iMC worldwide
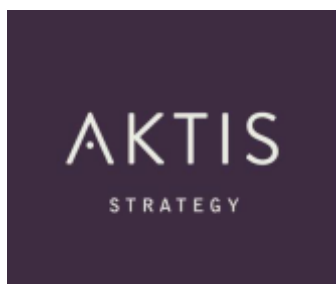Development | Management | Infrastructure

Formative Evaluation of the Support to Emerging Governance Structures (Tamkeen) Programme in Syria

Formative Evaluation Report

DFID, May 2016

In association with:

AKTIS
STRATEGY

RMTeam
Research & Management مجموعة البحث والإدارة

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Acronyms

AR	Annual Review
AS	Ahrar al-Sham
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
Daesh	Al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham, otherwise known as IS or ISIL
DTO	Designated Terrorist Organisation
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict Affected State
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSA	Free Syrian Army
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMC	IMC Worldwide Ltd.
IP	Implementing Partner
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JAN	Jabhat al-Nusra
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Local Administration Council
LCC	Local Coordination Council
LF	Logframe
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoLARR	Ministry of Local Administration, Relief and Refugees
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PM	Project Management
PYD	Kurdish Democratic Union Party forces
QA	Quality Assurance
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SC	Steering Committee
SIG	Syrian Interim Government
SSA	Syrian Security Agencies
TC	Tamkeen Committee
TL	Team Leader
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
VfM	Value for Money
YPG	Kurdish People's Protection Units

1. Executive Summary

Evaluation Purpose

The Support to Emerging Governance Structures ("Tamkeen") programme is a UK Aid programme delivering support to governance in Syria. It is co-funded by the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and European Commission (EC), and is managed by the Department for International Development (DFID). Tamkeen (in Arabic, *empowerment* or *enablement*) is a programme designed to encourage the emergence of local governance structures in communities through the participatory delivery of basic services in a volatile political and conflict environment. Tamkeen runs until August 2016 and is currently in its third cycle, with a total of 28 established Tamkeen Committees (TCs)[1].

This is the first independent evaluation of DFID's governance programme in opposition-controlled Syria. As a formative evaluation of the Tamkeen programme, it was conducted by the IMC Consortium between August 2015 and January 2016. The evaluation comprises two key elements: (1) a Conflict Analysis and Field Survey of six chosen locations in opposition-controlled Syria where the Tamkeen programme is established; and (2) a literature overview and summary of learning to date on governance in Syria. The main objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess progress to date of the Tamkeen programme against its stated objectives at output, outcome and impact level and critique the project's theory of change (ToC), using the OECD-DAC criteria.
2. Identify which elements of the intervention are/are not working well and why.
3. Understand how the context and political economy affects programme delivery and why.
4. Examine the feasibility of scaling and replicating the model and approaches adopted by Tamkeen elsewhere in Syria; and by extension, in similar circumstances elsewhere in the world.

Methodology

Under a set of criteria that included rural/urban, north/south, level of women's participation, and known levels of relative programme success, the evaluation selected six locations where TCs had been established in the first two cycles of the programme. The six locations were spread across Aleppo (including Aleppo City),, Idlib, Rif Damascus and Dar'a. In-depth qualitative analysis was undertaken in each location, including a political economy analysis, conflict assessment and stakeholder analysis, and a survey of community perceptions over the efficacy of the Tamkeen programme. Particular attention was paid to the link between the TCs and the Local Administrative Councils (LACs) since the programme is designed to eventually 'graduate' to full involvement and responsibility of the local councils.

In total, 370 respondents were interviewed inside Syria by local researchers, through focus groups and key informants interviews. The Conflict Analysis, undertaken by a wholly separate team to the initial Field Survey team; consisted of all male respondents. The Field Survey, however, included a significant number of women (about 100), many of whom formed Tamkeen women's sub-committees. The evaluation faced a number of challenges and limitations that included:

- Volatile security that resulted in delayed fieldwork in some locations. Nevertheless, the team was in situ and able to conduct most of the planned interviews.

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[1] Since the time of writing the Tamkeen programme has been extended to November, 2016. It is now in its fourth cycle and works in 38 communities.

- Context specific nature of all of the sites which makes it difficult to generalise findings. However, findings for all locations are to some extent 'typical' when applied to comparisons between rural/urban, IDP/settled communities, gender dynamics, or when examining a community under siege or under intense fighting.

Findings

There were four key evaluation questions (EQs), each with sub-questions translated and adapted to the local context. A conflict timeline was created for each locality to help understand how contextual variables have influenced Tamkeen progress over two years. The findings in relation to the EQs are:

EQ1: How have contextual factors impacted the success of Tamkeen?

Summary

The fragmentation of communities due to conflict and the collapse of the centralised governance system experienced under the Syria regime have led initially to a state of chaos but more recently to the emergence of civilian-led governance structures. In terms of legitimacy and resources, these have largely replaced the imposed governance of armed actors. There is, however, a limited structure linking LACs with provincial and/or national bodies, or horizontally between LACs, so the impact of Tamkeen is limited and local.

The political economy is still highly volatile and dependent on who controls essential goods coming in and out of the communities. Through introducing competition in some areas and creating a viable alternative to privatised services, Tamkeen has offset some of this monopoly.

The more stable/less contentious the context – and the fewer available other resources in the community - the more successful Tamkeen has been in achieving the stated programme outcomes. Conversely, where there are high levels of violence, bombardment and insecurity there is less willingness to engage in public pursuits such as the voluntary Tamkeen Committees. In all locations the judicial system is controlled by armed factions (predominantly JAN). Holding local governance actors to account is not a priority within these structures.

A common theme from the political economy analysis highlights the emergence of civic structures that have, over the course of two years, largely taken control of governance systems and service delivery from armed groups. Nevertheless, this control by civic structures sits within the wider influence of Sharia Courts and Shoura Councils (dominated by conservative armed groups, mainly JAN which is still very apparent). The balance of power between armed and civic actors depends on the level of security and stability in the area. Where these are relatively high, civic actors are more independent of armed actors, their legitimacy is better established, and they have a relatively elevated level of power. Although the evaluation could not verify the correlation, there may also be mutual causality: where civilian groups are stronger, there is greater likelihood of secure and stable communities.

The conflict has unmasked and exacerbated pre-existing conflicts within the communities that hitherto had been suppressed by the Baath regime. LACs (and by extension Tamkeen) are much-affected by this political re-mapping of the area, with constant shifts between moderate and extremist groups often linked to local dominant families, particularly in southern Syria. In general, this has been a distraction from the core role of the local councils.

The largest resources in all communities pass between hands of civilians; they are not exclusively controlled by armed actors. The evaluation found that remittances are the largest economic resource,

followed by donor contributions (including private Islamic benefactors). In terms of political economy, Tamkeen resources can, therefore, be relatively small. However, their importance is that they are one of the few publicly accountable resources coming into a community.

TC projects are helping prevent the privatisation of public services and having a positive impact in bringing the cost of services down through increased competition. With the collapse of the state service provision sector in opposition-controlled areas, and with the war-damaged infrastructure, a new group of private service providers has arisen. The TCs to some extent offset this trend by introducing greater competition and providing free services where possible.

An overall legal framework that brings all the emerging governance entities together is absent. Though some have argued for modifying Syrian law, such as the use of the framework Law 107 for LACs, there is no legal platform for this. Despite the inauguration of the Syrian National Coalition and its interim administration (in exile), there is little connection between this and the 'bottom-up' creation of LACs. Tamkeen's impact on enhancing governance therefore remains limited and local. Tamkeen is not yet sufficiently established (or sizeable) to be scaled up.

Changing public opinion in favour of accountable governance is more challenging in cases where deeply rooted intra-communal conflicts exist. In a community in Idlib the LAC split due to divisive family feuding, something not foreseen by Tamkeen. Nevertheless, the Tamkeen project had a positive impact in combining the two competing local councils. At the formation stage the TC included members from both councils and gradually contributed to reducing tension and reaching a mutual agreement that resulted in the formation of one LAC. The TC also played a role in lessening the tension between the community and armed groups which was interfering in the delivery of bread through pressuring the local bakery. The same TC also managed to resolve the issue of leakage in the water system by removing the illegal withdrawal of water from the network. This received much support from the community.

EQ2: Was the selection process for the TCs and their operating procedures perceived as transparent, accountable and inclusive?

Summary

The application of Tamkeen operational principles varies widely across each location. The TCs largely comprise individuals from influential and power wielding entities in the community rather than being selected by the public by genuine public selection. Yet the evidence points to several examples where Tamkeen operating principles have led to better practice in governance. Financial transparency has improved, though procurement processes are not always fully followed. TCs are still for the most part exclusive of women and minorities. Tamkeen projects are selected without sufficient knowledge of alternatives. Projects have been successfully implemented in many cases but not always up to technical standards, and the implementation cycle for projects has been too short.

The war has induced greater degrees of conservatism, with women's role in the community deteriorating and a consequent reduction in their representation in political or governance positions. Tamkeen projects have tried to rectify this through increasing the representation of women on the TCs as well as in project management. Women sub-committees were introduced into the second cycle of the project as a vehicle for women's increased participation. In some instances this was successful, but in others it created a situation in which women were only informed of matters mostly already decided by the men. In the communities studied in Dar'a women's involvement was mainly done at the project selection phase only. By contrast, in Aleppo the lack of interest in Tamkeen from the city council in terms of project implementation appears to have created increased opportunities for women to take leadership and decision making roles. They have had success in the projects they have implemented including the

teachers' training centre. The TC has thus provided a great resource for women's empowerment in Aleppo City, particularly when compared to the city council. A common finding was that with many men being absent (or, indeed, killed), the increased domestic and economic responsibilities of women prevent them from engaging in public bodies.

Financial transparency has gradually improved but procurement processes are not always fully followed. Financial transparency has gradually improved through public announcements of tendering and results but decisions around procurement are still questioned by the wider community members. Strict procurement processes are not always perceived by the TCs as necessary and are not always fully followed. Under the Tamkeen procurement principles, projects above the financial ceiling ($40,000) require public tendering. The evaluation found evidence of TCs splitting projects into multiple, lower-value projects to avoid formal public tendering.

The selection of TC projects is done mostly (although not exclusively) without a feasibility study, and the community has to choose blindly without realising the financial costs and the expected results that can be achieved within available resources. People might have prioritised their needs differently if they were provided with more information and could make an informed decision.

EQ3: How do community members experience the activities of the Tamkeen Committees?

Summary

In general, public perception of Tamkeen is determined by the visible success of the individual projects undertaken by the TCs. Community awareness of Tamkeen was higher in the more rural homogenous communities (for example, in Idlib) than in the urban communities that had a far greater array of external funding. In a war context the distinction between humanitarian aid and basic services is often blurred, and Tamkeen resources for the latter are (inevitably) insufficient. The choice of projects was rarely contested by the communities, and their benefits are widely acknowledged; however, project success generates demand which cannot always be met by existing resources. Requesting public contributions for maintenance and sustainability of projects is generally accepted, but only if a wider sense of public ownership is promoted; advocacy and awareness have not been consistent or sufficient. The lack of capacity in some TCs and in LACs is the greatest impediment to project success.

For wider community respondents, Tamkeen projects, not the process, were the reference of success. This was particularly apparent in communities under constant bombardment or under siege where the provision of basic services is a lifeline. But in all locations Tamkeen's reputation depends on the perceived success of projects. Interestingly, though, a consequence of Tamkeen's success in terms of local ownership is that the attribution of success/failure is also 'owned' locally; the programme itself is rarely criticised. There was also evidence in some communities that delays in project implementation generated tensions with other local implementing entities.

Project sustainability depends on a wider sense of community ownership. In Tamkeen communities participation in payment schemes for services such as water and electricity is widely accepted; however, it is very conditional upon good quality of the service, sufficient communication of project objectives, and the coverage of the project across the entire community.

To some extent Tamkeen has been the victim of its own success. Project funding for public services increases demand, and the level of funding available through Tamkeen alone could rarely cover services for the entire community. This was the case, for example, in a community in Dar'a where the TC decided that water provision was essential, then realised that available project funds could cover only a certain number of the community. Contentious choices around project selection were made, expectations were raised, and funds lasted only a short period.

Geographical variants emerged from the research. The communities in the north showed greater degrees of success in terms of project implementation, communication and demonstration of good governance practices. These were more stable communities with a greater degree of homogeneity, with regular habits of communication. By contrast, progress in the south was more impaired by disruptive clan and family dynamics; here the TCs gave a great deal more attention to project delivery than to governance principles.

Rural versus urban dynamics have affected the implementation of the Tamkeen project. The level of Tamkeen funding compared to local resources is a determinant of success. Tamkeen funding in rural communities tends to be relatively large compared to LAC resources; this also seems to determine the level of TC/LAC commitment to good governance principles. The opposite is also true – in one community in Aleppo, for example, TC principles were of little interest to the local council through which Tamkeen worked. Here, politics was highly charged in the local council and greater power and authority were exerted by it.

In almost all locations there was no clear complaint mechanism for the TCs[2], but in some communities action was taken upon complaints raised outside a formal process. An indirect result of creating the TC was that community members and beneficiaries more confidently expressed their opinions. In some respects, Tamkeen presents a classic development dilemma: the more successful it is at self-promotion, the more exposed it is to raised expectations and criticism from the community.

Advocacy and awareness are by far the key success factors in terms of public accountability and acceptance of Tamkeen principles. In a community in Rif Damascus the lack of public awareness of TC activities was compounded by the fact that publicity generated by the LAC was only directed towards active institutions and CSOs rather than the public. In Cycle 2 in a community in Rif Damascus communications were purposely kept low-profile because reportedly (though the causal link cannot be verified) one public meeting was bombed after being advertised on Facebook. In a community in Dar'a the evaluation found that limiting public pronouncements to the internet excluded large sections of the population; in a community in Idlib, the LAC recognised that insufficient attention had been given to public dissemination of its work.

With limited resources, TC project selection has not concentrated on economic resilience activities commensurate with the local economy. In the first cycles of Tamkeen the emphasis was on basic service delivery; there is now an opportunity to pass this responsibility to the LACs, allowing Tamkeen, where it runs parallel to LACs, to promote collective economic activities within the community, rather than be saddled with recurring costs of service provision. Where 'graduation' to LAC support occurs, however, service delivery should continue to be the main remit and responsibility of local government.

EQ4: Has the Tamkeen project achieved or is it in the process of achieving intended objectives?

Summary

The level and demand for good governance are higher than might be expected, especially given the low baseline from which the programme started. Incremental progress towards Tamkeen objectives is noticeable, and the process is beginning to take root, especially where there has been a level of continuity over two years. However, Tamkeen needs to invest greater resources in understanding and adapting to the very different circumstances and socio-political environments of each community. Poor capacity and experience within LACs and TCs are an impediment to progress. With little inter-communication between locations, the influence and promotion of a Tamkeen 'standard' has been

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[2] In Cycle 3 each TC installed a complaint box.

minimum. Also, influence on other actors – CSOs, for instance – has been limited by the lack of coordination and knowledge of who is doing what within communities.

Poor capacity within the TCs – and by extension, the LACs – has been an impediment to achieving the intended outcomes of Tamkeen. The TC is a voluntary body, created with community members who frequently do not have the necessary technical expertise to implement projects of the required scale. Training has not been consistent and has not been followed up regularly. In a community in Dar'a, LAC members claimed to have had no exposure to manuals or training; in communities in Aleppo training was only introduced at the beginning of the process, but not followed up later; and in a community in Dar'a the view was that training was 'theoretical' but not easy to apply in reality. The result has been too much reliance on the Tamkeen staff to direct and make choices on behalf of the TC; this runs contrary to the central purpose of the programme.

Aleppo City was perhaps unique in being the only one of the six communities where Tamkeen had little hope of influencing the comparatively much better-resourced City Council. In communities in Dar'a the model was ill-equipped to overcome local political complexities. A degree of adaptation of Tamkeen principles to local requirements was seen in two communities, but there is still an underlying debate – and one not yet resolved - over how adaptable to cultural variables a programme of this kind should be without compromising its central value and objectives.

Tamkeen resources are spread too widely across too many communities, possibly diminishing the influence of the more successful models. There has been little communication between communities on the outcomes of Tamkeen; in this respect, media has been under-utilised, so the degree of communication, community involvement and learning between communities has not been optimal. Tamkeen could be used to consolidate much-needed 'islands of stability' in opposition-held areas, and to create demand from both LACs and the community at large for more transparent and accountable services. One way of doing this could be through having a few 'gold standard' LACs that might, through information exchange and media, influence others. The promotion and understanding of Tamkeen governance principles requires continuity.

The influence of TCs on civil society organisations, as opposed to the LACs, has been limited due to only sporadic interaction. In this respect the coordination role of LACs could be improved. Only in very few instances was there a concerted effort to interact and/or coordinate Tamkeen projects with other aid providers.

Conclusions

The Tamkeen initiative has been useful, necessary and antithetical to military and/or religious dominance. A key to the acceptance and viability of the Tamkeen model is its low-profile, local ownership. It has yet to be absorbed within local/provincial/sub-national structures, but concerns over creating 'parallel structures' were not warranted in the first two years when local councils were themselves not developed. This is gradually changing, and with it comes the urgency to develop the capacity of national bodies to sustain services and uphold minimum standards of public accountability. At the same time, the model should only be supported if it demonstrates improved participation, including women and minorities, and counteracts the existing dominant power structures.

The governance objectives of Tamkeen have only been partially met in terms of their influence on other bodies, but with a few exceptions the trend is broadly in the right direction. If Tamkeen is to move towards greater emphasis on the assimilation of good governance into local government practice, output indicators on capacity development, behavioural change and open participation within local government bodies will have to be developed so that these become key measurements of success. Moreover, indicators will need to shift increasingly towards community demand rather than supply, with less

dependence on the effectiveness of projects per se. The volatile context – the conflict dynamics both internal and external to the communities under review - will continue to be the major impediment to intended outcomes. Conflict analysis as an active ongoing activity is required, including a thorough risk assessment over the potential consequences of introducing new and challenges processes of governance into a situation where these might challenge strong vested interests.

