire to replicate and/or start their own initiative, respondents referred to specific activities such as ‘afforestation campaign’, ‘city cleaning campaign’, ‘sewing centres’, ‘psychological support for children’, and ‘support to women’ – to name a few.³⁴

Table 2. Moubader Magazine reader survey – perception

Perception		
RS Question	Answer options	# of respondents per answer
Has reading this Magazine influenced your perception of local initiatives?	Yes, I have a more positive opinion of local initiatives	122
	Yes, I have a less positive opinion of local initiatives	12
	No, my opinion has not been influenced by Moubader	19
	Do not know	9
	Other	0
	Prefers not to say	6
	Not responded	5

³² Regarding the hand-to-hand distribution, one IMPACT monitor reported perceiving that the distribution team also handed Magazines to civilians who were not interested in the Magazine. IMPACT monitors were not instructed on how to verify the level of interest of individuals receiving the magazine and, for such reason, this observation cannot be considered as a finding in itself. Nonetheless, it reveals that magazine pick-up rates alone are not a sufficient indicator of efficiency of the different types of distributions in connecting (potential) readers with the Magazine.

³³ Note that respondents can select more than one option for this survey question.

³⁴ References made to these local services/ activities are nor presented in hierarchical order neither do they represent the entire spectrum mentioned by respondents. More primary data is available upon request.

How does the content in this Magazine make you feel? (more than one answer was possible)	Optimistic	85
	Inspired	35
	Sceptical	0
	Curious	16
	Indifferent	0
	Pessimistic	0
	Interested	62
	Do not know	3
	Prefer not to answer	0
	Other	38 ³⁵

Key finding # 3 – Staff members of initiatives covered by Moubader reported an increase in civil society interest in their initiatives and improved possibilities for connecting with other institutions.

In the KIs conducted with staff members of initiatives that were featured in the Magazine, a large majority of Key Informants (KIs) reported an increase in civil society interest and improved possibilities for connecting with other institutions. Half of the respondents stated that their initiative received an increase in number of social media visits after the coverage by Moubader. One KI interviewed in Dara'a sub-district pointed out that his/her initiative has been asked by "most of the residents of the city [...] to do new voluntary activities [...including...] women, children and education issues". The Dara'a KI attributed the city residents' request for new activities to the initiative's coverage on Moubader. Another Dara'a KI, whose initiative provides psychological support to children, noted a 80% increase in the programme's attendance due to Moubader's coverage.

All interviewed KIs reported an increased acceptance from the communities. For example, one KI in Dara'a reported that individual activities covered by Moubader were more acceptable to civil society than individual activities not covered by Moubader – even if they were implemented by the same initiative. In addition, coverage by Moubader appears to have raised civilians' awareness of covered subjects. For example, an information event on breast cancer in Dara'a had a 90% increase in the number of attendees compared to previous information events advertised exclusively on Facebook. Finally, more than half of the KIs stated that their initiative has been able to expand its network since the Moubader coverage.

Moubader coverage has led four out of the eight initiatives represented by the nine KIs interviewed to change their outreach strategy. Those four initiatives were now publishing, for example, brochures and/or their own magazines. In addition, KIs interviewed on behalf of these four initiatives stated that their initiatives now put more emphasis on maintaining high standards with regard to their Facebook pages and quality of published photographs.

Five out of nine KIs stated that Moubader coverage of their initiative has helped to create partnerships with the Local Councils, Provincial Council and/or the Ministry of Local Administration. Five KIs referred to partnerships with international actors such as international NGOs or universities such as Cambridge College in London as a result of Moubader Magazine coverage.

Concluding remarks

The findings of the TPM indicated that Moubader Magazine was a very useful source of information on civil society initiatives and available services in the monitored sub-districts. In its printed form, the Magazine was revealed to be particularly relevant in providing information to individuals with limited Internet access. The fact

³⁵ This category has been excluded from the analysis as none of these 38 respondents has referred to a feeling induced by reading Moubader Magazine. Instead, respondents have referred to non-applicable categorisations such as 'hobby of reading'.

that Moubader does not cover “political and military affairs” but focuses on the coverage of civil society initiatives was seen identified by interviewees as unique and positive. The Reader Survey results indicate that the content seems appealing to readers as the majority of readers reported reading the magazine either assiduously or sporadically – whenever the magazine was accessible.

