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SOLIDARITÉS
INTERNATIONAL

Cash transfer program in Northern Syria

Case study: Implementation of cash-based projects in Aleppo governorate



SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL
November 2015





For the past 35 years, the humanitarian aid organization SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL has been active in the field during conflicts and natural disasters. Our mission is to help people whose health, or even whose very lives are threatened, as quickly and as efficiently as possible, by covering their basic needs: food, water and shelter.

After responding to the initial crisis, our humanitarian aid teams assist the families and most vulnerable communities until they regain the means to survive and the autonomy needed to face the challenges of an uncertain future with dignity.

Drawing on our experience with the most severe humanitarian crises, from Afghanistan to Haiti and including the Balkans, Rwanda, Indonesia and Darfur, we are especially committed to the battle against diseases linked to unclean drinking water, the leading cause of mortality worldwide.

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1 HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

In March 2011, the Syrian government began facing massive protests which quickly developed into a nationwide uprising. Protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, that his government be overthrown, and an end to nearly five decades of Ba'ath Party rule. Since 2011, violence has intensified, fighting has continued to spread, and the conflict has evolved into a fully-fledged civil war and a sectarian conflict. Large parts of the country have fallen under temporary or permanent control of armed-groups, particularly in the North of the country. In 2014, the violent expansion of the *Daesh* in the Northern areas of the country intensified the conflict and led to a dramatic deterioration in both the security and humanitarian situation.

Humanitarian needs, both in Syria and neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq), have rapidly increased. As of June 2015, the UN estimated that 7.6 million people were internally displaced, 4 million were refugees and 12.2 million were in humanitarian need¹.

As one of the county's most populated governorates, with a total population of 4,670,000 people in 2004², the Aleppo governorate particularly suffered from the consequences of the conflict, such as:

- The destruction of houses and properties as well as infrastructure (water networks, sanitation systems, electricity networks);
- The displacement of a huge wave of the population, putting stress on the living conditions of the hosts families;
- Inflation;
- The deterioration of agricultural assets and the closure of factories.

Displaced and local populations in this region were deprived of sources of income while their savings and coping mechanisms were slowly exhausted. Basic commodities such as fuel, gas, warm clothes and milk became unaffordable.

¹ Strategic Response Plan 2015 for Syrian Arab Republic

² According to the 2004 census data plus demographic growth projections

2 NEED ASSESSMENT

Since 2012, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE (SI) has conducted several assessments in Aleppo governorate to monitor the evolution of the situation and the needs of the population in order to define the goals and methods of its operations. The results of these assessments were complemented by the data gathered by SI's teams both in Turkey and in Syria through daily field visits and meetings with local stakeholders and humanitarian organizations intervening in Northern Syria, both in rural and urban areas. Interviews with representatives of the communities and with displaced and host families were held in order to gather information and gain a deeper and more up-to-date understanding of the situation.

Aleppo city was quickly identified as the town where with the highest concentration of vulnerable people and thus was seen as the city to focus on. However, due to security and access constraints, and the fact that most people fleeing Aleppo city find shelter in its countryside, SI decided to implement its operations there.

Since the beginning of the conflict, several factors combined to deprive the most vulnerable families of the financial ability to answer their basic monthly needs (food, water and sanitation, hygiene, etc.). These included:

- The closure of Aleppo's factories, which used to employ a large proportion of the population, and the subsequent dramatic decrease in income opportunities for the local population.
- The closure of borders and the downturn in trade with Turkey which led to unpredictable high inflation and deflation on the local markets.
- The decline in agriculture due to drought.
- Instability
- The irregular payment of government wages.

Thus, it was impossible for the most vulnerable families to purchase basic commodities in order to maintain a balance diet, have enough energy for heating and cooking in the house and adequate hygiene. Moreover, even if food and other basic commodities were generally available in local markets, the access was restricted by high prices. As a

consequence in order to deal with the crisis, families resorted to negative coping mechanisms such as:

- Reducing the number of meals;
- Reducing food diversity;
- Selling some of their belongings;
- Cutting trees for heating and cooking purposes.