Recommendations

Tamkeen Process

1. **Adopt more inclusive ways to share information; internet is limited and mosques are often exclusive of women, disabled and those who do not attend the mosque.**
2. **Encourage project feasibility studies and greater information on project options for TC members to foster Syrian ownership and to manage community expectations from the outset.**
3. **Adopt tighter controls over TC membership selection.** There are too many cases of patronage and accusations of preferential selection.
4. **Provide follow-up training for TCs to increase technical capacity as required. Manuals and training are not sufficient if used only at the start of TC formation.**
5. **Lengthen the TC project cycles to 12 months to offset procurement delays and ensure a reasonable implementation schedule and monitoring.**
6. **Ensure that projects adhere to a legal framework of regulations.** The Syrian law, with some modifications, remains the most suitable. LACs, for example, could look more closely at Syria law article 107 as a working framework for local governance.

Transition to local government

7. **Invest more in ongoing conflict and contextual analysis that allows adaptation and response to changing realities.**
8. **Reinforce the concept that TCs are temporary and not permanent structures.** For instance, ensure that a more formal agreement – perhaps a modification to the existing MoUs, with specific benchmarks and targets – is arranged between the TCs and LACs. Currently, parallel structures are for the most part avoided by including LAC members within the TCs. But the terms for a transition from TC to LAC are not spelt out; nor indeed is there any formal understanding of the relationship between the two entities. The MoU should include a specific exit strategy.
9. **In considering support for vertical governance structures, develop a new model at provincial and governorate levels from the centralised 'top down' approach that has become the norm of regime-controlled governance**. The structures above LACs are very different; they do not directly provide services, though the skills in the Directorates could be exploited. Also they could become a central repository of information and coordination for all assistance in the region.
10. **Pay greater attention to coordinating Tamkeen activities with similar donor-assisted projects**. This is particularly important with respect to LAC capacity development and to ensuring the sustainability of successful projects initiated by Tamkeen. Specific areas of training – Public Financial Management (PFM), for instance – could be developed with inputs from DFID.

2. Introduction and background

2.1 Introduction

IMC Worldwide (IMC), Aktis Strategy (Aktis) and RMTeam Research and Management (RMTeam) conducted an independent Formative Evaluation of the Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria (Tamkeen) Programme from August 2015 to January 2016. Working closely with the Tamkeen Implementing Partners (IPs), and with the Department for International Development (DFID), the evaluation team gathered first-hand information from field research in Syria as well as background research on the rapidly changing environment in which Tamkeen is placed.

There are three core elements to the evaluation: (1) literature overview and summary of learning to date; (2) Conflict Analysis, and (3) Field Survey. Each of these three informs the key EQs, and in turn these inform our critique of the Tamkeen ToC, leading to conclusions that include an assessment of whether Tamkeen is a replicable and appropriate model for Syria and perhaps other similar war environments.

The immediate issue is whether DFID should extend the Tamkeen programme in its current form beyond mid-2016. The evaluation therefore looks in detail at the pros and cons of the model, offering an independent enquiry into how the programme has unfolded and how it is perceived by different communities in Syria. It also provides insights to help guide any redesign of the DFID-supported governance programme which may include a new ToC.

2.2 The Tamkeen programme: background

Tamkeen is one of the UKAid programmes delivering support to governance in Syria. It is co-funded by the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and European Commission (EC), and is managed by DFID. The total budget to August 2016 is approximately £18m.[3] Tamkeen (in Arabic, *empowerment* or *enablement*) is a programme designed to encourage the emergence of local governance structures in communities through the participatory delivery of basic services in a volatile political and conflict environment. It aims to support and preserve space for the moderate opposition in preparation of a higher-level political settlement. The individual projects and activities undertaken by the TC are the vehicle through which opportunities to build good governance are demonstrated. The distinction between process and projects is important because although both are inextricably linked, the ultimate objective is to improve governance practices, making them acceptable to the wider community and sustainable beyond the life of Tamkeen. A higher-level aim is to test whether good governance is possible in the midst of conflict and factionalism.

Since the start of the uprising in March 2011, Syria's previously centralised governance structures have undergone considerable change. In opposition-held areas, the pattern of emerging governance structures is highly politicised (in many cases linked to local community and/or sectarian identities), securitised and with competing structures. Local Councils (LACs)[4] have evolved and are increasingly taking on responsibility for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and public services. In 2012 the Syrian National Coalition was formed; under this a Syrian Interim Government (SIG) was created in 2013. At various times

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[3] Since the time of writing the Tamkeen programme has been extended to November, 2016. It is now in its fourth cycle and works in 38 communities.

[4] The term Local Administrative Council (LAC) is the formal term used by the Syria Opposition Coalition (SOC), but many other terms are used in Arabic reflecting the diversity of organisations. These include Local Councils, Local Coordination Committees and Revolutionary Councils (with stronger links to armed groups). For our purposes we will use Local Councils (LACs), unless otherwise stated.

there have also been efforts to establish Provincial Councils which do now exist to varying degrees depending on the location. The LACs, however, continue to operate relatively independently.

The Tamkeen programme was begun in November 2013 with a 3-month design phase as part of a two-year programme. From February 2014 to November 2015 the first three cycles were implemented by the contractor. In April 2015 the contract was extended to cover cycle 4 (up to August 2016), along with extra funding for work with women and at provincial level during cycle 3.

As of October 2015, 28 TCs had been formed, and in Cycle 3 there were 126 approved projects, with the remaining communities scheduled to receive approval in the coming weeks. The TCs themselves had submitted a total of 41 monitoring reports, though with quite a range in quality.

The TCs are in opposition controlled and contested areas of Syria (in the Governorates of **Aleppo**, **Idleb**, **Rural (Rif) Damascus** and **Dar'a**). TCs are linked to a sponsoring LAC and they are meant to improve basic service delivery. The TCs receive capacity building training in needs identification, project prioritisation, planning, budgeting, financial management and accountability processes. Through donor-supported grants, they are provided funds based on a pre-approved menu of services (Basic Package of Services) through an agreed funding cycle process.

The Tamkeen project aims to strengthen good governance practices for the delivery of services (governance, infrastructure, health, education, livelihoods) by community based committees. TCs in certain respects present a parallel structure to the LACs; this was intentional in the sense that the TCs were never designed as permanent structures, but rather were to lead by example, especially in areas where the LAC was still very new or had been usurped by political or military factions. Good governance in service delivery entails effective programme cycle management (needs assessment, costing, procurement, and financial management), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and the use of inclusive, transparent and accountable processes. The project has two intended outcomes: good governance practices are mainstreamed into delivery of services (supply side impact), and communities' expectations of good governance in service delivery are raised (demand side impact).

3. Approach & methodology

3.1 Evaluation Overview

The four main evaluation objectives of the IMC Consortium are:

1. Assess progress to date of the Tamkeen programme against its stated objectives at output, outcome and impact level and critique the project's theory of change, using OECD-DAC criteria.
2. Improve understanding around which elements of the intervention are/are not working well and why.
3. Improve understanding of how the context and political economy affects programme delivery
4. Comment on the extent to which the approaches adopted by Tamkeen could be replicable in similar contexts elsewhere in Syria; and by extension, if Tamkeen is a governance model that could be used in similar circumstances elsewhere in the world.

The evaluation Inception Phase took place from August 10th to September 17th 2015. In the first phase (10-15 August) the team conducted a preliminary desk review of project document, logical framework, work plans, interim reports, and other data. Following preliminary meetings in London with DFID, the team convened in Istanbul (11-12 August) for a kick-off meeting with DFID followed by introductions and discussions with the Tamkeen implementer. The Team Leader then proceeded to Gaziantep to continue design preparation with Aktis and, on 15th August, to conduct a one day workshop with RMTeam management and three field coordinators from RMTeam to discuss in detail the evaluation overall objectives and the field research questions.

RMTeam subsequently developed the field research plan, finalised the draft data collection tools in Arabic/English, and drafted the initial field researchers' guidelines. The training materials for the field team were prepared in the first week of September 2015. Some activities (literature review, gender, contextual overviews) were also begun from outside the immediate region but by individuals familiar with Syria. Aktis undertook its Conflict Analysis background data collection to complement the data gathered in the field.

The majority of the primary research inside Syria was undertaken from October to November 2015. Due to the security situation in Syria teams gathering data were remotely managed (i.e. not all were able to travel back and forth from Turkey and therefore were contacted and instructed online[5]). Data QA was undertaken through frequent online (and phone) contacts with the RMTeam survey team in the field[6].

During the Inception Phase DFID convened a Steering Committee which reviewed the various stages of the main evaluation and gave guidance on inputs. The tools and analytical methods were piloted in mid-September 2015, followed by the full Field Phase in October. Simultaneously, the literature review was undertaken to complement primary data collected by RMTeam and Aktis. The main bulk of analysis and identification of initial findings, recommendation and lesson learnt took place during the analytical workshop in early November, enabling the evaluators to present "headline" findings to the DFID Steering Committee in early December.

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[5] Aktis, RMTeam and the contractor are all based in Gaziantep, so this is the 'hub' for the evaluation.
[6] When the original written records of interviews were submitted the senior analyst at RMTeam highlighted discrepancies and/or unclear responses. Through skype and/or phone calls, clarification was sought; only very rarely was it necessary to return to the interviewee for further information.

The first draft of the formative evaluation was submitted to DFID in early January 2016. A presentation of the final report workshop to DFID by the consortium took place in Istanbul on 12-13 January 2016. The final report, including annexes and executive summary, was submitted shortly thereafter.

3.2   Audiences for deliverable reports

The primary audience for the Final Report is:

- Funders of the programme - HMG Syria CSSF including representatives from DFID, FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and MoD (Ministry of Defence), and the EC.
- Implementing contractors

The secondary audience includes:

- DFID staff designing programmes in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS).
- Other donors and implementers active in the non-humanitarian response in Syria and other fragile conflict affected states.

Due to the sensitivities of the crisis within Syria, some aspects of the evaluation have remained confidential for security/ethical reasons, especially names of people and locations.

3.3   Overall approach

The bedrock of the evaluation is the primary field data from an extensive range of respondents inside opposition-held Syria. Six communities were chosen from the (then) current list of 18 where the Tamkeen programme was implemented. An in-depth qualitative analysis was undertaken in each of these communities, including a conflict analysis and a qualitative field survey, each pertaining to the strengths/weaknesses and successes/failures of the TC in that community. Each context had distinctive features, but emerging from these were some commonalities that allowed a degree of comparative analysis and general findings.

The analysis is complemented by a wider literature review that looks not only at contextual issues within Syria as a whole but also at contemporary knowledge of governance issues in the country, and more particularly what knowledge has been acquired about governance interventions in the midst of conflict.

The approach involved three sets of individuals: specialists on conflict analysis, gender and the Syrian context; field-based analysts able to gauge and analyse the conflict dynamics within each of the six chosen sites; and field-based survey teams and analysts who engaged in detailed conversation with a wide set of stakeholders directly or indirectly involved with Tamkeen in each of the six sites. Interviews were conducted with TC members, LAC members (those on the TC and those not), civil society representatives, women's groups, professional groups/individuals, project recipients and community groups (details below). The evaluation methods were qualitative. For each of the six communities a piloting of the interview guides was carried out – a different group for each of the six – in September 2015 and the interview guides were adjusted where necessary.

A more detailed explanation of the methods used for the field research is provided in the accompanying Conflict Analysis and Field Survey Report, Annex A.

3.3.1 Ethical standards

The preamble to each of the above two primary research undertakings included instructions to the field team on how to present the Survey to the respondents. This included assuring them that no individuals will be named in any public documents of the evaluation, and that they are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. All stored data was to be anonymised and in the course of the study transmitted only to a small selection of individuals. All stored transcripts are electronic, accessible only by the core team of the evaluation.

3.3.2 Data analysis

There were close to 150 scripts (i.e. records of either KIIs or FGDs) produced by the two teams engaged by RMTeam. These were submitted for analysis by senior RMTeam individuals in Gaziantep. The analysts 'colour coded' transcripts thematically in relation to the different EQs. This raw data was summarised in English; these summarised transcripts are available for inspection.

Since this was a qualitative methodology, all survey teams were extensively debriefed to capture (a) any data that is either ambiguous or missing from the scripts; and (b) the overall impressions and views of the team once they have completed the full set of interviews. From this, additional conclusions/findings were recorded for each of the six communities.

Taking each EQ in turn, the analysts then returned to the appropriate section of the transcripts, summarising the findings for each location and recorded these in the précised (annexed) field survey report. Section 5 below is the collated summary of all these findings.

3.3.3 Evaluation Matrix

The Evaluation Matrix below sets out the main **high leve**l EQs with related sub questions and indicators alongside key data sources and methods. The EQs frame the evaluation as a whole; they are answered by all three elements of the evaluation: the Conflict Analysis, Field Survey and Literature Review. The Field Survey and Conflict Analysis adapted and supplemented these questions with more specific and targeted questions for the chosen six sample communities, but their respective summaries feed into this overall Evaluation Matrix.

EQ1 What contextual and conflict issues have affected the success of Tamkeen, and how?

Judgement criteria:	Indicators	Methods and sources
Project design • **Was a quality conflict analysis undertaken at the outset of the programme?** • **Was the conflict analysis developed by the contractors usefully used throughout implementation as a determinant of how (and if) to continue the programme**	The extent to which Conflict Analysis has been understood and applied by the Tamkeen implementers, and whether the M&E system used a dynamic and constantly updated conflict analysis. The extent to which local	The Conflict Analysis is divided into three elements: (1) Conflict Sensitivity Audit, that looks at how/if conflict analysis was used during the design and execution of the project; (2) Conflict Research, looking at which key contextual factors have contributed to the successful/unsuccessful achievement of project outcomes;

in the area(s) concerned?

Project execution

- **To what extent have the TCs and their activities shifted power relations in the community?**
- **What are the key contextual issues that have led to successful/unsuccessful implementation of basic services in line with good governance principles?**
- **What are the key contextual issues that have led to progress/impediment in achieving project outcomes?**

parties/individuals consider it be important to be engaged with the TC and why.

The nature of local power relations (including tensions) that exist between individuals/families/forces in the area, and how this affects, or is affected by, the presence of a TC. Over time, how conflict and/or shifting local dynamics have affected the success of Tamkeen.

The extent to which the TC may have either exacerbated or resolved tensions within the community.

and (3) The changes that TCs have made in terms of political economy of the local community.

The sources of information are:

1) Project and some wider literature;
2) Data obtained from RMTeam field surveys, including the more specific KIIs on contextual environment.
3) Other local sources, including social media.

EQ2 Was the creation and process of the TCs understood as transparent, accountable, and inclusive?

Judgement criteria:

The actual selection process is well known, so the questions here are more about how well the process was understood.

- **Was there an inclusive selection process and how 'representative' is this understood to have been?**
- **In terms of the composition, levels of participation and inclusion, were there differences between TCs; for example, between northern and southern areas?**
- **Were gender aspects of inclusion understood by the TCs and acted upon?**
- **Were minority social groups contacted and their concerns effectively included in TCs?**

Community awareness of the TC process

- **To what extent was there public awareness and dissemination of TC structures and processes?**
- **Were financial and procurement processes made easily accessible to the wider community?**
- **Does the community at large**

Indicators

Evidence of a commonly understood definition of what is meant by 'representative'.

The level of seniority, roles and influence of women selected to be on the TC.

Whether the TC, by including minorities, was able truly to represent a departure from the norm in terms of representation.

Mechanisms (posting online, posting on mosque walls, etc.) and used to indicate the TC project activities.

Indications of exclusion of certain groups (IDPs, disabled, ethnic minorities)

Examples of people using a complaint procedure over activities of TCs. An officer assigned to manage complaints

Link with the Field Surveys and background project literature

Project literature is inherently biased, but provided a useful first set of conclusions around these questions which were then ground-truthed with FGD and KII evaluations methods.

The series of FGDs and KIIs (annexed to this report) are geared towards specific groups or individuals in the six communities. The key questions are designed to initiate a discussion around the topics listed here; interviewees were invited also to express views on other related issues that arise.

	within the TC	
(and particular groups within the community including women and minorities) feel that they have been included in the procedures and activities of the TC?		
• **Is there an effective public complaints procedure within TC?**	Extent to which LAC reps in the TC are involved in decision making	
Synergy/coordination between TC and LAC	Examples of how TC processes have influenced change in the manner LACs undertake their business	
• **To what extent have members of LACs and/or local shura been included in TC committees?**	Evidence that TC activities have affected the behaviour of other service providers such as NGOs & CSOs	
• **To what extent have the skills learned in the TC been replicated within the LAC?**		

EQ3 How do community members experience the activities of the Tamkeen Committees?

Judgement criteria:	**Indicators**	**Links to the Field Surveys and Literature Review**
• **Do community members know of the existence of TCs and are they interested in how it is created and by whom?** • **Do community members think that TCs are established and operate in a transparent and participatory way?** • **Are community members aware of services undertaken by TC?** • **Have communities benefitted from the creation of TCs?** • **Do community members feel that TCs are accountable and inclusive (gender, minority and vulnerable groups)?** • **Are the projects chosen by the TC regarded as beneficial to the community as a whole?** • **Are community members able and willing to continue the services provided by TCs?**	Extent to which community members think the TCs are accountable and transparent. Extent to which these levels of accountability are important to most people. Evidence that the services provided are "owned" by the community The extent to which the TC is regarded as a 'donor project' or as a community resource Levels of responsibility within the community for the upkeep and/or continuance of the service beyond the project cycle	Field Survey questions addressed to different members of the community: professionals, women, service users[7], NGOs/civil society entities. RMTeam was given not only a series of tailored questions, but also an orientation and training over the higher-level objectives of the evaluation. This was important so that (a) not just yes/no answers are returned; (b) the Field Survey draws out whether the TCs have promoted good governance by example; and (c) Whether the TC is perceived as a progressive model to be replicated elsewhere, especially in the LACs.

EQ4 Has the Tamkeen project achieved or is in the process of achieving intended objectives?

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[7] This will depend on what particular service facility is funded through Tamkeen.