The KI results indicated that staff of local initiatives covered by Moubader perceived the magazine coverage as useful. Key informants provided explicit examples of how Moubader has helped raise awareness and acceptance for services offered by them. KIs also mentioned an increase in the number people attending their initiative’s activities as well as the number visitors to their social media networks after the magazine coverage. No negative implications for the civil society initiatives covered by Moubader have been reported by KIs.

Overall, findings of this monitoring exercise suggest that Moubader Magazine has contributed to communicating successful service delivery stories within opposition-held areas in Syria. The Magazine was also reported to have helped build trust between civil society initiatives and local population in these areas. Nonetheless, given that the vast majority of interviewees were male, further research would need to be conducted to capture females’ perception of Moubader Magazine.

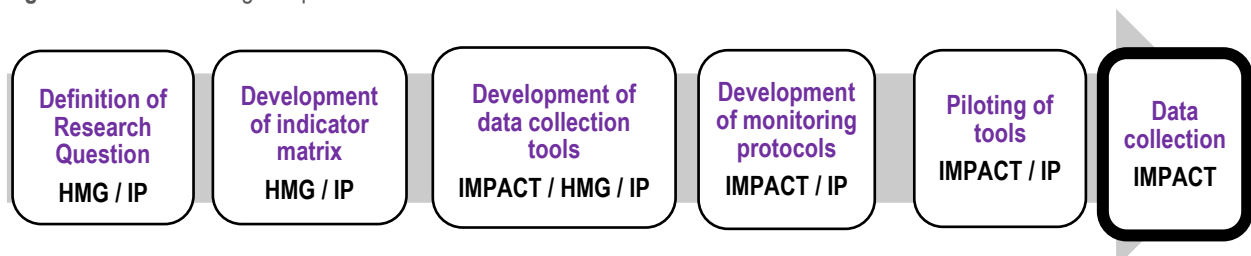
Methodology

Monitoring Cycle

For each of the monitored project outlined in the Findings section, research questions were defined by HMG in consultation with individual IPs and IMPACT. IMPACT engaged closely with HMG and the individual IPs to develop suitable indicators 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 selection of data collection methods and technical design of the data collection tools.

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 tools and collecting the data.