According to assessments conducted by SI and other organizations since 2012, three main categories of the population can be viewed as vulnerable:

- Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs): many of those have experienced multiple displacements and are living with host families, in schools or in unfinished buildings;

- Host families: since the beginning of the conflict, their situation has dramatically deteriorated as they have had to bear the financial burden of hosting IDPs and sharing resources while income opportunities decreased.
- “Returned migrant” or returnees: families originally from rural areas of Aleppo governorate that used to live and work in Aleppo city and who had to go back to their villages because of the conflict. For simplicity, this category is included within IDPs.

3 PROGRAM RATIONALE

The assessments conducted by SI and other humanitarian organizations since 2012 identified the main needs in Northern Syria as fuel & gas (especially during the winter), food, water, medicine and hygiene products. Clear gaps were identified in the WASH, food security and shelter/NFI sectors.

Despite growing inflation, markets in Aleppo governorate continued to function, even if it was at a much slower pace than before the conflict. Due to the high cost of basic commodities, households with limited income opportunities were not able to meet their basic needs and had to mostly rely on humanitarian assistance (mainly distributions). Hence, SI decided to implement a Cash Transfer Program to help the most vulnerable households, including both IDPs and host households, to access food and meet their basic needs.

After lengthy discussions with local representatives, it was commonly decided to operate mainly through Cash For Work (CFW). As cash grants would not be easily accepted by the local population, providing general-interest work as a way of giving cash appeared to be the most acceptable and dignified solution to help the local population. However, for the families without anyone in a condition to work Unconditional Cash Grants were completely accepted as an option.

As the front lines were permanently changing with the population moving accordingly and to avoid people gathering in the same place, SI decided to focus on short-term aid, under the form of a “one-shot” money provision combining 20 days Cash For Work rotations and Unconditional Cash Grants.