Judgement criteria:	Indicators	Links to Field Survey, Literature Review and Conflict Analysis
• **Has Tamkeen created a demand for more transparent and accountable services, or is it only a vehicle for project activities?** • **Is there evidence that the processes (good governance) also are held up as good examples in the community?** • **Has there been a shift in expectations around local governance as a result of Tamkeen?** • **Is there evidence that TC practices have influenced and/or are being replicated in other local entities, for example, LAC or NGOs in the community? If so, why?** • **Is there evidence that process as well as project activities will be retained and how?** • **Has Tamkeen introduced a usable model for good governance appropriate to the circumstances that people face?**	Extent to which good governance has, over time, either implicitly or explicitly been perceived as important within a volatile context. Extent which Tamkeen addresses some of people's primary concerns at this time in their community The involvement of civil society bodies in the selection and implementation of TC activities, and whether this is an important indicator of "representation" Extent which TC processes has been replicated elsewhere (LACs, NGOs), and examples of this. Reasons given for why Tamkeen processes have been adopted elsewhere. Extent to which Tamkeen is regarded as a vehicle for accessing external funds, or whether there is something more permanent in the acceptance of these governance principles	The Literature Review, especially the wider review of learning that comes from other governance projects in Syria, has helped with some comparative analysis that informs what works and what doesn't work in the context of protracted conflict environments. The Conflict Analysis has nuanced this with an analysis of the more specific dynamics within the chosen six communities. Although it may not be appropriate to extrapolate findings beyond these six communities, some common and comparative findings have emerged. An important question is whether the conditions attached to a donor-driven programme (such as gender & minorities' representation, or administrative transparency) are regarded as simply externally imposed (and necessary to receive support) or standards that people actually believe are important. The Conflict Analysis looked at political influence and whether there was anything in the way that Tamkeen was run that suggests it could be relatively 'neutral', serving all people within the community without discrimination.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Literature Review Methodology

Much is already known about how the TCs were formed and how the TC projects were chosen and executed in Cycles 1 & 2 (from April 2014 to May 2015). The contractor's literature in this respect has been very thorough, including an internal assessment of progress at the end of each cycle. In this report we avoid too much descriptive repetition of what is known and concentrate more on the collection of qualitative data, combining this with contextual analysis.

The Literature Review is reflected in the Main Report. It covers general contemporary knowledge of governance in Syria as well as specific knowledge of the areas in which Tamkeen operates. It refers to available evaluation studies on current or previous work on governance in the opposition-held areas. It is

based on reports published by academics, donors, NGOs and local and international organisations. Most of the resources are available online, though additional resources have been sought directly from organisations concerned.

Gender identities are fundamental to understanding conflict dynamics as well as levels of representation within Tamkeen activities and communities. Specific gender questions were addressed by both the Conflict Analysis and the Field Survey, and the evaluation reflects the manner in which women participate in local governance and the positive/negative consequences entailed[8]. Given the extreme levels of security risk and conservatism in some of the communities, gender and female inclusion as actors of change are considered in relation to the different behaviours of the dominant armed groups in different locations. We have complemented the field survey data with a literature review on gender mainstreaming and gender sensitive programming.

3.4.2   Conflict Analysis Methodology

Entirely separate from the Field Survey (in terms of the team and the process) was the Conflict Analysis used to address in particular EQ1, the examination of contextual and conflict issues that have affected the project's ability to achieve its outcomes. There were two elements to this: primary data collection of qualitative interviews undertaken in the six communities with selected key individuals; and a retrospective analysis of how the conflict environment has affected the project over 23 months from November 2013 to October 2015.

The selection of respondents for the Conflict Analysis depended on the combined local knowledge of RMTeam and the extent to which the team was able to be referred to other potential respondents in the course of the evaluation. All respondents were drawn from educated professional and/or activist members of the community with a wide understanding of contemporary political and contextual issues. The obvious limitation, however, was that the sample of respondents could not be 'representative' in any manner, and was dependent on personal contacts and leads; at the same time, security precautions prohibited direct contacts with some military groups.

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[8] The Tamkeen Annual Review 2014 raised and in part addressed concerns of the negative impact of including women in governance structures and the subsequent friction it was causing with males in the community.
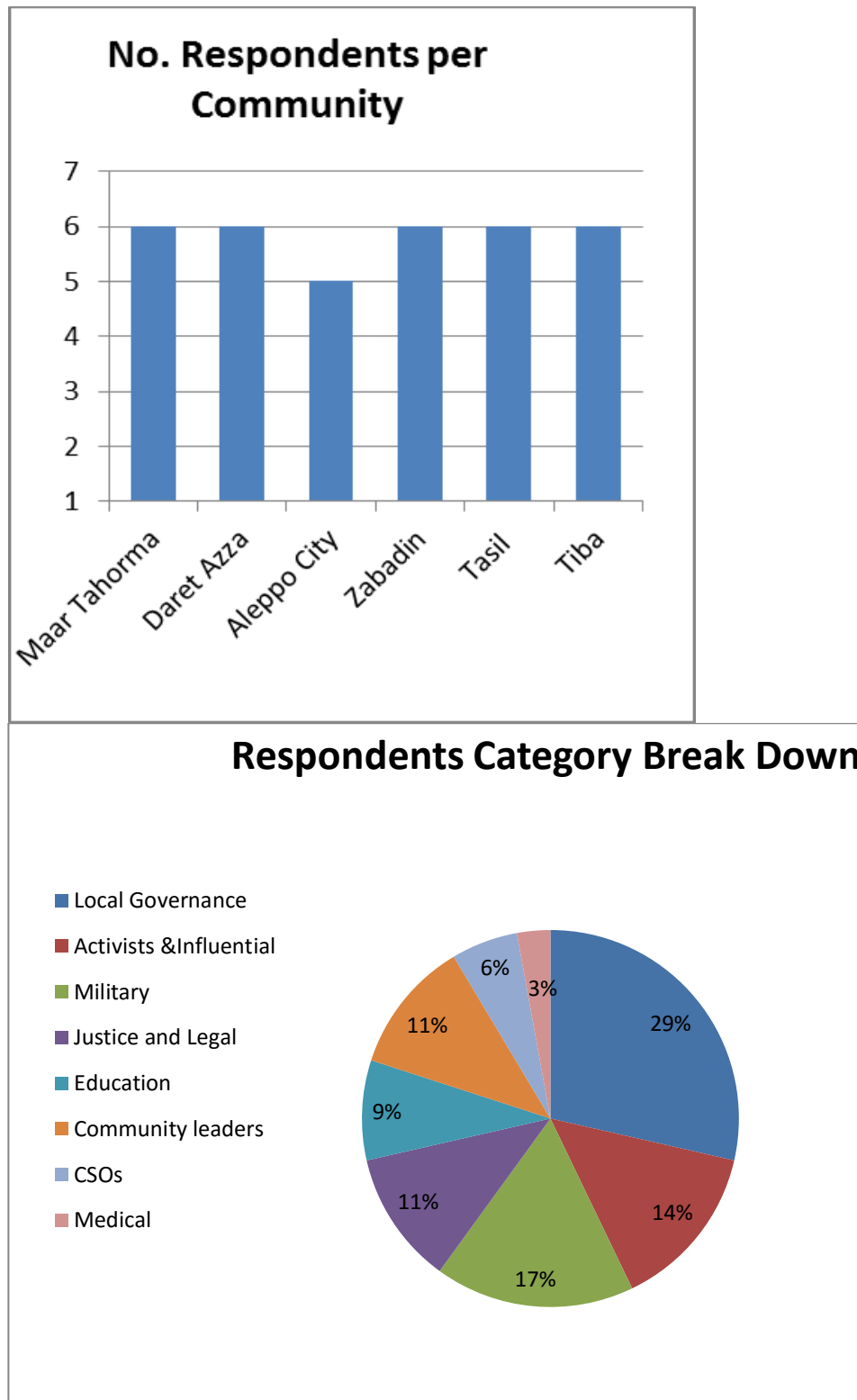
Figure 2: Breakdown of Conflict Analysis Respondents

The Conflict Analysis specifically addressed the first EQ (EQ1) "**What contextual and conflict issues have affected the success of Tamkeen, and how?**" In order to answer this question, a separate research methodology was used to address three sub-questions. The following table summarises these.

EQ 1.1: What are the key contextual factors that have led to the successful/unsuccessful achievement of the project outcome?	EQ 1.2: What evidence is there that contextual factors were taken into account during the design and execution of the project?	EQ 1.3: What evidence is there that Tamkeen activities have changed the local political economy, either positively or negatively?
Conflict Research	**Conflict Sensitivity Audit**	**Political Economy Analysis/Stakeholder Analysis**
Here we analyse the conflict in terms of structural factors, conflict dynamics, sources of resilience, and actors to produce a robust understanding on the conflict environment, and how it may affect a particular intervention. We conduct a retrospective analysis of key developments in the conflict, including changes in the dominance of different factions in the six communities concerned. The Conflict Research comprises four factors; parallel governance, external assistance, and security conditions.	Here we look at how the implementer has managed potential unintended consequences that may affect the outcomes of the project. We examine the level of contextual awareness used in the project design and execution, the quality of the conflict analysis, and how it was utilised throughout the project to inform planning and decision making processes.	Political Economy Analysis aims to understand how power and resources are distributed locally, and what factors determine this distribution. It analyses structures, institutions and actors, producing indicators against which changes in the local political economy can be measured over time. We use this methodology to assess how the project has been affected by, and affects the political context in each of the six communities. We accept, however, that the method is limited by the number and knowledge of respondents chosen. The security context and time limitations prevented a thorough PEA analysis; it is more accurately depicted as a stakeholder analysis.

Figure 3: Conflict Analysis Methodology

3.4.3   Field Survey Methodology

The evaluation adopted a purposive sample framework and took a depth rather than breadth approach, a sample of six communities where primary data was collected of both the TCs themselves and the context in which they operate. Given the unusually difficult operational environment, the selection of these communities was a process of consensus reached between the evaluation team, DFID, and the implementing agency, ensuring that the purposive sample not only broadly met the sampling criteria outlined below, but also was realistic in terms of access and security.

The six TCs and their respective communities cover a broad range of variables currently found in opposition-controlled areas of Syria. The selection was based on the following criteria:

- At least one TC from each of the four Governorates (Aleppo, Idleb, Dar'a and Rif Damascus)
- High/low levels of LAC participation in the TCs
- High/low levels of female participation in the TCs
- The inclusion of one terminated TC
- A mix between rural and urban TCs

- A mix between those started in Cycle 1 and those started in Cycle 2.

The Field Survey collected primary data on community perceptions (including of local institutions) of the TCs, and how good governance is understood in local communities. The field research team used semi-structured KIIs and FGDs with pre-selected respondents. The FGDs allowed a degree of group dynamics and mutual discussion that encouraged respondents to reflect on their collective experience of Tamkeen and how important it is within the community. The KIIs allowed a more confidential appraisal of issues that key individuals could share; there were also more targeted questions about particular aspects of the Tamkeen programme.

The initial selection of informants was done by asking the Tamkeen field coordinator for the lists of LAC and TC members, then contacting them for group and/or individual interviews. To some extent snowball sampling was done from here, encouraging suggestions of civil society activists and prominent individuals who would have some knowledge of Tamkeen. Because RMTeam staff are also in the community, they were able to use their own contacts to identify suitable respondents from local CSOs and professionals. Community respondents were mostly drawn from beneficiaries of Tamkeen projects.
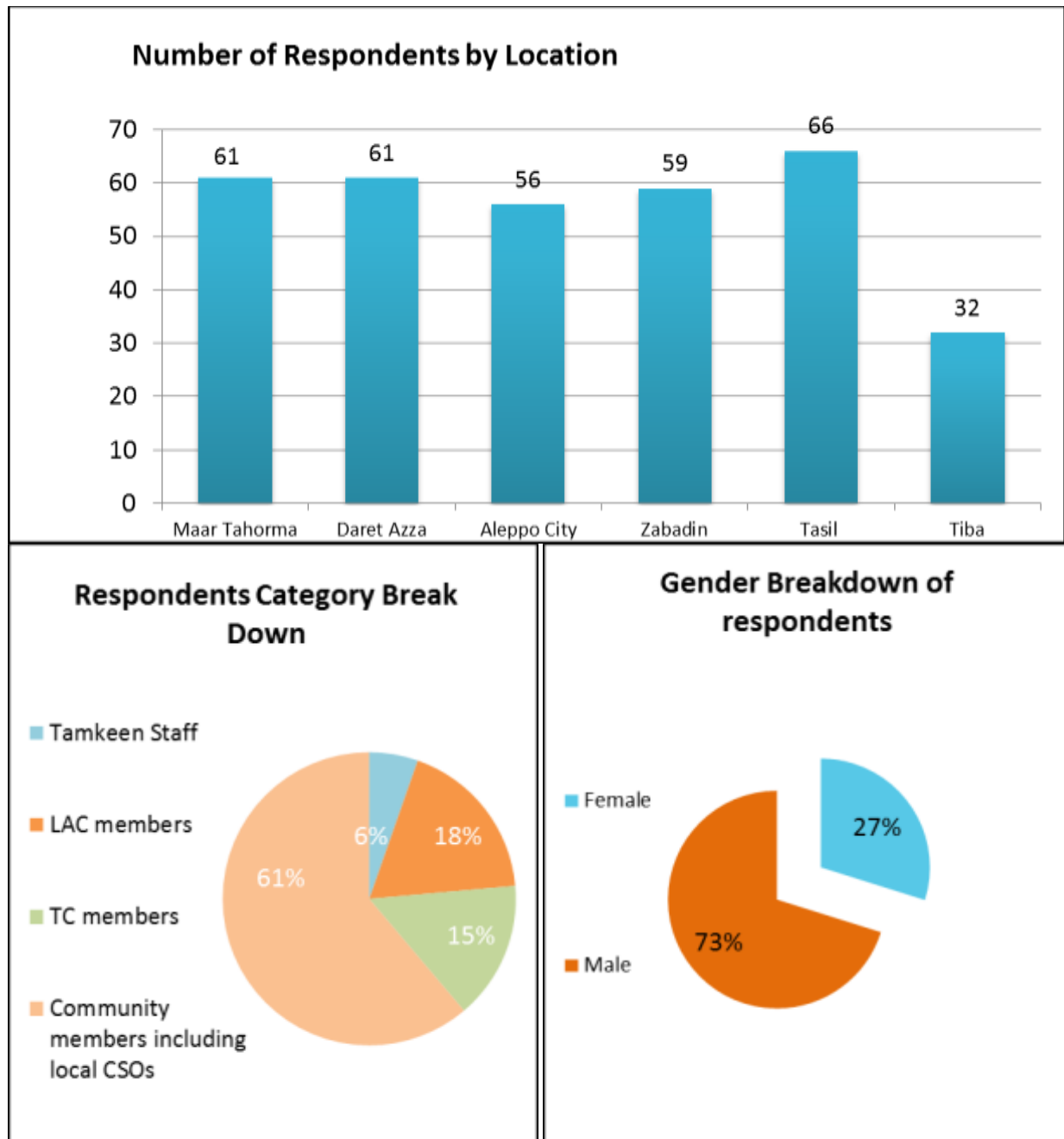
Figure 4: Breakdown of Survey Respondents

3.5   Limitations of the Evaluation

The greatest limitation to the evaluation was the volatile security situation in all locations. Nevertheless, the team was in situ and able to conduct most of the planned interviews, even though the presence and number of respondents were subject to last minute changes. The greatest difficulty was in the one failed location where a second phase of interviews was necessary in view of the reluctance of some respondents to participate; there were particular sensitivities over the closure of the Tamkeen project earlier in 2015. Even after the second batch of interviews, the full picture of why things went awry in this community could not be adequately explored.

The quality of data – depending as it does on the dialectic between individuals - relies on the experience of the RMTeam researchers on the ground. The evaluation methods largely comprised a qualitative field

survey, with summaries recorded on paper. The emerging data was quite rich, though easier to obtain from KIIs rather than FGDs due to the social pressures of conveying consensus within a group setting. Some of the best group interviews were with separate women's groups. The follow-up debriefing of the researchers uncovered additional material that was not initially recorded and a degree of triangulation was possible through the literature review.

There were some limitations in providing quality assurance to the interview process and data collection. The senior management was based in Gaziantep and could only review data retrospectively. This is one reason why the thorough debriefing of the field team was important in capturing some issues that were not fully reflected in the written submissions. It is also important to mention that, with the exception of some of those interviewed for the conflict analysis, all respondents had a degree of awareness of Tamkeen. The evaluation collected data neither from indirect beneficiaries, nor from armed groups; in this respect, therefore, there was inevitably some bias in the findings.

The evaluation explored dynamics in only six communities, a purposive sample from which some more general findings emerged. However, in Dar'a in particular the chosen sites have very specific contextual issues that cannot easily be generalised across the whole governorate. Arguably, the same might be true of the other locations, though findings here can be more confidently expressed as 'typical' when applied to comparisons between rural/urban, IDP/settled communities, gender dynamics, or when examining a community under siege or under intense fighting. There are, therefore, some major reservations in generalising these findings and applying the evaluation recommendations across the entire Tamkeen programme. It is possible, nevertheless, to highlight trends across the six locations that could be considered in relation to the whole Tamkeen programme. Perhaps more importantly, it highlights the necessity to develop an evaluation model sufficiently flexible to adapt to the very different circumstances of each location.

4. Context

4.1 The Syrian Conflict

The first demonstrations that launched the Syrian revolution began in Dar'a City in March 2011, inspired by the wider regional Arab Spring social and political protest movements. Demonstrations soon spread across Syria but were met by violent suppression from the security forces of the government. In November 2011, a turning point was reached when the Free Syria Army (FSA) came out to defend and protect the peaceful demonstrations against the regime that were under attack by the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in Dar'a. Armed attacks against government security forces quickly multiplied and spread across the country, including to Rural Damascus and Idleb by early 2012. By summer 2012, most of Syria's major cities were seeing battles between government forces and relatively ad-hoc groups of armed revolutionaries (at this point often led by SAA defectors), by now mostly referring to themselves as the FSA.

From mid-2012, these opposition armed groups were gaining effective control over increasingly larger zones from which they could organise and plan attacks. Within a short time these areas had consolidated to the point where civilian governance bodies could emerge, such as Local Coordination Committees (LCCs) and Revolutionary Councils. At first, and before the organs of the Syrian state had committed to withdraw services from these areas, the LCCs organised non-violent protests mainly driven by youth. As the uprising became more of an armed struggle the government was forced out of certain areas and gradually reduced the services delivered in the opposition areas. At this stage the LCCs and many other structures got involved in responding to local humanitarian needs, although in most cases they were not considered neutral enough to be recipients of international aid. Over time, in the absence of wider service delivery by government, some previous government and public service workers came together (sometimes with the youth of the LCCs) to start to re-establish services.