Figure 1. Research design steps and actors involved



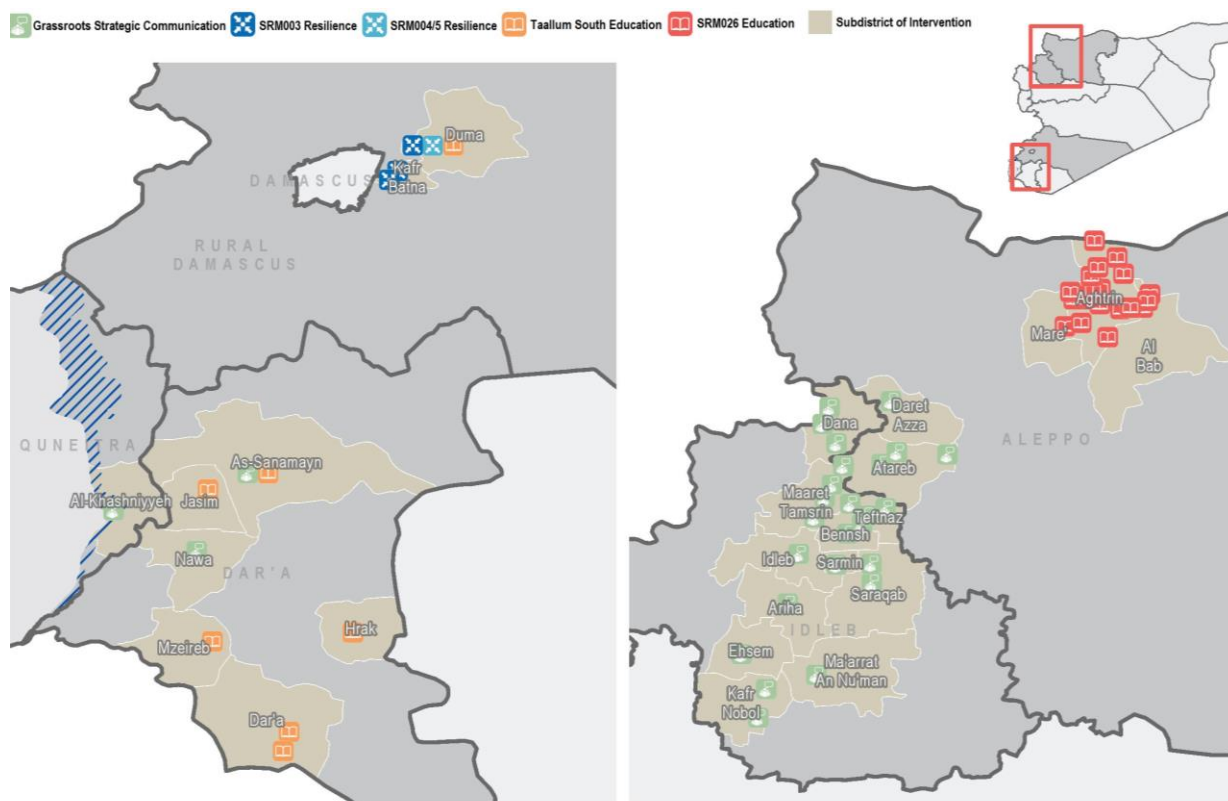
Geographic coverage

The TPM exercises in WP2 were conducted in five governorates, Rural Damascus,³⁶ Dara’a, Quneitra, Aleppo and Idleb. Locations monitored were selected by the IPs based on the implementation status of project

³⁶ Rural Damascus can also be referred to as “Rif Damascus”.

activities and accessibility of locations where activities were conducted. Please see Map 7 for information on completed TPM exercises, i.e. Grassroots Media Activism (Moubader), Taallum (South), SRM S003 (Stockpiling), SRM 004/5, and SRM 026.

Map 7. Project locations monitored at sub-district level



Data Collection Methods

A combination of different qualitative and quantitative methods was employed during the TPM. The identification of suitable methods was based on the nature of the project monitored, the research questions and corresponding indicators. Consequently, data collection methods were established on a project-by-project basis. The completed TPM exercises in Workplan 2 as well as the data collection activities for each are listed in Table 3. Data collection methods are further elaborated in the following sub-sections.

Table 3. Number of data collection activities implemented per project and per type of data collection method³⁷

Project	Status	DO	KII	FGD	Individual Survey
Taallum Initiative (South)	Completed	2	32	8	0
SRMS003 (Stockpiling)	Completed ³⁸	27	1	0	0
SRM004/5	Completed	8	0	0	0
SRM026	Completed	2	239	0	0
Grassroots (Moubader)	Completed	62	9	0	313
Total		101	281	8	313

³⁷ Status as of November 15th 2017.

³⁸ SRMS003 (Stockpiling) monitoring is completed. SRMS003 (Distribution) monitoring is ongoing.

Direct observation

Direct observation (DO) was used to obtain descriptive information from a neutral third party of the environment/context of a particular intervention. The focus of the DO depended on the research questions of the project monitored. DO was used in all TPM exercises in this reporting period.

DO was beneficial in collecting physical evidence that can be readily seen, such as verifying stocks stored in a warehouse in SRMS003 or in observing the construction of a hospital tunnel in SRM004/5. It was also useful in providing additional meaning and context, such as gaining a more in-depth understanding of the Magazine's distribution process in Grassroots. DO was best used in combination with other data collection methods.

Despite the advantages of DO, this method was susceptible to the enumerators' inherent bias. To reduce bias, DO conducted in the field included visual evidence (e.g. pictures and videos) and other qualitative methods. In addition, IMPACT enumerators were thoroughly trained in DO techniques. They were provided with pre-designed observation forms that guide the field activities. This allowed them to proceed in a more systematic and structured manner in recording relevant information at the monitoring site. The principles of neutrality and professionalism were also emphasised during enumerator training. Ideally, enumerators should not conduct DO in the community that they are from to mitigate potential bias. However, due to movement restrictions, this was not always possible. IMPACT had not observed any cases of intentional bias by enumerators throughout Workplan 2.