4.2 Consequences for Governance Structures

In certain early cases where the state had completely withdrawn services - there were attempts at forming civil bodies committed to organising local governance and providing basic services for the population. These Local Administrative Councils (LACs) are the main governance structures emerging from the governance vacuum following the collapse of Syrian state structures in opposition areas. Subsequently, various other emerging governance structures, including National Coalition (Etilaf) and then Syria Interim Government (SIG, initially formed under Etilaf), as well as some of the new provincial structures, have recognised the importance of LACs and are trying to create closer links with them to increase their credibility as a governance structures.

By 2014 the LACs were slowly evolving into functional service delivery units and/or representative local governance bodies. The process has been tenuous, not least because LACs have lacked funding and they have not been considered as legitimate and accountable bodies within their own communities, primarily because their membership is self-selected. While they struggled to provide for the governance and material needs of the population, FSA groups were unable to effectively resist government forces by themselves. Over time there emerged better organised, better equipped and more disciplined Islamist and Salafist armed groups to fight and win battles against the Syrian government, including initially JAN, Ahrar al-Sham (AS) and Daesh. Although Daesh was ejected from many opposition-controlled territories in early 2014, JAN and AS remained and indeed quickly expanded – at least in the north of Syria.

4.3   Controlling Groups

For almost 50 years the Ba'ath regime has managed for the most part to suppress historical disputes among different ethnic, social and sectarian communities. With the civil war, these conflicts have re-emerged, some of which are very localised. The findings from the conflict analysis in this evaluation suggest that if a local family dominates politics and commerce, this can in some cases lend itself to a more stable and uncontested local governance structure. The notion of a pluralistic Syria with, for example, genuinely elected councils is still far from realities on the ground, as confirmed by the evaluation.

The Euro-centric definition of "moderate" also needs qualifying. JAN is tolerated and supported by local people in many areas because, unlike Daesh, it comprises relatively larger numbers of native Syrians[9] and rules with a lighter touch than some other controlling groups. They are interwoven into the local conflict dynamics of communities and surrounding areas where the Tamkeen programme operates. High levels of unemployment and the necessity to provide for their families have forced men of fighting age into recruitment by extreme organisations. JAN pays around $100/month (contrasting with $400/month paid by Daesh)[10]. The existence of common enemy - the Assad regime - is sufficient for most fighters to consider moving from one group to another for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons, based on the extent to which that fighting force provides a salary and has updated weaponry.

4.4   Tamkeen and the Conflict

In this report we explore how Tamkeen has been affected by, and responded to, this dynamic. While in theory good governance in service delivery at community level sounds appealing and feasible, in reality the engagement of local communities in good governance in contested areas of Syria is extremely challenging for two reasons: first, civilians do not wish to confront military groups on matters of political control; second, the historical legacy of top-down government has not encouraged democratic participation. The security situation in these areas is very fluid, with a number of Designated Terrorist Organisations (DTOs), such as JAN, contesting territory and influence with the so-called moderate Western-supported groups. Daesh's advance in Syria further destabilises a volatile context.

Regular aerial bombardment by the US-led coalition (including UK, Turkey, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Jordon, Bahrain, Australia), Russian and Syrian government forces against various opposition-armed groups continues. Government shelling of opposition-held areas is accompanied by the coalition attacks on Daesh and associated groups since September 2014. The evaluation found that the more stable areas not on the frontline of any ground offensive and with less intensive aerial bombardment provided more favourable conditions for substantive improvements in governance practices. The evaluation found that without constant shifts in population (IDPs, evacuation, etc.) and relatively minimal inter-communal conflict, opportunities for greater community participation existed. The table below shows the current security situation and operating environment in each of the four governorates where Tamkeen is implemented.

4.5   Security Situation (December 2015)

Governorate	Security Conditions	Project Environment
Idleb	Jaish Al-Fateh remains the main entity controlling the governorate, with only Fou'a and Kafarayya towns under Assad's	Assaults by JAN are likely to occur at any point. Russian airstrikes impose a major threat

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[9] JAN does, however, contain many Saudis, Tunisians and people from the Gulf States.
[10] ibid

	governmental control. Dozens of airstrikes are being conducted on opposition-held areas. Many reports indicate a deliberate targeting of infrastructure facilities. Opposition locations are now more exposed to aerial attacks. Russian airstrikes are targeting the southern countryside of the governorate.	to staff/projects within the governorate.
Aleppo	Regime forces launched major ground operations to recapture ground south and east of the city. Meanwhile, disputes between armed opposition groups and YPG forces north of the city led to JAN controlling Castello road. Aerial bombardments are taking place on a daily basis on the opposition-controlled parts of the city, a significant increase since the start of the Russian intervention.	The only route leading to the opposition-held parts of the city is currently regulated by JAN. Staff/activists going in might face the danger of assault/arrest. Russian airstrikes impose a major threat to staff/projects within the city.
Rif Damascus	Though aerial operations are still being conducted in opposition-controlled Eastern Ghouta and Darayya, conflict severity has decreased in the Damascus surroundings, along with the rate of ground clashes. It remains unclear whether this is due to current weather conditions, or to ongoing negotiations between opposition groups and the government of Assad.	Remains unstable and besieged, with the only route into the areas being a network of highly-targeted tunnels that connect Damascus City with the opposition-controlled areas.
Dar'a	Clashes ongoing in the northern sector of the governorate. Meanwhile, aerial operations have increased since the start of the Russian intervention, though no major ground battles are currently ongoing. Russia's preparations to operate from Sha'irat airbase are likely to lead to more aerial attacks against opposition-controlled areas in the governorate. Fighting between Daesh and JAN/opposition forces has ended, as the leader of the Daesh-affiliated group in western Dar'a was assassinated by JAN.	Conflict situation remains stable with minimal activity in the southern parts of the governorate. JAN areas of influence remain in the western parts of the governorate. Airstrikes are the main threat to staff/projects.

Strengthening governance in a volatile and fast changing context raises the issue of where legitimacy resides. Prominent families and individuals in the communities tend to dominate local politics, and the TCs are no exception to this. The evaluation found that these prominent individuals can exert influence over the allocation of resources, sometimes to the exclusion of those not considered bona fide members of the community, such as IDPs and minority ethnic groups. Moreover, the emergence of community level governance, with its focus on supporting local people and structures in the absence of effective institutions, could be viewed by some stakeholders as undermining efforts to maintain or create national institutions. The 'parallel structures' argument is persuasive. Although TCs were conceptualised as filling a temporary gap in service delivery in the face of weak local government, the evaluation found that this

notion was not always well understood or explained to the communities. A relatively well-resourced TC can quickly assume prominence and a semblance of 'permanence' in a dependent community.

4.6 The Theory of Change

The evaluation ToRs cited the original ToC for the programme that was drawn up for Cycle 1. The 2014/15 Annual Review produced a new logframe (LF) against which a new ToC was developed by the contractor in the July 2015 Results Review[11]; this is reproduced below. One projected outcome for the earlier ToC was that Tamkeen would produce greater support for a democratic political transition. DFID's 2014 Review found this not to be the case, although there was evidence of increasingly articulated community demand for services. The change in the ambitions of the Tamkeen ToC in part reflects realities on the ground; by 2015 it was apparent that there was an increasing disconnect between local government and the transitional interim authorities and the notion of political transition (the basis of the Geneva II talks of January 2014) was all but abandoned. The new ToC thus represented a more localised ambition – how to work directly with governance institutions, especially at the level of local councils.

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[11] Tamkeen Cycle II Results Review, July 2015

Theory of Change related to Logical Framework

"IF you deliver services through an open, transparent, participatory grant process, in a way that engages and empowers local councils in moderate opposition controlled areas of Syria…

OUTPUTS →

1. Participatory bodies formed (TCs, PCGs)
2. Delivery of essential services are planned with good governance
3. TCs monitor and evaluate work and share results with the community
4. Women manage and lead projects
5. Provincial level coordination improved

"…THEN people's welfare and the way they are governed will improve...

OUTCOMES →

1. TCs demonstrate improved governance practices
2. Services are improved and access is provided to vulnerable groups
3. Beneficiaries perceive services are delivered by entities practicing good governance

"…AND people will also see what an open and accountable state would be like and will want and expect the existing and future governance bodies to be more participatory, transparent and accountable in their approach to service delivery…AND donors will be much better positioned to insist on such conditions for funding service delivery when working directly with governance institutions at all levels."

IMPACT →

1. Local Councils and NGOs demonstrate good governance practices
2. Beneficiaries demand and expect good governance practices from service providers
3. Local councils are better prepared to take on direct funding for service delivery conditioned upon their uptake of good governance principles

One of the most important outcomes – the creation and maintenance of civilian-led structures – remains. If stabilisation is the goal (implied but not explicitly stated in the ToC), enhancing local governance and bottom-up legitimacy are both highly relevant. Notwithstanding the lack of baseline data upon which to base a comparison, the academic literature (such as "Rebel Governance and the Syrian War"[12]) reiterates the centrality of good governance in creating islands of stability and, indeed, in saving lives.

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[12] Rebel Governance and the Syrian War", Zachariah Mampilly, Middle East Political Science 12-2-2014.

EQ4 returns to the ToC and the expected outcomes for the Tamkeen programme as a whole. In the conclusion, the ToC is revisited with a comment against each of the indicators.

5. Findings

The following narrative presents the 'top line' findings from the field work and analysis.

5.1   EQ1: How have contextual factors impacted the success of Tamkeen?

Summary

The fragmentation of communities due to conflict and the collapse of the centralised governance system experienced under the Syria regime have led initially to a state of chaos but more recently to the emergence of civilian-led governance structures. In terms of legitimacy and resources, these have largely replaced the imposed governance of armed actors. There is, however, a limited structure linking LACs with provincial and/or national bodies, or horizontally between LACs, so the impact of Tamkeen is limited and local.

The political economy is still highly volatile and dependent on who controls essential goods coming in and out of the communities. Through introducing competition in some areas and creating a viable alternative to privatised services, Tamkeen has offset some of this monopoly.

The more stable/less contentious the context – and the fewer available other resources in the community - the more successful Tamkeen has been in achieving the stated programme outcomes. Conversely, where there are high levels of violence, bombardment and insecurity there is less willingness to engage in public pursuits such as the voluntary Tamkeen Committees. In all locations the judicial system is controlled by armed factions (predominantly JAN). Holding local governance actors is not a priority within these structures.

Conflict variables

The evaluation overlaid six conflict timelines relating to the six communities (Figure 5). A general upsurge in violent conflict is usually witnessed during spring months. For example, in March, April, and May 2014, there was an approximate 20% increase in conflict incidents reported. Similarly, the trend continued during 2015 (23% increase against the year's average). Inter-rebels fighting was the cause of much of this increase, mainly the disputes between Daesh and other opposition groups, which resulted in escalating security threats across the six communities during late 2013/early 2014.

The evaluation ranked the severity and impact of conflict incidents in each of the six communities across two years. The first and greatest concern in most communities was the upsurge and severity of regime shelling. Secondly, clashes between armed groups usually caused increased abductions, executions and assassinations of senior personnel in the communities. Thirdly, changes of controlling actors in the communities were usually the result of local families turning on each other based on their affiliation with different armed actors. For example, in mid-2014 there were disputes between local families in one community as it turned out that some had affiliations with regime forces.

The Conflict Analysis suggests that although JAN are not a numerically large force, they project an image of stability and to some extent suppress other local conflicts that might have come to the surface. This stability is either welcomed or simply tolerated[13].

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[13] There are parallels here with the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s which, especially in rural areas, was seen as a stabilizing force.

In Idleb and Aleppo in particular, the greatest destabilising issue is Russian bombardments. They are not as predictable as regime bombings, and have reintroduced fear and uncertainty in communities since November 2014. The evaluation found that one consequence for Tamkeen is that communities' day to day security and survival overrides and distracts any efforts towards 'normalised' governance and the distinction between humanitarian and regular service provision is blurred.

The following figures illustrate the conflict timelines in each of the six selected communities, and resulting impact on governance. The timelines were built around social media and media agency reports over the two year period. Keywords such as the community name, and local actors were used to search for conflict-related reports on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The intensity and duration of a conflict incidence was then 'scored' on a monthly basis across the two years, represented in the graph below. The impact on local governance was then analysed.

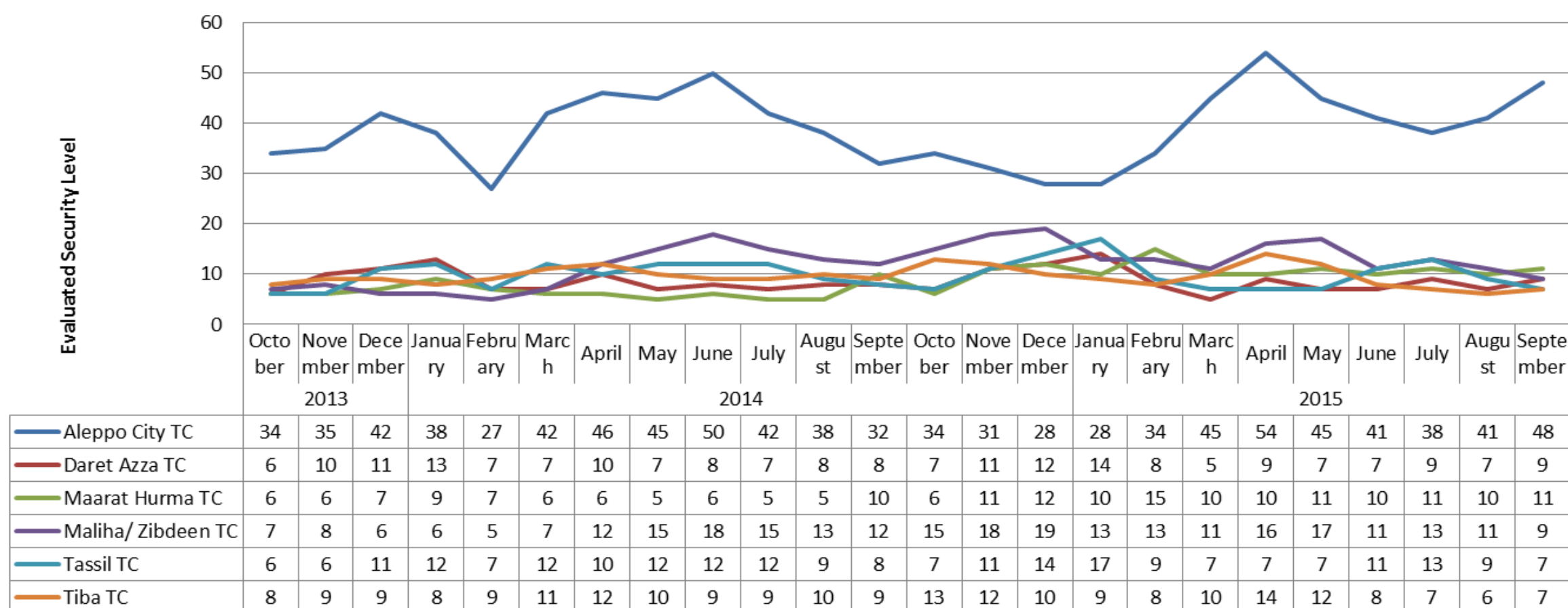## Conflict Timeline, Tamkeen Communities, 01 October 2013 - 01 October 2015

	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
	2013			2014												2015								
Aleppo City TC	34	35	42	38	27	42	46	45	50	42	38	32	34	31	28	28	34	45	54	45	41	38	41	48
Daret Azza TC	6	10	11	13	7	7	10	7	8	7	8	8	7	11	12	14	8	5	9	7	7	9	7	9
Maarat Hurma TC	6	6	7	9	7	6	6	5	6	5	5	10	6	11	12	10	15	10	10	11	10	11	10	11
Maliha/ Zibdeen TC	7	8	6	6	5	7	12	15	18	15	13	12	15	18	19	13	13	11	16	17	11	13	11	9
Tassil TC	6	6	11	12	7	12	10	12	12	12	9	8	7	11	14	17	9	7	7	7	11	13	9	7
Tiba TC	8	9	9	8	9	11	12	10	9	9	10	9	13	12	10	9	8	10	14	12	8	7	6	7

Figure 5: Conflict Timelines for the Evaluation Communities

General impact on local governance

Q4 2013: The main impact on local governance was the conflict between Daesh and rebels, especially in northern Syria. The main impact was the increase in criminality, abductions, and arbitrary executions from either side.

Q1 2014: As Daesh began withdrawing from Idleb and Aleppo governorates towards the eastern countryside of Aleppo, there was, at local levels, a significant increase in executions and abductions. Families started turning on each other depending on affiliation.

Q2 2014: As opposition groups started having increased authority in their areas, local governance conditions improved, even though regime shelling levels were significantly high as spring battles broke out. Areas under JAN control witnessed more security incidents than they had before.

Q3 2014: As conflict severity decreased for two quarters, there was greater opening for civilian-controlled local governance. Regime shelling and disputes between JAN and local armed actors were the main concerns during this period.

Q4 2014: Conflict between local population/armed actors and JAN escalated. Though the regime's heavy shelling and attacks remained the main concern, local disputes with specific armed actors had a negative impact.

Q1 2015: There was a significant increase in JAN's presence and authority across most communities, as local brigades were fought by JAN. Civilian unrest and JAN prosecution were the main challenges alongside the regime's heavy bombardment.

Q2 2015: Spring's increase in conflict caused large IDP movements from many regime shelling-exposed communities into safer areas. As armed actors became more preoccupied with the increase in conflict severity, disputes between civilians increased alongside criminality.

Q3 2015: JAN's authority increased in most communities. JAN began to impose severe jurisdiction, with implications on local governance, as their policies and laws became entrenched in the communities.

The Conflict Analysis revealed some common patterns in the emergence of civic structures in moderate controlled areas of Syria[14]. The narrative can be summarised in the following:

- Armed groups take control of an area from the regime, and the governance system and service provision collapses.
- New local civic organized powers are created in response to need, mainly LACs and CSOs.
- These entities then start dialogue and negotiation with the armed groups to take over the running of civic affairs. Their ability to attract international donor support gives them popular legitimacy.
- The balance of power between armed and civic actors depends on the level of security and stability in the area. In more stable areas (with no active fighting fronts and no aerial bombardment), civic actors have more power when compared to less stable areas.