Key informant interviews

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used to monitor all projects in Workplan 2, with the exception of SRM 004/5. This method has proved to be effective in providing in-depth information, especially in context such as Syria where the 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 project, location and topic being assessed. In the context of this TPM, key informants included:

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

KIIs to be interviewed were selected by IPs. Due to movement restrictions within Syria, exact activity locations and times were often available on short notice. This gave IMPACT limited time to prepare its monitoring activities (including enumerator recruitment and training). Therefore, the IP selection of KIIs facilitated and expedited the preparation for monitoring activities. However, there could be potential bias for selecting KIs that provide more favourable responses. To reduce any potential bias, IMPACT has started requesting a list of contacts from the IP in order to conduct random sampling when selecting interviewees for KIIs and FGDs, and will ensure that all IPs adhere to IMPACT's current approach in the selection of interviewees in future monitoring projects.³⁹

Focus group discussions

FGDs can explore the dynamics and individual viewpoints and interests within the community. Given the nature of the monitoring activities in this reporting period, FGDs were only used for Taallum (South). Trainings of the enumerators, on the questionnaire and the topic was conducted before the implementation of the FGD

³⁹ The first project that adopted this approach was Ciheam Bari 2, where results will be reported in Workplan 3.

to ensure that useful information was collected. A particular focus was given to the probing questions and to the mediating role of enumerators within the activity.

A purposive selection was done by IPs to identify FGD participants who were the most adequate to answer the questions. Sampling also followed 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 six and eight participants, who were older than 18 years. Both male and female were selected to participate, in separate sessions, to ensure gender balance representation in findings. The number of FGDs per location and type was decided in the framework of the programme and location.

Individual surveys

An Individual Surveys data collection method was only utilised in Grassroots (Moubader) to conduct reader surveys for the Moubader Magazine. Due to the volatile security situation and difficulties in accessing the entire population, randomised probability sampling was not possible. Although non-probability sampling method cannot be considered representative with a quantifiable level of precision, the survey approach was useful in sampling a higher number of respondents and the data gathered can be indicative of the target group surveyed.

However, the nature of individual surveys tends to solicit brief responses through multiple choice or short answer questions, as opposed to methods such as KIIs or FGDs that can explore topics in detail. It was helpful to complement the breadth of surveys with the depth of KIIs. This also helped contextualise findings within wider community dynamics.

In addition, the IMPACT team noted that some data collected were excluded from analysis (13 out of 326 surveys were invalid), due to missing or incorrect answers. This could be due to the respondents' misunderstanding of the questions or lack of interest in participating in the survey, hence providing answers that are unclear. To reduce the amount of invalid data, more attention can be paid to assess the survey's length and language, e.g. in reducing the number of options in multiple choice questions.

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 beginning of data collection, one day of fieldwork was normally 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.

Findings in this report 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 data collection tools between pilot and actual data collection.

Analysis

After each monitoring day that involved data collection, enumerators were debriefed by the IMPACT field coordinators. During the debriefing sessions, done over the phone or on Skype, staff ensured that the data 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 was finalised, primary data was translated by IMPACT field coordinators or by external translators. IMPACT assured respondents that anonymity was preserved during all stages of the TPM, associating a code to each respondent that replaced their name in the questionnaire and in the database.

In the individual surveys conducted for Grassroots, quantitative data was entered into an excel data entry form, and cleaned to omit invalid results (e.g. incomplete surveys). Data was analysed according to each survey question, where findings were disaggregated by readers and non-readers. To increase the depth of analysis, disaggregation by gender and locations would be helpful in the future.

Primary qualitative data was coded using Atlas TI software, being split into sentences (quotations) and divided according to the research question and indicators of the TPM. Primary data analysis was 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 emphasised 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.