The balance of power between armed and civic actors seems to depend on the level of security and stability in the area. Where these are high, civic actors are more independent of armed actors, their legitimacy appears to be better established, and they have a relatively elevated level of power. Although the evaluation could not always verify the correlation, there may also be mutual causality: where civilian groups are stronger, there is greater likelihood of secure and stable communities.

The above narrative was commonly reported by those interviewed. At the beginning of 2013 the National Coalition (Etilaf) and MoLARR claimed the duty to develop local government in opposition areas and to bring these together under one umbrella. This did not occur, and LACs emerged independently and without central coordination. From cycle 3 onwards, Tamkeen has continued to engage with MOLARR and has tried to bring LACs together within provinces, but it is beyond its remit to directly address this fragmentation.

An overall legal framework that brings all the emerging governance entities together is absent. Though some have argued for modifying Syrian law, such as the use of Law 107 for LACs, there is no legal platform for this[15]. For the most part, though, in opposition controlled areas regime governance structures have collapsed at all levels. No clear system has replaced it; rather, there has been a mishmash of regulations and Sharia Courts dominated by the more extreme armed actors. If an offence is committed for example by a TC member, there is no civic court to refer the case to. JAN in particular tries to dominate the judicial system by having at least one judge at each Sharia Court, or by completely controlling these courts. Some courts have judges who deal with Sharia regulations and others who deal with affairs other than those covered by Sharia law.

The conflict has unmasked and exacerbated pre-existing conflicts within the communities that hitherto had been suppressed by the Baath regime. LACs (and by extension Tamkeen) are much-affected by this political re-mapping of the area, with constant shifts between moderate and extremist groups often linked to local dominant families, particularly in southern Syria. In general, this has been a distraction from the core role of the local councils.

The extent to which a community will bear allegiance to a local fighting force varies. Small brigades may comprise men from the locality, but the larger forces, those with more substantial resources to fight the regime, are from elsewhere. In some cases there is a fairly stark separation between civilians and fighters. In Aleppo, for instance, the fighters are not from the local area; in one city elsewhere liberation was not widely celebrated because they knew bombardment would soon follow so many left the city.

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[14] These common trends cannot be ascribed to all Tamkeen communities but are considered sufficiently widespread to be outlined here.

[15] This law was not passed so it had no legal applicability. Although it is subject to divergent interpretations, it might, however, be a useful framework for local governance.

The largest resources in all the six communities pass between hands of civilians; they are not exclusively controlled by armed actors. The evaluation found that in order of scale and importance, remittances are the largest economic resource, followed by donor contributions, and then by trade and supply lines. Remittances are done almost entirely through *hawala* dealers, an efficient system also used by Tamkeen. The importance of aid depends on the number of donors and size of community. Aid includes considerable donations from private Islamic benefactors and friends of families; in this respect it links with remittances. Several Syrian political parties and individuals are providing services and support in the form of 'political' money to buy loyalty and mobilise public support. These are mainly political actors with an Islamic agenda.

In terms of political economy, Tamkeen resources can, therefore, be relatively small. However, their importance is that they are one of the few publicly accountable resources coming into a community.

TC projects are helping prevent the privatisation of public services and having a positive impact in bringing the cost of services down through increased competition. With the collapse of the state service provision sector in opposition-controlled areas, and with the war-damaged infrastructure, a new group of private service providers has arisen. The TCs to some extent offset this trend by introducing greater competition and providing free services where possible [16].

Changing public opinion in favour of accountable governance is more challenging in cases where deeply rooted intra-communal conflicts exist. In a community in Idlib the LAC split due to divisive family feuding, something not foreseen by Tamkeen. Nevertheless, the Tamkeen project had a positive impact in combining the two competing local councils. At the formation stage the TC included members from both councils and gradually contributed to releasing tension and reaching a mutual agreement that resulted in the formation of one LAC. The TC also played a role in lessening the tension between the community and armed groups which was interfering in the delivery of bread through pressuring the local bakery. The TC also managed to resolve the issue of leakage in the water system by removing the illegal withdrawal of water from the network. This received much support from the community.

Conflict Sensitivity in Tamkeen

The evaluation reviewed the manner in which conflict sensitivity was applied to the Tamkeen programme from its outset. Data was gathered through reviewing Tamkeen project reports and having KIIs with senior project staff. The first step was to gain an understanding of how the project conceptualised conflict sensitivity; project performance in each community was then assessed against the following criteria:
▢ Was a project-specific conflict analysis conducted?
▢ Did this analysis identify conflict dynamics at the local level, and suggest ways to address them?
▢ Did this analysis identify conflict indicators that could be reasonably tracked?
▢ Did this analysis include a localised stakeholder analysis, along with engagement strategies?
▢ How systematically was this analysis updated?
▢ Is there evidence that this analysis directly influenced project decision making?

During the design and inception phase of Tamkeen there was considerable debate over what conflict sensitivity meant for the project. Initially the issue was whether the project should have a limited 'do no harm'[17] approach, or a more developed conflict sensitivity approach that assumed the project could

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[16] The evaluation had no empirical evidence of this, but in one community, respondents claimed that Tamkeen had helped bring prices of water and electricity down by almost 50%.
[17] The Do No Harm concept is now largely out of date, and in Syria is not realistic. The issue is to minimise (and carefully manage) negative impact while maximising the positive impact of the project on conflict.

potentially reduce conflict, and would measure this. Eventually it was decided that the project should lean towards a 'do no harm' approach. This meant that its principle goal with regard to conflict sensitivity was to avoid creating tensions in the community, with TCs not becoming political tools of various competing stakeholders. The more proactive 'peacebuilding' objectives of Tamkeen were not pursued. In the event, the project did attempt to demonstrate some evidence of it having contributed to a reduction in local tensions. The third project impact level indicator states "Number of communities with evidence that Tamkeen has not exacerbated conflict/tensions", with one milestone being "No communities evidence contribution to tensions; one community evidenced reduction in conflict/tensions".

Unavoidable limitations on the accuracy, quality, and timeliness of conflict analysis were perhaps the most significant impediment to the project's ability to demonstrate conflict sensitivity. In the highly complex and volatile Syrian context, no analysis can be exhaustive or provide absolute certainties about conflict dynamics; there is, however, value in developing a "good enough" analysis. On the whole, the research capacity of Tamkeen improved over time, learning from mistakes and expanding the scope of relevant information that research teams should collect from the field. The level of qualitative detail that informed the Cycle 2 stakeholder analyses – notably the transition away from using quantifiers of conflict severity to a more nuanced approach to understanding conflict dynamics – improved on that of Cycle 1.

A remote management model such as Tamkeen has associated risks, no matter how closely it is monitored. It has not always been possible, or indeed realistic, for the project to triangulate the validity of every piece of information, and relationships on the ground are entirely in the hands of the field staff. The Tamkeen Area Managers and Field Officers needed to be impartial and develop an instinctive understanding of the situation on the ground, making rapid assessments of changing local dynamics. In almost all cases this has worked, but in one location, the initial choice of field staff was questionable because of the close association that the field officer had with a dominant family in the community. The difficult security environment to some extent prevented verification that project implementation was actually occurring in the community. It was much later discovered that mismanagement was occurring, and Tamkeen in that location was terminated.

By their very nature governing bodies are political and the risk of Tamkeen being used as political leverage by a narrow set of interest parties is very real. Tamkeen has often demonstrated a keen awareness of this risk, for example in one community where Tamkeen successfully mediated between the interests of town elders and a revolutionary group. Generally, Tamkeen's conflict analysis demonstrated an awareness of the basic political divisions in a community and adapted engagement strategies to encourage inclusivity, although in one community, in cycles 1 and 2 respondents indicated that the TC was biased and subject to undue influence within a politically discordant council. For respondents in the community who were even aware of the TC (though many were not), some felt that the TC was simply supporting the interests of one side of the council.[18] In this location, working at this level prevented the TC from having the same level of engagement and control over project beneficiaries demonstrated in other TCs. This turned the TC into more of a funding channel than a governing body meant to empower local stakeholders.

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[18] The situation was further complicated by events in northern Aleppo in 2015. The Democratic Syria forces (mainly consisting of international coalition-backed Kurdish Democratic Union party forces (PYD)) and Jaish al-Thowar (the majority of which is the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have since October dominated the area. Both raided Aleppo's Sheik Maqsoud neighbourhood and the ACC following Russian airstrikes targeting the Free Syrian Army – which had, until that point, controlled the area. As a result the "moderate" Free Syrian Army accused these other two "moderate" forces of being in cahoots with the Russians. There are now battles between these two "moderate" forces. (See Mowaffaq Safadi, *The Guardian*, 17th December 2015).

5.2 EQ2: Was the selection process for the TCs and their operating procedures perceived as transparent, accountable and inclusive?

Summary

The application of Tamkeen operational principles vary widely across each location. The TCs largely comprise individuals from influential and power wielding entities in the community rather than being selected by the public by genuine public selection. Yet the evidence points to several examples where Tamkeen operating principles have led to better practice in governance. Financial transparency has improved, though procurement processes are not always fully followed. TCs are still for the most part exclusive of women and minorities. Tamkeen projects are selected without sufficient knowledge of alternatives. Projects have been successfully implemented in many cases but not always up to technical standards and the implementation cycle for projects has been too short.

Although some commonalities are reported here, many of the field research findings are location/context specific and need to be considered within the findings of the contextual analysis. The process and formation of TCs is inclusive in terms of influential/active community members, and the LAC, but unelected TC members often represent the more influential members of the community. Nevertheless, public engagement for the final selection of members has improved systematically over the first two cycles of Tamkeen, with a wider range of communication channels used to create awareness on good governance. Rural locations are much more successful with this compared to more complex urban settings[19]. Generally, this is because rural communities are smaller, more cohesive and less likely to have transient populations.

The war has induced greater degrees of conservatism, with women's role in the community deteriorating and a consequent reduction in their representation in political or governance positions. Tamkeen projects have tried to rectify this through increasing the representation of women on the TCs as well as in project management. Women sub-committees were introduced into the second cycle of the project as a vehicle for women's increased participation. In some instances this was successful, but in others it created a situation in which women were only informed of matters mostly already decided by the men. In communities studied in Dar'a women's involvement was mainly done at the project selection phase only. By contrast, in Aleppo the lack of interest in Tamkeen from the city council in terms of project implementation has appears to have created increased opportunities for women to take leadership and decision making roles. They have had success in the projects they have implemented including the teachers' training centre. The TC has provided a great resource for women's empowerment in Aleppo City, particularly when compared to the city council. A common finding was that with many men being absent (or, indeed, killed), the increased domestic and economic responsibilities of women prevent them from engaging in public bodies.

LAC involvement and Shoura Councils/Sharia courts are the main hindering factors for women's active participation in all locations except Aleppo City. Wider community pressure restricts women's role; this came out very clearly in the interviews in Dar'a governorate and Rural Damascus.

IDP engagement in Tamkeen is varied. In some communities the TC is perceived to be inclusive of IDPs and efforts were made to take into account their views in the selection of the TC members and in project selection. In others though, there was little involvement of IDPs.

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[19] Communication channels were limited by security. In one incident a public meeting was bombed after being publicised on Facebook. Though the direct causality is difficult to verify, the community has erred on the side of caution.

Financial transparency has gradually improved but procurement processes are not always fully followed. Financial transparency has gradually improved through public announcements of tendering and results but decisions around procurement are still questioned by the wider community members. Strict procurement processes are not always perceived by the TCs as necessary and are not always fully followed. Under the Tamkeen procurement principles, projects above the financial ceiling ($40,000) require public tendering. The evaluation found evidence of TCs splitting projects into multiple, lower-value projects to avoid formal public tendering.

The selection of TC projects is done mostly (although not exclusively) without a feasibility study, and the community has to choose blindly without realising the financial costs and the expected results that can be achieved within available resources. People might have prioritised their needs differently if they were provided with more information and could make an informed decision. For example, a community in Idlib this was the case, though by contrast in another community in Aleppo a feasibility study of projects was undertaken.

The operating time frame for Tamkeen projects has been too short. In debriefing the field survey team, the evaluation found this to be a common issue. A period of 6 months is insufficient to solicit true community participation and to plan, procure and implement projects. On average, the TC formation process every cycle takes around 2 months, equal time is required for community engagement on projects needs and prioritisation, leaving only 2 months for actual project implementation. This was largely reflected in budgets being consumed at a late stage in the project cycle[20], with insufficient time for viable results to be measured.

5.3 EQ3: How do community members experience the activities of the Tamkeen Committees?

Summary

In general, public perception of Tamkeen is determined by the visible success of the individual projects undertaken by the TCs. Community awareness of Tamkeen was higher in the more rural homogenous communities (for example, in Idleb) than in the urban communities that had a far greater array of external funding. In a war context the distinction between humanitarian aid and basic services is often blurred, and Tamkeen resources for the latter are (inevitably) insufficient.

The choice of projects is rarely contested by the communities, and their benefits are widely acknowledged; however, project success generates demand which cannot always be met by existing resources. Requesting public contributions for maintenance and sustainability of projects is generally accepted, but only if a wider sense of public ownership is promoted; advocacy and awareness have not been consistent or sufficient. The lack of capacity in some TCs and in LACs is the greatest impediment to project success.

The evaluation asked how important, in the wider scheme of things, was the Tamkeen programme to the community? Was it actually understood as a model for good governance in the long term, or perhaps just one of many foreign-supported "projects", perceived as a useful input in the short term?

The level of community awareness of the existence of Tamkeen was different across all locations. In some locations the majority of the community knew of the work that Tamkeen was doing. By contrast, in others – the more urban and extensively populated locations with a greater array of external funding – public knowledge of and interest in Tamkeen was relatively low. The differences appear to hinge on levels of

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[20] The actual budget consumption rates do not, however, capture the "late rush" on spending. There was 86% utilisation in cycle 1, 88% in cycle 2, 76% so far in cycle 3 but still increasing.

homogeneity, reinforced by public announcements and – perhaps above all – by the profile of the Tamkeen projects themselves.

For wider community respondents, Tamkeen projects, not the process, were the reference of success. TC formation and administration was of relatively less importance. This is understandable, and in some respects the projects <u>are</u> the measure of success for the public because if they are delivered effectively, that is all that people require. This was particularly apparent in communities under constant bombardment or under siege where the provision of basic services is a lifeline. The distinction between 'regular' services (water, health, education) and emergency relief – or between humanitarian and development aid - is not clear cut, and perhaps not important. The public concern is generally around who delivers the service and for how long. There are contrasts and tensions between top-down models of governance typified by the Assad regime and the decentralised model promoted by the LACs. The LACs and Tamkeen replace what used to be provided by central government, and in localised small communities Tamkeen is important because it is their only source of funding.

With community perceptions of Tamkeen 'success' being closely tied to project delivery, it is hardly surprising that in one community, Tamkeen's reputation is tarnished by long delays in one specific project. **Delays in project implementation there also generated tensions with other local businesses tied to the project.** Interestingly, though, the complaints are not targeted at the Tamkeen project per se, but at the members of the TC. This is a consequence of Tamkeen's success in terms of local ownership: the attribution of success/failure is also 'owned' locally; the programme itself is rarely criticised.

One community in Aleppo was one of the better locations in terms of demonstrating good governance principles. Here there was a close relationship with the LAC and the adoption of Tamkeen processes by a prominent NGO. Respondents reported the need to have good governance especially during crisis when resources were limited.

Open and fair financial processes were reported in two communities in particular. By contrast, TC processes were reported as "closed, almost secret" in another. In a fourth, there were some delays in project delivery and a consequent level of public mistrust towards the TC (and, indeed, the LAC), though by cycle 3 this began to improve through a concerted effort to transmit information to the community. In a fifth location – where Tamkeen has closed due to 'failure' – lack of transparency and public notification of the activities and decisions of the TC were reported by many respondents.

Project sustainability depends on a wider sense of community ownership. The sustainability (and to a lesser extent the legitimacy) of the TCs is undermined by their dependency on external donors. There is an acute awareness that everything could be terminated abruptly if donors stopped funding.
Communities are aware of the importance of sustainability and in principle are willing to support this financially. However, incomes are generally low and dependence on external sources is still high. Sustainability is the ultimate responsibility of the LAC, but it often lacks a clear plan of how to cover project running costs. In Tamkeen, communities participation in payment schemes for services such as water and electricity is widely accepted; however, it is very conditional upon good quality of the service, sufficient communication of project objectives, and the coverage of the project across the entire community.

For example, in one location, the TC in coordination with the LAC needed to reduce supplies for children in schools, teachers' salaries etc., because they were unsure about the sustainability of the project and there was no/little alternative funding for the community. The evaluation found that the weakness was that there had been little interaction with other local organisations who may have contributed to a combined effort towards sustaining a much-needed project.

To some extent Tamkeen has been the victim of its own success. Project funding for public services increases demand, and the level of funding available through Tamkeen alone could rarely cover services for the entire community. This was the case, for example, in a community in Dar'a where the TC decided that water provision was essential, then realised that available project funds could cover only a limited area and certain number of the community. Contentious choices around project selection were made, expectations were raised, and funds lasted only a short period. Tamkeen may then have an inbuilt propensity towards disappointing results and/or frustration, something that can only change either with greater funds or by a more restrictive manner of project selection. However, in a war context, particularly where a community is under siege and/or bombardment, the distinction between humanitarian aid and basic services is blurred. The challenge is to avoid raising expectations which cannot be realised.

Geographical variants emerged from the research. The communities in the north showed greater degrees of success in terms of project implementation, communication and demonstration of good governance practices. These were more stable communities with a greater degree of homogeneity, with regular habits of communication. By contrast, progress in the south was more impaired by disruptive clan and family dynamics; here the TCs gave a great deal more attention to project delivery than to governance principles. This said, the three evaluated sites in Dar'a and Rural Damascus cannot be considered typical of the south, and drawing wider conclusions from data here is problematic.

Rural versus urban dynamics have affected the implementation of the Tamkeen project. The level of funding compared to local resources in a specific community, as well as the effort made to create public awareness of Tamkeen, is a determinant of success. Tamkeen funding in rural communities tends to be relatively large compared to LAC resources; this also seems to determine the level of TC/LAC commitment to good governance principles. The opposite is also true – in one community in Aleppo, for example, TC principles were of little interest to the local council through which Tamkeen worked. Here, politics was highly charged in the local council and greater power and authority were exerted by it. Also, with the more homogenous communities, communication has been easier. Projects in smaller communities were also most effective not only because the politics was less contested but also because there was no competing funding.