Challenges and Limitations

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

- On certain occasions, IMPACT enumerators were confronted with KIIs unwilling to respond.⁴⁰ This risk can be minimised by a thorough selection of KIIs participating in data collection activities. Additional KIIs can also be included in the list provided by the IP to ensure the expected number of interviews be obtained in case KIIs were unable or unwilling to participate. FGD participants have also been unwilling to collaborate on a few occasions. Organising more FGDs per location and surveyed group, where possible, could help to address resulting data shortages in the future.
- Monitoring locations and participants were selected by IPs, which can lead to potential bias. In Taallum (South), enumerators observed that FGD participants from two schools in Dar'a governorate had prepared their response in advance, with their comments and demands written down on a piece of paper. Responses given by participants were repeated across male and female FGDs, as well as the primary school and secondary school FGDs that were in the same community. As this severely impacted the quality of the data, IMPACT has established a new protocol to avoid the situation from happening in future monitoring projects. IMPACT would request a list of contacts from the IP in order to conduct random sampling when selecting interviewees, and would ensure that all IPs adhere to IMPACT's current

⁴⁰ For Grassroots (Moubader), the KI identified to respond for one of the local initiatives featured in Moubader magazine refused to collaborate with IMPACT monitor. This was said to be because the participation entailed no form of compensation, although this had been clarified when the interviewed had been scheduled over the phone.

approach in the selection of interviewees in future monitoring projects.⁴¹ In addition, anticipated communication would take place to make sure IPs are clear on the dos and don'ts of monitoring, including why questionnaires should not be shared with interviewees.

- Due to barriers in accessing female respondents, there was an unbalanced male to female respondents ratio in the data collected. To increase the number of female respondents, measures can include selecting monitoring locations that have a higher representation of female, and hiring female monitors where appropriate.
- Politically sensitive topics remained difficult to discuss, limiting the scope of research questions that can be addressed. In Grassroots (Moubader), the overarching research question that evaluates whether a “positive perception of initiatives affect target audiences’ perception of the moderate opposition’s role in the transition process” was removed after pilot, as respondents refused to answer this question due to its high sensitivity.
- For reasons linked to the volatile operating context in Syria, IMPACT security focal points 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 caused delays in data analysis due to the time-consuming process of data entry.
- Data collection dates were often subject to changes due to the rapidly changing security environments in locations where TPM activities were conducted. For Taallum (South), the volatile security situation in Rural Damascus Governorate delayed the implementation of data collection activities from May 2017 to June 2017 during the summer holiday period. This meant that no DO was conducted in schools in Duma. In the future, monitoring timelines can be planned to avoid conducting data collection during school holidays for education projects as much as possible. However, the monitoring timeline was also designed to minimise the time period between Taallum’s intervention and the availability of TPM results. Further delaying TPM activities to the new school year would have negatively affected the availability of TPM results to HMG and IP in informing changes to the project’s design.
- The highly volatile context can limit the predictability of project timelines, leading to limited time for IMPACT to prepare its monitoring activities. For example, it was difficult for ARK to plan Moubader’s distribution location and times ahead of time - as it depends on the time needed to approve the Magazine at various checkpoints. Therefore, IMPACT received short notice on distribution locations and dates, leaving IMPACT with limited time to contact enumerators and conduct enumerator training. Although this did not cause any notable issues with regards to the quality of the data collected, more time for enumerator training would have been useful.
- Remote management both within the staff structure for IPs and IMPACT posed communication challenges. This was mitigated by asking IMPACT enumerators to directly communicate with IPs’ field officers under the IMPACT Field Coordinator’s oversight to reduce the layers of communication. To ensure accountability, IMPACT’s Assessment Officer was also in touch with the IP’s project manager to receive updates on the distribution plan. The information collected on the project manager level helped verify the information obtained on the field level.

⁴¹ This approach was first adopted in Ciheam Bari 2, and key findings for this project will be presented in Workplan 3.