In almost all locations there was no clear complaint mechanism for the TCs[21], but in some communities action was taken upon complaints raised outside a formal process. An indirect result of creating the TC was that community members and beneficiaries more confidently expressed their opinions. In some respects, Tamkeen presents a classic development dilemma: the more successful it is at self-promotion, the more exposed it is to raised expectations and criticism from the community.

In most locations, TC formation was largely controlled by the LAC; this, along with the influence of Shoura Councils, produced a rather similar body. The fear that Tamkeen sets up parallel structures is largely unfounded. If the TC is dominant, this is because of the relative ineffectiveness of the LAC. Conversely, if the TC is either wholly absorbed within the local council or has a low profile in comparison to the LAC, it is not regarded as a competitor. However, this means less chance of presenting a better model of governance. And with less competition comes less influence/impact. The only exception to this was one community where, despite having helped to reconvene and coordinate 'exiled' communities, the TC was still regarded by the LAC as something of a competitor for resources and influence.

The greatest impediment to working through LACs, notably in rural locations, is their lack of capacity. A LACU 2015 study was the most informative about their performance. It revealed that the most popular projects for LACs were water, power, education, health and hygiene; yet across all LACs lack of funding

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[21] In Cycle 3 each TC installed a complaint box.

was the key issue. The most shocking finding of this study was that only 5% of funded projects through LACs had been completed successfully, whilst more than half of them had stopped, and although 28% were still in progress, 20% were working at low-productivity. 65% of projects were not implemented due to delays in funding. The reasons given for the lack of support to LAC projects were weak management skills, financial irregularities and inadequate monitoring/documentation[22].

Advocacy and awareness are by far the key success factors in terms of public accountability and acceptance of Tamkeen principles. In a community in Aleppo, despite some shortcomings, public awareness of the TC's work was acknowledged as fairly widespread. By contrast, in a community in Rif Damascus the lack of public awareness of TC activities was compounded by the fact that publicity generated by the LAC was only directed towards active institutions and CSOs rather than the public. In Cycle 2 in a community in Rif Damascus communications were purposely kept low-profile because reportedly (though the causal link cannot be verified) one public meeting was bombed after being advertised on Facebook. In a community in Dar'a the evaluation found that limiting public pronouncements to the internet excluded large sections of the population; in a community in Idlib, the LAC recognised that insufficient attention had been given to public dissemination of its work.

5.4   EQ4: Has the Tamkeen project achieved or is it in the process of achieving intended objectives?

The Tamkeen Theory of Change assumes that if the processes of good governance are adopted, people's welfare and the way they are governed will improve. Moreover, the assumption is that with these improvements, together with greater transparency and accountability, will come greater public demand for such a model of governance. These linkages and assumptions are explored here.

If Syria is to have a new decentralised system of governance, the question is whether the Tamkeen model represents a viable, acceptable and replicable model of how best to conduct local governance. Tamkeen is a process, not an institution; its future lies in the transition to, and adoption by, local and provincial councils. Although the formative evaluation looked only at its effectiveness and acceptance at a particular moment in time (the end of Cycle 2), preparations were already underway for the new Tamkeen programme from mid-2016 that would more closely link the process to emerging governance structures in opposition-held areas of Syria.

Summary
The level and demand for good governance are higher than might be expected, especially given the low baseline from which the programme started. Incremental progress towards Tamkeen objectives is noticeable, and the process is beginning to take root, especially where there has been a level of continuity over two years. However, Tamkeen needs to invest greater resources in understanding and adapting to the very different circumstances and socio-political environments of each community. Poor capacity and experience within LACs and TCs are an impediment to progress. With little inter-communication between locations, the influence and promotion of a Tamkeen 'standard' has been minimum. Also, influence on other actors – CSOs, for instance – has been limited by the lack of coordination and knowledge of who is doing what within communities.

This evaluation question points towards outcome-to-impact objectives. In the programme logframe these were summarised as:

1. Communities in opposition-controlled areas support/expect the use of good governance practices in the delivery of services, and entities adopt good governance practices

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[22] "The indicator of Needs for the Local Councils of Syria", LACU, September 2015.

2. Tamkeen Committees demonstrate the mainstreaming of good governance practices and principles (including transparency, accountability and participation) into effective and successful service delivery activities

The evaluation found that levels of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in local governance were above what one would expect in such an environment, especially given the comparatively low baseline for these before the conflict.

The potential for Tamkeen to be the 'neutral' embodiment of good governance principles, unimpaired by political interference, has not been realised. Tamkeen has the potential to be 'neutral' if it is more inclusive and is seen to promote good governance. To a greater or lesser extent it is still seen as represented and controlled by community members with existing power. Although this is not overtly discriminatory, it can reinforce existing prejudice or exclusion; for example, towards women and minorities.

The promotion and understanding of Tamkeen governance principles requires continuity. In the most stable communities of the six studied, these principles have gained purchase over time and Tamkeen here is perceived as a valuable alternative to what already exists. By contrast, in less stable communities the principles of good governance were rarely properly emphasised or executed. In Aleppo City, the objectives attributable to Tamkeen were to some extent irrelevant since it was swamped by the relatively larger activities of other donors and the dominance of the City Council. To be a role model, Tamkeen requires a greater degree of communication, community involvement and learning between communities. By Cycle III it had become more entrenched and better understood in most communities. Many of those individuals involved in Tamkeen were also active in provincial councils, LACs and other institutions. Arguably, this should lend itself to the mainstreaming of governance principles, but without rigorous advocacy it can also compromise the unique nature of Tamkeen.

Poor capacity within the TCs – and by extension, the LACs – has been an impediment to achieving the intended outcomes of Tamkeen. The TC is a voluntary body, created with community members who frequently do not have the necessary technical expertise to implement projects of the required scale. Training has not been consistent and has not been followed up regularly. In a community in Dar'a, LAC members claimed to have had no exposure to manuals or training; in communities in Aleppo training was only introduced at the beginning of the process, but not followed up later; and in a community in Dar'a the view was that training was 'theoretical' but not easy to apply in reality. The result has been too much reliance on the Tamkeen staff to direct and make choices on behalf of the TC; this runs contrary to the central purpose of the programme.

Aleppo City was perhaps unique in being the only one of the six communities where Tamkeen had little hope of influencing the comparatively much better-resourced City Council. In communities in Da'a the model was ill-equipped to overcome local political complexities. A degree of adaptation of Tamkeen principles to local requirements was seen in two communities, but there is still an underlying debate – and one not yet resolved - over how adaptable to cultural variables a programme of this kind should be without compromising its central value and objectives.

Tamkeen resources are spread too widely across too many communities, possibly diminishing the influence of the more successful models. There has been little communication between communities on the outcomes of Tamkeen; in this respect, media has been under-utilised, so the degree of communication, community involvement and learning between communities has not been optimal. Tamkeen could be used to consolidate much-needed 'islands of stability' in opposition-held areas, and to create demand from both LACs and the community at large for more transparent and accountable services. One way of doing this could be through having a few 'gold standard' LACs that might, through

information exchange and media, influence others. The promotion and understanding of Tamkeen governance principles requires continuity.

The influence of TCs on civil society organisations, as opposed to the LACs, has been limited due to only sporadic interaction. The trend in most areas is towards the separation of roles of different actors; for instance, some previous local government experts are either sitting idle or have become private suppliers of services. Where Tamkeen has had influence on CSOs, it has been on specific aspects of certain organisations. For instance, in Aleppo one NGO used some of Tamkeen's methods on needs assessment, and another was advised on financial methods by a Tamkeen staff member. One of the better examples of CSO influence was a community in Aleppo where the NGO worked quite closely with the LAC and with the TC. CSOs were consulted in a community in Dar'a, though they worked more closely with LACs than with TCs and claimed not have been directly influenced by Tamkeen processes/principles. Yet, there appears not to have been any consistent contact with CSOs underpinned by regular fora or consultation in any of the locations. Coordination with active local actors should be increased especially when the projects are focused on infrastructure rehabilitation and services provision.

6. Conclusions and review of the Tamkeen Theory of Change

DFID's 2014 Annual Review also reported that the project had made encouraging progress in its first year, awarding it a score of A++ (substantially exceeded expectation) for the outputs and the outcome.[23] The evaluation found this to be over-generous, though we accept that the focus was primarily on the formation of TCs, a quantitative assessment of output results. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that project accountability and procurement methods were in some cases potentially open to abuse, and there was exclusion of women, IDPs and other minority groups, and poor communications in other cases. This is not down to the poor performance of the implementer, but rather to a 'reality check' on the kind of environment in which these institutions are created. The model and logic of the Theory of Change does not account for the "why?" when the indicators are not met. For example, Output 4 is "Women manage and lead projects". In some cases this may be true, but often the projects are peripheral to basic services, which in turn are led by men. It is unlikely that Tamkeen will significantly change gender dynamics which tend to be entrenched further in a war context. The evaluation is aware that data was collected at a particular moment in time, prior to additional improvements introduced in Phase III of the programme. Meanwhile the contextual environment in some cases changed quite dramatically in early 2016 (especially in Aleppo and the surrounding areas). This is a high risk programme, and we repeat what was stated above - despite profound challenges, the levels of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in local governance facilitated and encouraged by the Tamkeen process are still above what one would expect in such an environment.

There is increasing attention given to the process of governance from other sources, including the wider literature. Outside of Tamkeen the new Syrian media outlets are scrutinising LACs and new initiatives have arisen. For example, the Aleppo City Council announced an emergency in February 2015 after it failed to pay salaries for three months in a row. The Syrian Transparency Initiative, a website dedicated to monitoring the performance of LACs, made an inspection site visit which revealed administrative chaos in the council[24]. The initiative also regularly publishes the financial reports and lists of projects of the councils that it monitors. It also lists all its members, the internal structure and related news.

A corollary to the increased reflection on local governance projects is that it triggers OECD donor funding, and the encouragement of donor funding directly to local councils was one of the suggested indicators of success in the ToC. Local governance is the one aspect of the Syrian conflict that everyone, except the regime and its allies, wants to succeed. Tamkeen was launched within a context with comparatively low good governance standards, even before the conflict. The challenge of resources and capacity remains; Tamkeen alone will not be able to address this – greater emphasis is needed to collaborate with other capacity development initiatives on the ground. It is interesting that local councils are increasingly sensitive to requirements set by donors. For example, a radio programme on the strengths and weaknesses of LACs was broadcasted in 2015[25]. Concerns over bad performance and infiltration by Islamist groups led to the resignation of the entire Dar'a City LAC in July 2015[26], not least because of the fear that donors would withdraw funds.

There has been a shift in emphasis within the Tamkeen logframe over the two years. The first set of indicators (2014) essentially rested on: (i) Tamkeen's influence on other formal governance structures;

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[23] Tamkeen Programme Annual Review, DFID, December 2014, page 1.
[24] The Syria transparency initiative, 1-2-2015
[25] The strengths and weaknesses of LACs in opposition controlled Syria" , Al Kull Radio, 19-1-2015
[26] Resignation of members of the Local Council of Daraa City, 21-7-2015

and (ii) the extent to which it "did no harm" and/or reduced conflict. The second set (2015) added a "good governance threshold" measurement (a set of indicators) in which anything above a 45% score was deemed a success. We believe this threshold was too low and allowed for too many instances of artificial compliance with Tamkeen principles and slippage in accountability standards. The implementer set a high standard in reporting; nevertheless, there is a commercial imperative in demonstrating high scores. DFID had few options to verify and triangulate the findings.

A difficulty in assessing the cogency of the ToC is that contextual realities largely confine progress to the first two layers of Outputs and Outcomes. Beyond the empirical evidence of project execution, impact indicators are often a matter of conjecture and rely on a combination of stakeholder's perception and hope. Syria's uprising was <u>about</u> governance, and many of those interviewed are educated people able to clearly articulate expectations and to understand impediments to progress. The distorted war economy, for instance, is a necessary evil with which Tamkeen must engage, irrespective of how well it or the LACs have accommodated good governance principles.

 In the box below, we comment very briefly on whether based on the findings of the evaluation elements within the ToC appear to have been achieved. When looking at the 'linked' assumptions, we have some concerns. The move from Outputs to Outcomes, for instance, relies on the notion that "*people's welfare and the way they are governed will improve*". There are no specific indicators on welfare in general. Improvements in governance, although discernible in almost all cases, were only very small in Dar'a, though much better in Idleb. If Tamkeen is to move towards greater emphasis on the assimilation of good governance into local government practice, output indicators on capacity development, behavioural change and open participation within these bodies will have to be developed so that these become key measurements of success. Moreover, indicators will need to shift increasingly towards community demand rather than supply, with less dependence on the effectiveness of projects per se.

Outputs
1. Participatory bodies formed (TCs, PCGs). **Yes**
2. Delivery of essential services is planned with good governance. **Yes**
3. TCs monitor and evaluate work and share results with the community.   **Yes, though some better than others.**
4. Women manage and lead projects. **Yes, but in many cases still excluded from key decision making**.
5. Provincial level coordination improved. **Not yet any substantial inroads at the time of evaluation, but emphasis in Phase III and IV.**

Outcomes
1. TCs demonstrate improved governance practices. **Very varied across our sample.**
2. Services are improved and access is provided to vulnerable groups. **Services improved, but resources inadequate to increased demand.**
3. Beneficiaries perceive services are delivered by entities practicing good governance. **Very varied across our sample.**

Impact
1. Local Councils and NGOs demonstrate good governance practices. **Only incrementally and only in some locations.**
2. Beneficiaries demand and expect good governance practices from service providers. **General increase in demand across our sample.**
3. Local councils are better prepared to take on direct funding for service delivery conditioned upon their uptake of good governance principles. **Many LACs now ready for direct funding; good governance still location-specific and subject to political interference. Tamkeen may contribute to this, but contextual variables are predominant.**

In Section 7 we present a number of recommendations, most of which are about process, and all of which are backed by the following broad findings derived from the limited sample of Tamkeen project areas covered by the evaluation:

- The Tamkeen initiative has been useful, necessary and antithetical to military and/or religious dominance.
- Some donors, including DFID, have accepted the high-risk strategy of remote management in a conflict environment.
- A key to Tamkeen success is low-profile, local ownership.
- The stated goal from the outset – that Tamkeen should absorb the model within local/provincial/sub-national structures – needs to be more explicitly stated to stakeholders.
- Capacity development of national bodies is essential to sustaining services and upholding minimum standards of public accountability.
- The model should only be supported if it demonstrates improved participation, including women and minorities.

7.   Recommendations

7.1   Tamkeen process

1. **Adopt more inclusive ways to share information; internet is limited and mosques are often exclusive of women, disabled and those who do not attend the mosque.**
2. **Encourage project feasibility studies and greater information on project options for TC members to foster Syrian ownership and to manage community expectations from the outset.**
3. **Adopt tighter controls over TC selection.** There are too many cases of patronage and accusations of preferential selection.
4. **Provide follow-up training for TCs to increase technical capacity as required. Manuals and training are not sufficient if used only at the start of TC formation.**
5. **Lengthen the TC project cycles to 12 months to offset procurement delays and ensure a reasonable implementation schedule and time for monitoring.**
6. **Ensure that projects adhere to a legal framework of regulations.** The Syrian law, with some modifications, remains the most suitable. LACs, for example, could look more closely at Syria law article 107 as a working framework for local governance.

7.2   Transition to local government

7. **Invest more in ongoing conflict and contextual analysis that allows adaptation and response to changing realities.**
8. **Reinforce the concept that TCs are temporary and not permanent structures.** For instance, ensure that a more formal agreement – perhaps a modification to the existing MoUs, with specific benchmarks and targets – is arranged between the TCs and LACs. Currently, parallel structures are for the most part avoided by including LAC members within the TCs. But the terms for a transition from TC to LAC are not spelt out; nor indeed is there any formal understanding of the relationship between the two entities. The MoU should include a specific exit strategy.
9. **In considering support for vertical governance structures, develop a whole new model at provincial and governorate levels from the centralised 'top down' approach that has become the norm of regime-controlled governance**. The structures above LACs are very different; they do not directly provide services, though the skills in the Directorates could be exploited. Also they could become a central repository of information and coordination for all assistance in the region.
10. **Pay greater attention to coordinating Tamkeen activities with similar donor-assisted projects**. This is particularly important with respect to LAC capacity development and to ensuring the sustainability of successful projects initiated by Tamkeen. Specific areas of training – Public Financial Management (PFM), for instance – could be developed with inputs from DFID.

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Annex 3 – Evaluation Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

1. **Formative evaluation of the Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria ("Tamkeen") Programme**

2. **Feasibility study for and the design of an ongoing Outcome Evaluation of the Support to the Emerging Local Governance in Syria ("Tamkeen") Programme**

Introduction

1. The Department for International Development (DFID) seeks an evaluation team with extensive skills and experience in the design and implementation of high-quality evaluations in fragile and conflicted-affected states (FCAS), to conduct two pieces of work in relation to the Support to Emerging Local Governance in Syria programme (now referred to as "Tamkeen") in moderate-controlled and contested areas in Syria. The **first piece of work is to conduct a formative evaluation** of the programme in pre-existing projects locations. The **second piece of work is to carry out a feasibility study and develop a design for an ongoing outcome evaluation**, most likely focusing on both new and existing project locations. This is an exciting opportunity to develop an innovative methodology/design to address the significant challenges of evaluating programme outcomes in the changing and challenging context of Syria. DFID are very interested in hearing from suppliers with creative solutions. As the evaluation team requires both significant experience in the design and implementation of high-quality evaluations and the development of innovative, robust methods, as well as an ability to conduct to high-quality research in Syria, it may be appropriate for suppliers to form consortia to bid for this contract.

2. The two pieces of work should take place simultaneously. **If DFID judge the proposed design for the ongoing outcome evaluation to be feasible, relevant and high quality, it is highly likely that the contract will be extended to enable the selected evaluation team to implement an ongoing outcome evaluation.** The feasibility study/design report for the ongoing evaluation will be submitted part way through the implementation of the formative evaluation to help enable a timely decision around contract extension. If the decision is taken to extend the contract to cover the implementation of the ongoing evaluation, fieldwork may begin before the formative evaluation is completed. This should be considered and reflected in the proposed workplan and resourcing for this contract.