Conclusion

CSSF's intended impact and summary of findings

The projects monitored in Workplan 2 cover areas including education, stabilisation response, and strategic communications. Although the range of programmes monitored was diverse, programme goals relate to CSSF's intended impact regarding an inclusive political process, effective and legitimate governance, and strengthening community resilience.⁴²

Taallum contributed toward building effective and credible actors within the education municipality. Findings suggest that the Education Assembly and Education Directorate developed new skills, including project management and computer skills, to better deliver education services in their respective schools as a result of Taallum's training. Additionally, these trainings introduced new knowledge and skills to the community that were not available among the public sector in pre-conflict Syria. With regards to suggestions for programme improvement, respondents mentioned that the content of the training can be more conflict-sensitive.

The Moubader Magazine facilitated inclusive participation and civil society engagement of its readers. Through the Magazine, a majority of reader respondents claimed to have gained a greater awareness of local initiatives, and some respondents also indicated a desire to participate in local initiatives. Given the wide coverage of the Magazine, this also suggests a chance for readers to be informed about initiatives in other governorates across Syria. A methodological challenge was people's refusal to participate in the survey at distribution locations in IDP camps. This suggests that those who were not interested in the project or do not see its relevance were less likely to participate in the feedback mechanism, and were hence excluded from the dataset. Further investigation can explore the extent to which the IDPs were engaged in community initiatives, and the extent to which the Magazine has had a positive impact on this specific population.

Projects conducted under SRM aimed to strengthen the community and individuals' resilience to the conflict. In SRM004/5, TPM findings indicate that the hospital rehabilitation was completed by the end of Phase II. The hospital rehabilitation including the construction of protective layers and underground tunnels was designed to increase its ability to provide medical assistance to the community in the event of an airstrike.

SRMS003 (stockpiling) was also completed as planned, with the exception of purchasing less diesel than expected and no benzene fuel due to the spike in prices. There was evidence of efforts to be conflict-sensitive in the project design. For example, the decision to place warehouses across eight different locations was intended to reduce the risk of damage as a result of airstrikes target. If one area is besieged, there is a higher chance that other areas are able to access the stocks in the alternative warehouses.

In SRM026, education rehabilitation was identified as a priority need to help communities recover from ISIL occupation. TPM findings indicate that all school supplies were purchased and stipends distributed as expected.

Data collection methodology and limitations

A wide range of data collection tools, including secondary data review, DOs, KIIs, FGDs, and individual surveys was utilised to adapt to the research questions and context. In particular, mixed method was first introduced in Workplan 2 through TPM of Grassroots. Reader and non-reader individual surveys were utilised to collect data from a larger sample of respondents.

⁴² The intended impact of CSSF includes 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 organisations.

As outlined in the Methodology section, there were new and ongoing challenges due to the volatile and challenging contexts that the projects operate in. For example, politically sensitive topics remain difficult to discuss. In Moubader, the overarching research question that evaluates whether a “positive perception of initiatives affect target audiences’ perception of the moderate opposition’s role in the transition process” was removed after pilot, as respondents refused to answer this question due to its high sensitivity. This leads to challenges in examining some of CSSF’s broader goals and intended impact relating to political processes.

Furthermore, the volatile environment in Syria makes it more challenging to draw implications beyond the project period monitored. For example, TPM findings from projects monitored in May and June 2017 indicate that the attendance rate has increased as a result of Taallum’s intervention. Due to the airstrikes in Idlib in September 2017, an increase in student dropout rate since the start of the school year was reported,⁴³ after the completion of Taallum’s monitoring period in June 2017. As evident, outcomes are highly subject to the ongoing challenges posed by the conflict. Therefore, it can be particularly valuable to monitor projects overtime to assess their ability to respond to changes in external environment. To maximise the value of TPM in projects monitored, it can also be valuable to draw broader lessons and good practices that can be shared with other relevant IPs.

Similar to Workplan 1, the volatile context and lack of access mean that random probability sampling was not possible, limiting the level and scope of monitoring that was conducted in Workplan 2. However, outcome monitoring is a crucial component in understanding the effectiveness of projects implemented in a holistic way. In areas where access increases overtime, IMPACT will explore the feasibility and scope for conducting outcome monitoring. More detailed information of TPM findings and analysis can be found in the output reports of each project.

⁴³ [As Bombing Returns to Idlib, Start of New School Year Sees Rise in Student Dropouts](#), Syrian Observer, 27 September 2017.