Context and Background

3. There are significant security risks of working within Syria and in neighbouring areas. DFID places the upmost importance on security and assessment and mitigation of risk in this context. The successful

bidder will demonstrate how they will manage security throughout the contract and ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to security and risk management. Please see the Duty of Care and Risk Management section of this ToR for more details.

4. The UK has committed funds from the Syria Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to the Tamkeen project. The project aims to increase support/expectations of the use of good governance practices in the delivery of services, and to lead to entities adopting good governance practices in communities in opposition controlled and contested areas of Syria.

5. The Syria CSSF aims to strengthen the capacity of moderate structures and institutions so that they are increasingly recognised within Syria and internationally as more able to deliver services that meet Syrian needs. This reflects wider UK strategy to reduce the impact of the conflict upon Syrians, increase the legitimate authority of moderate voices and make effective practical steps to establish the conditions for a political settlement to the conflict in Syria.

6. The Tamkeen project's current funding covers the period of November, 2013 to July, 2016, and is co-financed by the European Commission (EC). The project's total budget throughout this period is approximately £18m. The European Commission will be involved in this evaluation and has been consulted in the development of these terms of reference.

The intervention is implemented in project cycles. The second cycle will end in May, 2015. A third cycle will take place from June, 2015 to November 2015 and a fourth cycle from December, 2015 to July, 2016. Decisions around the funding of cycles beyond the fourth cycle will be taken by DFID in autumn, 2015.

To date the intervention has identified and engaged with 19 communities in opposition controlled and contested areas of Syria (in the Governorates of Aleppo, Idleb, Rural Damascus and Daraa). TCs have been set up to identify local needs across a range of sectors[27] and to help meet these needs by delivering services according to specific guidelines and rules. These committees have been sustained in 19 communities. Following the selection of TC members, the TC is trained in programme cycle management (including assessment of community needs, costing, procurement and financial management). They are also trained in monitoring and evaluation and asked to complete an evaluation report (including beneficiary feedback) at the end of each cycle. The training should facilitate the committees to set up and conduct inclusive, transparent and accountable processes through which they can meet the needs of the community.

Whilst Tamkeen's primary objective is not conflict reduction, it aims to integrate conflict sensitivity and 'do no harm' principles to avoid the intervention exacerbating local conflict dynamics. By providing consultation mechanisms among community members, it seeks to make a contribution to dialogue and the peaceful resolution of differences within the community. In such a way, the project reflects wider Syria CSSF objectives of increasing the capacity of moderate structures and to reduce the impact of the conflict upon Syrians.

The proposed intervention aims to strengthen governance structures by operating on two levels: at the community level, through improving local service delivery; and at the programmatic level, through improving capacity and demand for good local governance. Reflecting overall objectives of the Syria CSSF, the project is increasingly trying to link into higher moderate governance structures such as provincial councils and the Syria Interim Government (SIG).

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[27] Governance, infrastructure, health, education and livelihoods

Intended impact: Communities in opposition-controlled areas support/expect the use of good governance practices in the delivery of services, and entities adopt good governance practices.

Intended outcome: Tamkeen Committees demonstrate the mainstreaming of good governance practices and principles (including transparency, accountability and participation) into effective and successful service delivery activities.

Intended outputs:

(i) Formation of participatory bodies strengthens collective engagement between local stakeholders
(ii) Tamkeen Committees are able to assess, plan, budget and facilitate delivery, and provide oversight of funds and delivery of essential services in response to beneficiary needs
(iii) Tamkeen Committees are better able to monitor and evaluate their service delivery especially in relation to how they are meeting the needs of the community
(iv) Women have meaningful involvement in leading and influencing projects including monitoring and evaluation

7. The Theory of Change for the project[28] is:

If local capacities for delivery and management of essential services can be maintained and strengthened in opposition and contested areas, then the local population is less likely to be displaced or to become dependent on humanitarian relief, and will feel reassured that institutions other than those controlled by the Syrian Government, or extremist Islamic groups, are capable of meeting the needs of the population.

If communities experience positive benefits of more local, participatory and accountable forms of governance, then the popular expectations of and support for a democratic political transition may grow and citizens and civil society will be more experienced to better articulate demands during any future political transition**.**

Please see the ITT pack for a more comprehensive version of the theory of change.

8. The following results chain summarises the process from project activities through to the intended impact.

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[28] Please note that following the Annual Review the project's theory of change may be reviewed. Any revised version will be made available to the evaluation team during the formative evaluation's inception phase.

TAMKEEN

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOME	IMPACT
1. Stakeholder mapping, orientation training and formation of Tamkeen Committees 2. Training of Tamkeen Committees programme cycle management (including assessment of community needs, costing, procurement and financial management) 3. Training of Tamkeen Committees in monitoring and evaluation of projects, and accurate reporting of funds	1. Formation of participatory bodies strengthens collective engagement between local stakeholders 2. Tamkeen Committees are able to assess, plan, budget and facilitate delivery, and provide oversight of funds and delivery of essential services in response to beneficiary needs 3. Tamkeen Committees are better able to monitor and evaluate their service delivery especially in relation to how they are meeting the needs of the community 4. Women have meaningful involvement in leading and influencing projects including monitoring and evaluation	Tamkeen Committees demonstrate the mainstreaming of good governance practices and principles (including transparency, accountability and participation) into effective and successful service delivery activities	Communities in opposition-controlled areas support/expect the use of good governance practices in the delivery of services, and entities adopt good governance practices

9. The project is delivered in the following sequence:

A. Identify and select areas of operation and local needs (in consultation with HMG/EC/Syrian structures).

B. Local field officers are recruited and trained to identify needs, stakeholders and drivers of conflict within project communities. Field officers implement and monitor the programme.

C. Tamkeen Committees are established in each location (population size of communities range between 10,000 and 40,000 people). Tamkeen Committees prioritise basic services and ensure that they are delivered. Each Tamkeen Committee is linked to a sponsoring Local Administrative Council (LAC) and most members of the Tamkeen Committee are put forward by the Local Council for the area. The number of members put forward is based on an assessment of the legitimacy of the Council; the higher the legitimacy, the more members put forward. The remaining members of the Committee are drawn from effective NGOs and civil society organisations in the local area.

D. Changes in capacity and legitimacy of the Tamkeen Committee are tracked using a Governance Framework. Tamkeen Committees receive capacity building training in needs identification, project prioritisation, planning, budgeting, financial management and accountability processes. Local Councils may also benefit from this training.

E. The Tamkeen Committees aim to deliver basic services effectively and with accountability, inclusiveness and transparency. This may provide a mechanism for the Local Administrative Council to improve internal capacity and strengthen their service delivery systems and facilities. This in turn may result in the local council having an increased legitimacy in the community.

F. The project team develops Basic Packages of Services (BPS) including on infrastructure and governance (Cycle 1) plus education and health (introduced in Cycle 2). Basic services supporting livelihoods are to be included under Cycle 3. These are pre-designed and pre-priced menus of services (with budget ceilings) that can be delivered swiftly.

G. Funding cycles (comprising five months of spending preceded by several months of preparatory planning activities) which reward positive performance are provided for service delivery implementation.

H. Tamkeen Committees (as well as the project team) are strongly encouraged to coordinate, formally and informally, their activities with other existing governance structures such as Provincial Councils, the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU), and the relevant interim or transitional Government ministries.

I. Tamkeen Committees monitor projects in their community and are asked to submit monitoring reports during project implementation (usually 3-4 reports). They also conduct an evaluation of the services delivered at the end of each cycle including collecting beneficiary feedback. The Tamkeen Committees are asked to share results of their evaluation with their communities. This monitoring and evaluation process is not used to evidence outputs and beneficiary outcomes, but rather to build the capacity of Tamkeen Committees to monitor, evaluate and share results with the community.

J. Field Officers and Finance Field Officers verify if project outputs have been delivered, reporting on these monthly.

K. An internal end of cycle evaluation is conducted by the Tamkeen programme to try to understand project impact, effectiveness and develop lessons learned. This evaluation has been conducted for Cycle I. This includes beneficiary and stakeholder interviews conducted by Field Officers in Syria, and interviews with programme staff. A summary of the report is translated into Arabic and shared with Tamkeen committees in Syria.

Security Risks to the Project

10. The project is managed in Syria, an active conflict zone. This means that a very high level of care needs to be taken to ensure the protection of those implementing inside Syria and in neighbouring areas who could, due to working on a UK Government funded project, come under attack from actors in the conflict. Due to this risk, this ToR does not include the locations that the project is working on, as this would be inconsistent with duty of care to Syrian implementers. This information will be shared with successful bidders.

Deliverable 1 – Formative Evaluation in cycle 1 and cycle 2 locations

Purpose

11. The **purpose** of the formative evaluation is to better understand what outcomes (both intended and unintended) are being achieved by the Tamkeen project. The findings will help to inform future programming decisions in DFID's Syria Team. The formative evaluation should also assess which contextual variables appear to facilitate or prevent progress towards achieving project outcomes.

12. DFID's Syria Team is the primary stakeholder for this evaluation. The formative evaluation should enable the team to make evidence based decisions in response to the following questions:

- Does the Tamkeen project appear to be making progress in achieving its stated outcomes?

- In the event of a continuation of funding future cycles of the Tamkeen programme, are there any recommendations on how the programme can be adapted to improve effectiveness and progress towards meeting outcomes?

- Should the programme's focus be changed to expand into or exclude certain sectors/geographies?

The answers to these questions will help inform strategic decision making by the Syria Team around funding and design of future project cycles, for example, does the programme need to better reflect the needs of women and vulnerable groups, and how could it do this?

13. DFID teams working in fragile states are secondary stakeholders of this evaluation. The evaluation should provide some evidence to support teams to make evidence-based decisions in relation to the following question:

- What combination of external factors and elements of the intervention may be required to maximise the potential for piloting or implementing in full this programme in other (comparable) fragile states?

14. Due to the poor access to Tamkeen project locations within Syria, the formative evaluation will also be the first time that project outcomes are assessed by an independent third party. The evidence base for this type of intervention over the long-term is relatively poor. As such, the formative evaluation has both a learning and accountability purpose.

Scope

15. The **scope** of the formative evaluation is as follows:

- Tamkeen cycle 1: 8 communities
  Intervention dates June 2014 to Nov 2014
  Sectors: Infrastructure, Governance

- Tamkeen cycle 2: 19 communities (original 8 plus 11)
  Intervention dates Dec 2014 to May 2015
  Sectors: Infrastructure, Governance, Health and Education

Of the 19 communities where the intervention was implemented in cycle 1 and 2, we expect a maximum of half of the communities to be included in the evaluation. Suppliers should make a proposal on how many communities they plan to include in the evaluation based on what they perceive is feasible and desirable based on the available budget and the ability to gain a diversity of respondents and viewpoints within and across the communities. DFID have worked with the implementers to develop criteria to guide sampling of the communities for the formative evaluation. This includes geographical area, access (both within Syria and from outside of Syria) and level of conflict – please see table below. Where possible, bidders should take this into account whilst designing their sampling methodology. Once the evaluation team has been selected, DFID and the implementing partners will share further information on the list of locations/these criteria. DFID will consult with the evaluation team to help ensure that the selected communities are as representative as possible whilst also feasible locations for fieldwork.

Governorate	Project cycle	High levels of conflict	Most poor	Proscribed group risk	Low accessibility (from outside Syria)	Low accessibility (from inside Syria)
1	1	No	No	No	Yes	No
1	2	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
1	2	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
1	2	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
1	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
2	1	No	No	No	Yes	No
2	2	No	No	No	Yes	No
3	1	No	No	No	No	No
3	2	No	No	No	No	No
3	2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3	2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3	2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
4	1	No	No	No	No	No
4	1	Yes	No	No	No	No
4	1	Yes	No	No	No	No
4	2	No	No	No	No	No
4	2	Yes	No	No	No	No
5	1	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
5	1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

It is possible that the list of cycle 1 and 2 communities may be reduced further due to external factors largely outside of the project's control. If this is the case DFID alongside the programme implementers will discuss with the evaluation team if it is still feasible to conduct the evaluation in any such communities.

16. The following cycle and issues are **outside of the scope** of the evaluation:

- The 10 new communities being introduced under cycle 3
  Intervention dates June, 2015 to November, 2015
  Sectors: Infrastructure, Governance, Health, Education and Livelihoods

- Assessing the impact of the Tamkeen programme on:

- the practice of democratic forms of governance at the non-localised level
- the impacts of service delivery on the health and wellbeing of citizens
- conflict reduction
- communities outside of the project locations

- All UK support to Syria beyond the Tamkeen programme both within and outside of the Syria CSSF, e.g. humanitarian aid, Civil Defence, Security and Justice, the Syria Recovery Trust Fund and the Assistance Coordination Unit. The UK has allocated £732 million of humanitarian aid to Syria and the region since the start of the crisis, of this £378 million was programmed inside Syria.

Objectives

17. In order to make informed decisions listed under the purpose section, the formative evaluation has four objectives:

    A. To assess progress to date of the Tamkeen programme against its stated objectives at output, outcome and impact level, and broader DAC criteria, where relevant.

    B. To assess if there is evidence of any unintended consequences of the Tamkeen project within the communities it operates.

    C. To improve understanding around which elements of the intervention are working well and why. To understand which elements of the intervention are failing to fully deliver and why.

    D. To improve understanding around the external context in which programme delivery is successful. To understand the external context in which the programme fails to fully deliver.

Evaluation Type

18. This evaluation will be conducted during the course of the implementation of the programme and includes data collection at one time point only. The evaluation is as such **primarily a formative evaluation**.

19. Given that the programme has been rolled out in distinct phases that are referred to as cycles, the evaluation will also look to make **some summative conclusions** about the completed Cycles 1 and 2. It is likely that some of the outcomes of either cycle may not yet have been fully realised despite the completion of the cycles. We do not expect the formative evaluation to be able to make summative conclusions about cycle 3.

20. The evaluation may also be described as a **Theory Based Formative Evaluation**, which assesses key preliminary outcomes and outputs (for cycles 1 and 2) and seeks to understand the linkages in the theory of change from inputs to processes to outputs and onto outcomes.

21. The formative evaluation is not an impact evaluation and as such will not be expected to use rigorous scientific methods to arrive at robust statements of attribution at the impact or outcome level through randomised control or the comparison to a counterfactual group. However, the evaluation will provide a depth of analysis that establishes the importance of the programme in enabling results to be achieved at the outcome level.

Evaluation questions

22. The evaluation will answer the following proposed set of questions.

DFID is open to bids which suggest alternative or expanded questions that may better meet the evaluation objectives.

Output level
How are the Tamkeen Committees established? How representative are committee members of the communities they intend to represent[29]?
How are decisions made and implemented within the Tamkeen Committees? What is the role of women in decision-making and implementation?
Outcome level
How do community members experience the establishment of the Tamkeen Committees? Do community members think that they are established in a transparent and participatory way? Does this experience vary between different groups, including women?
How do community members experience the services delivered by the Tamkeen Committees? Are they aware of them? Are they able to access them? Do they meet the needs of different groups in the community? Do community members think that the services are good quality? Do experiences and perceptions vary between different groups, including women?
How do community members experience the governance structures of basic services through the Tamkeen committee, for example, the processes by which services are selected, procured, delivered, monitored and evaluated? Do experiences vary between different groups, including women?
Is there evidence that the Tamkeen project is having other (both intended and unintended) effects on communities in moderate-held areas in Syria? Is there evidence of different effects on different groups, including women?
What is the impact of the project on local conflict dynamics, and how have local dynamics impacted on the project[30]?
Impact level
Is there evidence that the Tamkeen project is achieving or on the way to achieving higher-level impact in project locations, for example: • Improving the legitimacy of moderate structures[31] • Increasing the demand for more transparent, accountable and participatory forms of governance • Improving the governance practices of other local entities, for example, local councils or NGOs, including in surrounding areas?
Contextual Factors
What are the key factors which have led to (i) successful implementation of basic services in line with good governance principles, and (ii) progress in achieving project outcomes?
What are the key factors which have prevented/delayed (i) successful implementation of basic services in line with good governance principles, and (ii) progress in achieving project outcomes?

23. The evaluation should explore "why/why not" in relation to the questions above.

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[29] Whilst Tamkeen Committee members are not necessarily intended to be representative of the communities they represent, DFID is interested in understanding the extent to which they are representative and how this may influence programme outcomes.

[30] This should ideally be considered throughout project implementation cycles, for example, during the design phase, Tamkeen Committee member selection, procurement and implementation.

[31] Moderate structures may be defined at the Tamkeen Committees, Local Councils, Provincial Councils or the Syria Interim Government.

24. Reflecting the contextual questions above, the formative evaluation should produce a context analysis of the relevant external factors to the delivery of outputs and outcomes. This is important for increasing external validity so that the findings can be used appropriately in the changing Syria context and in other fragile and conflict affected states.

25. The role of women and vulnerable groups, for example, internally displaced people, should be given significant consideration when refining/responding to the EQs and developing the evaluation methods and tools. Conflict sensitivity should also be considered. Whilst Tamkeen's primary objective is not conflict reduction, it aims to integrate conflict sensitivity and 'do no harm' principles to avoid the intervention from exacerbating local conflict dynamics. By providing consultation mechanisms among community members, the intervention seeks to make a contribution to dialogue and the peaceful resolution of differences.

The Recipients and Audience of the Evaluation

26. The primary recipients of the evaluation are DFID's Syria Team.

27. Primary audience:
    - Funders of the programme - HMG (Syria CSSF including representatives from DFID, FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and MoD (Ministry of Defence), and the EC.
    - Implementing partners

    Secondary audience:
    - DFID staff designing programmes in fragile and conflict affected states
    - Other donors active in the non-humanitarian response in Syria and other fragile conflict affected states

28. The evaluator will be expected to deliver a presentation to the implementing partners and the project funders UK CSSF and the EC after the final report. DFID, in consultation with the EC and the implementing partners, will provide the successful bidders with a list of invitees.

29. Due to the sensitivities of the crisis within Syria, aspects of the evaluation may remain confidential for security/ethical reasons – but this will only be where safety may be compromised if information were to be in the public domain. Therefore, if required, a restricted annex of the report will be produced and shared with EC, UK CSSF and the implementing partners. In accordance with our commitment to transparency, the non-restricted elements of the report will be published on the DFID or HMG website.

Security Situation and Implications for Methodology

30. The Syria crisis is taking place in a complex political, geographical and humanitarian environment which presents a number of challenges to the evaluation which the team will need to be prepared to work with. We expect tender documents to carefully consider the feasibility of the design of the formative evaluation. It if is deemed unfeasible to collect reliable data to answer the proposed EQs in this ToR, then the EQs may be amended during the inception phase in agreement with DFID and the EC.

31. This means that in relation to the collection of primary data the bidders will have to consider carefully:

a. Risks to staff collecting data inside Syria (we expect that all data collection staff will be Syrian - international staff should not enter Syria to take forward this evaluation).

b. Suspicion of data collectors by beneficiaries and therefore unwillingness to provide information to any staff inside Syria.

c. Syria is an active conflict zone where there are a large number of armed actors and the conflict lines are continually shifting.

d. The sensitive nature of some of the topics that the evaluation is interested in (for example, around good governance) may put respondents and data collectors at risk and/or lead to constraints in being able to collect reliable data.

e. Challenges in selecting research participants within the project communities that represent the diversity of the community and the views within the community, including women and vulnerable groups.

32. Taking the above considerations into account, the evaluation team should think innovatively and propose an appropriate methodology and solutions about how data can be collected and quality assured to a high standard.

Design and Methodology

33. Evaluation providers should demonstrate how their proposed methods will:

   a. Meet recognised international standards (e.g. OECD-DAC Quality Standards)

   b. Do no harm and be conflict sensitive

'In situations of conflict and fragility, donors can do harm in almost as many ways as they can do good. Any intervention, policy or position can have unintended consequences. We need to take care to maximise our positive and minimise our negative impacts.'
For further guidance please consult
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67696/summary-note-briefing-papers.pdf

34. Interested suppliers are invited to propose an evaluation design and methodology. This should include:
   • A clear design including proposed methods, tools and techniques
   • Reference to international standards that will be used
   • An evaluation framework
   • A proposed timeline, including reference to how many days are allocated to each activity within the evaluation
   • Transparency over design limitations including those around making wider inferences, and the extent to which evaluation objectives can be met
   • The proposed sample within project locations and details on how the study participants will be selected within communities to ensure sufficient diversity
   • Details on how the evaluation team will quality assure the evaluation from start to finish
   • Details on how the evaluation team will ensure that ethical standards will be upheld throughout the evaluation
   • An analysis strategy including proposed techniques on data processing, analysis and interpretation, and how the evaluation team will assess the contribution of the Tamkeen programme to achievement of outcomes and triangulate different sources of data
   • A dissemination strategy

35. DFID envisions that the formative evaluation will mostly (if not entirely) use qualitative methods for primary data collection. However, proposals should state which methods, tools and techniques the evaluation will use to help address the challenges of collecting reliable data, especially on more challenging issues. It should draw on existing data sources where available. In consultation with DFID and the implementing partners the evaluation team will make a sound assessment as to which project locations it is feasible to collect data within. Large scale primary data collection of quantitative data is neither feasible nor desirable for this formative evaluation. Suppliers should spell out with adequate detail the approach and methods which they believe will most effectively and efficiently meet the purpose of the study within the time and budget available. The successful supplier will take forward a short inception phase (4 weeks) where they will refine their proposal in consultation with the DFID technical lead, the evaluation steering group, and other relevant stakeholders.

36. DFID expects a design that is sufficiently robust for the decisions outlined in the purpose to be made with confidence. Given the constraints on the collection of quality data and the changing environment in which the programme operates, we expect a design that is appropriately flexible and pragmatic.

37. DFID recommends that proposals incorporate the following in their methodology. However, we are open to additional and alternative recommendations from suppliers.

   - An initial desk-based review of existing reporting and reviews of the Tamkeen project, complemented by interviews with key HMG staff based in London and in the region
   - Qualitative interviews with Tamkeen staff including Syria-based staff working on the programme
   - Qualitative interviews with Tamkeen Committee members in selected locations.
   - Primary collection of data at the community level in selected locations.
   - Key informant interviews with third parties with knowledge of the programme, if relevant.

38. The use of experimental and quasi experimental methods is challenging in this context, and we are therefore not expecting them to be included in the proposal for the formative evaluation.

39. There are significant challenges to ensuring the development of high quality data collection tools and the collection of robust data in Syria, especially due to very limited access to locations within Syria creating increased challenges for quality assurance. Bidders should outline how both internal and external validity could be maximised within the given constraints, and how they propose to develop tools and monitor data collection within Syria. Innovative ideas to overcome challenges will be especially welcome.

40. We expect proposals to include details on how data will be collected, stored and managed securely, especially in view of security risks and the proximity of armed actors to project locations. DFID will own all data generated by the evaluation and will receive full datasets.

41. Proposals should also include details of the analysis strategy; which analysis techniques the evaluation team will apply, how will they try to assess contribution of the Tamkeen programme through the analysis and how they plan to triangulate different sources of data.

42. The evaluation should ensure that it adheres to the ethical evaluation policies of DFID (www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67483/dfid-ethics-prcpls-rsrch-eval.pdf), and proposals should include reference to any further ethical considerations in light of the ongoing conflict in Syria.

43. Proposals should consider conflict sensitivity in the design and implementation of the evaluation, and how the evaluation team can mitigate potential risks of worsening the conflict locally and the conflict affecting the evaluation.

Data Available

44. Given the challenges of primary data collection in Syria, it is important that the evaluation team reviews existing data and uses for triangulation purposes, where possible, to respond to EQs.

   Available data includes:
   - Implementer data collected for monitoring and reporting purposes. The majority of the data reporting to the LF is currently quantitative, collected by local project field officers within a limited sample of community beneficiaries. There is very limited independent verification of this data. The implementing partners are currently assessing how they can improve the collection of beneficiary feedback.
   - This includes data on basic services delivered, simple quantitative measures of level of beneficiary satisfaction with the services and awareness of the Tamkeen committees and their governance processes within communities. Data is disaggregated by gender.

Process

45. DFID and the implementers will seek to facilitate access to stakeholders who have direct links with the programme and those who play a political role, but it is likely that the evaluation team will have to make direct approaches to other stakeholders and beneficiaries who are within the scope of the evaluation. Proposals should also include details on plans to identify respondents at community level; trying to ensure that respondents are as representative of communities as possible, whilst recognising constraints, especially in relation to security.

Reporting and outputs

46. **Timelines**

   We expect the inception phase to be complete <u>four weeks</u> after the contract is signed. To ensure that timelines are adhered to, DFID will expect to approve this within a week of delivery; minor amendments pending.

The table below sets out some broad proposed timelines for the formative evaluation. Proposals should include a more detailed proposed timeline for the evaluation based on what is feasible in order to be able to deliver the evaluation to a high quality. Proposed workplans should include the number of days allocated to each activity. Proposals should also state how many team members will be working on each activity.

Formative Evaluation Activity	Completed by
Inception phase including desk review of existing reporting and data, and inception report	Mid-August, 2015
Inception report signed off	Late August, 205
Development of tools, and data collection	November, 2015
Topline findings presented	November/December, 2015
Final report	January, 2015
Presentation to key stakeholders of evaluation	February, 2016

Outputs

Inception report

47. The evaluation team is responsible for designing the evaluation, working closely with DFID's technical lead and the evaluation steering group to ensure that the evaluation framework and design meets DFID's needs and standards. In developing the bids, potential suppliers should establish the feasibility of their proposed design. Once contracted, the successful bidder will then be able to refine the design and some amendments may be made if the original proposed design is no longer feasible under changing circumstances.

48. The evaluation provider will include a set of questions to be answered, using the EQs put forward in this ToR as a starting point. The Inception Report will contain the following and will be submitted to DFID no longer than 4 weeks after contracting:

- Refined methodology including detailed sampling plan
- Final Work plan, including a clear allocation of days per activity
- Quality assurance plan
- Comprehensive risk register
- Communications plan
- Analysis and reporting plan

49. At the end of the Inception phase there will be a Break Point to review Inception Outputs. Progress to the Implementation Phase will be subject to the satisfactory performance of the Service Provider, delivery of Inception Outputs and the continuing needs of the Programme.

Implementation:

50. The implementation cycle will take place in London, Turkey, Jordan and Syria. It will include the development and finalisation of data collection tools, data collection, and analysis and interpretation of data. The evaluation team will be required to share updates with the evaluation's steering group and to be regularly in contact with the technical lead.

Presentation of Topline Findings

51. To help inform decision-making around programme funding and programme design, the evaluation team will present topline findings from the evaluation to DFID and other key stakeholders. During the inception phase DFID and the supplier will discuss and agree upon a timeline for this, based on what it feasible in terms of allowing sufficient time for preliminary analysis and what is appropriate to help inform DFID decision making.

Final Report

52. The evaluation team will submit a final report. The main body of this report will be no longer than 30 pages. In addition there will be a 2-4 page executive summary. If necessary a restricted annex will be produced (no longer than 10 pages). DFID will provide clear instructions on what should be restricted. Data classified as restricted will include that which pertains to specific locations and could put partners at risk. DFID will retain the copyright for the reports and data produced as part of this contract.

Workshop with Key Stakeholders and the Implementing Partners

53. Following agreement on the final report the evaluation team will take forward a workshop on lessons learned with implementing partners, DFID, FCO, MoD and the EC.

Quality Assurance

54. The formative evaluation's final report will pass through DFID's external Specialist Evaluation and Quality Assurance Service (SEQAS). SEQAS will assess the quality of reports and provide recommendations for improvement. The SEQAS quality assurance will add 3 to 4 weeks into the timetable at the final report stage. Following this process, the evaluation team will be expected to revise the report based on comments from SEQAS, DFID and the EC.

Deliverable 2 – Feasibility Study for and the Design of an ongoing Outcome Evaluation

55. DFID realises that the formative evaluation will offer limited information on the outcomes and the impact of the programme, due in part to the timing and scope of the evaluation as well as its likely design. As such, we require the evaluation team to also assess the feasibility of conducting an ongoing outcome evaluation, and develop an appropriate design. The development of the design will take place simultaneous to the implementation of the formative evaluation, in consultation with DFID's technical lead.

56. The feasibility study/design should examine the options for an evaluation which build on the formative evaluation (Deliverable 1). The dual purposes of the evaluation would be for accountability to funders and beneficiaries and for wider organisational learning. The evaluation should aim to provide a higher level of evidence than the formative evaluation to support decision-making around rolling out the Tamkeen programme further in Syria as well as in other fragile, conflict-affected states. As well as answering similar questions to the formative evaluation, this evaluation would ideally also be able to make an assessment as to what scale is required for the Tamkeen project to start achieving higher-level outcomes outside of the communities it immediately operates within/a significant proportion of opposition-controlled areas in Syria. This is especially relevant because as the project expands it plans to do so within geographical clusters.

57. The feasibility study/design should explore how best to build a stronger evidence base for the programme on an ongoing basis. It should assess to what extent it is feasible and desirable to collect data on stated programme outcomes at the beginning and end of future potential implementation cycles (in particular cycle 4 locations). If funding is approved for cycle 4, implementation would begin in December, 2015. The feasibility study/design should also consider possible future data collection in locations in a potential cycle 5 and beyond.

58. As implementation for cycle 4 would begin in December, 2015, a decision on whether to proceed with an ongoing evaluation incorporating cycle 4 locations would be taken as early as possible, ideally in September, 2015. If DFID judged the proposed design to be feasible, relevant and high quality (in terms of methodology, workplan and budget), the contract will be extended to enable the selected evaluation team to implement the ongoing outcome evaluation. If the proposed design included

developing a baseline in new locations, we hope that this would allow sufficient time for the full development of tools and methods for conducting a baseline in cycle 4 locations. However, this does not suggest that proposed designs must incorporate baselines and/or quantitative data collection. It is likely that DFID would only initially contract the ongoing outcome evaluation to cover the time period until after the end of cycle 4, due to the fact that a decision relating to funding of cycles beyond cycle 5 will not be made until autumn, 2015. If funding for future cycles is approved, however, it is likely that the contract will be extended to enable future data collection in cycle 5 and pre-existing locations. We recognise that this is not the ideal context in which to design an evaluation but this will nevertheless need to be considered in the evaluation design, workplan and resourcing. It should be noted that potential cycle 5 locations will be identified by the implementers by August, 2015, so if funding for this cycle is approved it may be possible and desirable to collect data in these locations before the end of 2015.

59. Building upon the formative evaluation, the design for the ongoing evaluation should also consider how best to continue to assess outcomes in cycle 1 and 2 locations, as well as cycle 3 locations.

60. The ongoing evaluation will not necessarily need to cover all locations in any cycle but locations should be sampled according to appropriate criteria.

61. We recognise that there are operational constraints relating to this programme, including the limited ability to randomly allocate the programme treatment. Therefore, certain experimental or quasi-experimental methods may be ruled out. However, since the programme has staggered implementation, there may be options for using this in an experimental evaluation design, for example, a stepped-wedge design.

62. The feasibility study should consider to what extent it is feasible to develop valid quantitative measures for outcomes of interest to the project (especially given their relatively sensitive nature). The evaluation team may wish to develop and pilot some quantitative measures with a limited sample during the formative evaluation to help ascertain this. It is highly likely that it will not be possible to achieve a random, representative sample. Similarly, given severe limitations around large-scale quantitative data collection in Syria, it may not be possible to deliver samples that are statistically powered to effectively track changes over time or between locations.

63. DFID is very interested to hear creative and innovative ideas on how to design the ongoing evaluation. A range of non-experimental methods will be considered and a design may employ at least two complementary methods to enable triangulation.

64. DFID's technical lead will work closely with the evaluation team to discuss feasibility of any proposed designs before the team submit the final feasibility study/design report. The project implementers will also be available for consultation with the evaluation team and to provide comment on feasibility and information on project locations.

The Recipients and the Audience of the ongoing Outcome Evaluation

65. As the purpose of the ongoing outcome evaluation would be to provide a stronger level of evidence in terms of outcomes achieved by the Tamkeen project in Syria, the primary audience and recipient of the evaluation would be DFID's Syria team, with DFID teams working in fragile states as important secondary stakeholders. The evaluation should support teams to make evidence-based decisions in relation to the following question:

Should the programme be piloted or implemented in full in other fragile states, or in which contexts should the programme be piloted or implemented?

Final Report for feasibility study/initial design

66. The main body of this report will be no longer than 15 pages. In addition there will be a 1 to 2 page executive summary. If necessary a restricted annex will be produced. DFID will provide clear instructions on what should be restricted. DFID will retain the copyright for the reports and data produced as part of this contract.

67. The design report should detail proposed study locations, sample sizes, methods and tools, budget, timeframes, analysis strategy, dissemination plan and quality assurance processes.

68. The final report would ideally be available by late September, 2015

Duty of Care

69. Duty of Care is a legal obligation and under DFID's policy on Duty of Care, the lead supplier is responsible for the Duty of Care of all supplier personnel (including employees, subcontractors and agents) including making the appropriate security arrangements to protect their safety and wellbeing. Suppliers must comply with the general responsibilities and duties under relevant health and safety law including appropriate risk assessments, adequate information, instruction, training and supervision, and appropriate emergency procedures. These responsibilities must be applied in the context of the specific requirements of the contract. Proposals should demonstrate how suppliers are capable of taking responsibility for duty of care within the contract. For further details please see DFID's policy on Duty of Care: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/137565/DFID-duty-of-care-suppliers-note.pdf.

Risk management

70. The supplier will be expected to set out their understanding of the most important anticipated risks, with an explanation of their mitigation strategies in a full risk register.

71. As part of this careful management of sensitive data and support for those handling this data will need to be taken forward and there should be a sound process for doing this.

Budget and payment for both deliverables

72. A maximum budget of £200,000 is available for this contract (deliverables 1 and 2). Subsequent extensions to the contract could increase the contract's value to above £500,000. Proposals should demonstrate how they can achieve value-for-money whilst ensuring risks are well managed and mitigated, and the evaluation receives a high level of quality assurance and the upholding of ethical standards from beginning to end. Suppliers may also include an appropriate output-based payment structure in their proposals. It is important that the budget breakdown clearly reflects that an appropriate number of days has been allocated to each key activity/different stages of the evaluation.

Evaluation Governance Arrangements

73. The evaluation will be supported by the following governance arrangements:

Role	Responsibilities
DFID Project Manager DFID technical lead (Evaluation Adviser)	1. Ensuring that appropriate resources are committed to the evaluation 2. Dealing with contractual issues 3. Ensuring the information necessary for the evaluation is made available to the evaluators and facilitating contact with key stakeholders and implementers, where appropriate 4. Sharing security information with the evaluator, as appropriate 5. Liaising with the evaluation team to ensure that the evaluation timetable is kept to 6. Submitting evaluation documents to SEQAS, where appropriate 7. Obtaining DFID's management response to evaluation findings 7. Working closely with the evaluation team to refine the formative evaluation's design during the first month (inception period) 8. Working closely with the evaluation team on the feasibility study and design of the ongoing evaluation. Obtaining a timely response to the feasibility study/design for the ongoing outcome evaluation report 9. Publishing evaluation findings, as appropriate
Evaluation team	1. Ensuring the evaluation stays on track, meets its objectives, and is delivered on time and within budget 2. Quality assuring the development of tools and data collection, analysis and interpretation 3. Duty of care of all on the evaluation delivery team
Evaluation Steering Group	1. Ensuring delivery of a high-quality and policy relevant evaluation 2. Quality assuring the final report (in conjunction with SEQAS) 3. Assisting in the interpretation of the emerging evidence, as required 4. Providing advice on how to proceed in the event that circumstances on the ground change 5. Consulting with the evaluation team on the feasibility study of the ongoing evaluation
External quality assurance (SEQAS)	1. Quality assuring the formative evaluation's final report

Documents to be included in the ITT

Annex A - Tamkeen's Logical framework[32] (indicators only)
Annex B - Tamkeen M&E tasks (taken from the implementers' M&E schedule)
Annex C - Project Theory of change[33]

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[32] This is the most recent revised version. Some of the indicators may undergo some revision.

Annex D - DFID's approach to Value for Money

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