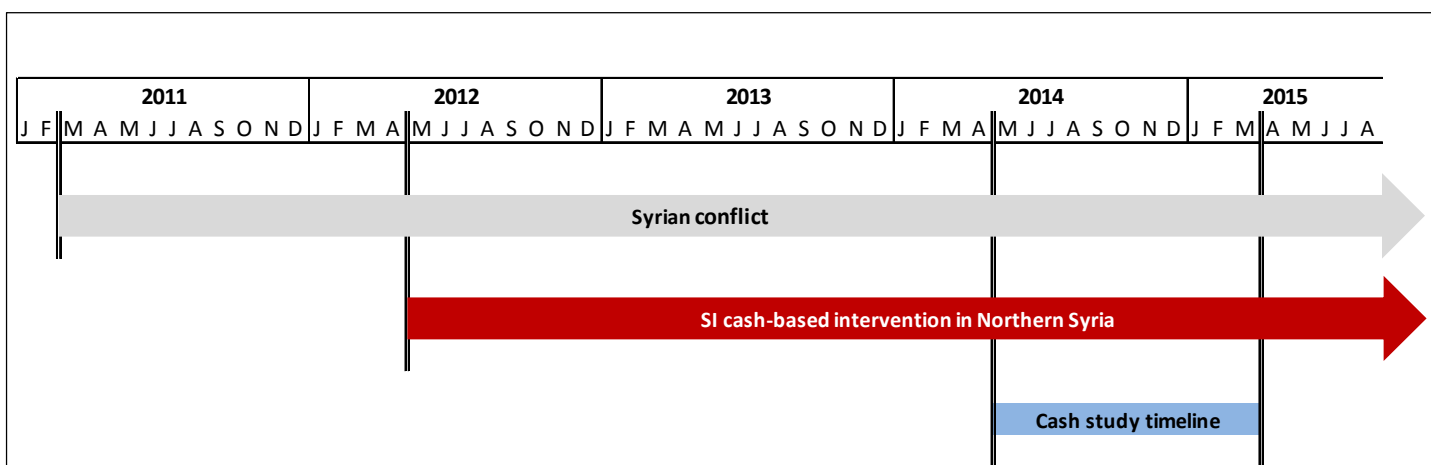


Figure 1: Case study timeline

4 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Global objective	To contribute to the improvement of the living conditions and livelihood of conflict-affected populations
Specific objective	To address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable populations affected by the Syrian crisis.
Expected results	The purpose of the project was to help the most vulnerable families of Aleppo governorate to meet their basic needs and deal with the weather conditions through Unconditional and Conditional (Cash For Work) Cash Grant activities implemented along with the seasonal distribution of NFI kits.
Duration	May 2014 to March 2015
Donor	DG ECHO
Number of SI staff involved	22 national staff in Syria and 4 expatriate staff in Turkey
Location	Jabal Saman, Azaz and Afrin districts in Aleppo governorate
Main sector	Food security / basic needs
Methods used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cash For Work for 3,708 Households ▪ Unconditional Cash Grant for 948 Households
Number of households reached	4,656 households / 23,542 individuals
Main activities	<p>37 CFW rotations completed :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graveling the IDP camp; ▪ Waste management; ▪ Cleaning and restoration of streets (more than 100 km); ▪ 'Light' restoration (sewer system, roads); ▪ Cleaning and restoration of public premises (including mosques, 7 schools, etc.).
Key outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The households targeted were able to meet their basic needs with the cash provided; ▪ The households and communities targeted are very satisfied by the project, the selection process and the methods used.

5 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Since 2012, SI has devised implementation processes which are tailored to the local context and aimed at reducing the risks of a remote Cash Transfer Program in a highly insecure context while answering the needs of local populations.

Amount distributed

The amount of the allowance distributed was defined according to the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) as defined with the Cash-Based Response Working Group in Turkey. The SMEB aims to include all the items needed to answer the basic needs of by a **6-person household during one month** (food, hygiene items, accommodation, water, etc.). Monitoring these commodities on the major local markets on a monthly basis made it possible to evaluate the minimum expenditure needed to meet

basic needs while taking into consideration the impact of inflation/deflation. The variation in the daily wage and in the exchange rate between USD, Turkish Lira (TRL) and Syrian Pound (SYP) were also monitored.

As the allocation is also including the price of the accommodation, a reduced allocation is distributed to the beneficiaries living in a camp as they don't have to pay for their shelter and receive more regular humanitarian assistance than the ones located in the countryside. That is why the value of the allocation and thus the number of working days varies according to the location:

- 20 days in cities and villages in the Aleppo countryside;
- 16 days in a camp or informal settlement.

The most vulnerable households who were unable to work received the same allowance through Unconditional Cash Grants.

Item	Qty	Item	Qty
Bulgur wheat	15 Kg	Eggs	6 Kg
Rice	19 Kg	Tomato paste	6 Kg
Bread	37 Kg	Soap	12 Kg
Dried pulses	19 Kg	Laundry/dish soap	2 Kg
Ghee	7 Kg	Toothpaste	2 pcs
Sugar	5 Kg	Sanitary pads	4 Pack of 10
Salt	1 Kg	Refined kerosene	25 L
Fresh vegetables	6 Kg	Water	2.8 L
Chicken	4 Kg		

Figure 2: Northern Syria Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket

The location of the intervention

SI applied the following criteria to select the locations for its Cash Transfer Program:

- By analysing the needs identified by humanitarian organizations at a regional level (using the cluster system, assessments, etc.), SI was able to identify locations where no assistance had been provided or where its intervention could be complementary;
- A village/city/town/settlement where the current population, IDP and host communities had serious needs;

Local representatives

In each main city, these local representatives are in charge of organizing and managing the community life (provision of water, schools...) for the city itself and the surroundings small villages. they are organized and recognized by local populations as local authorities. Local representatives have clear ideas of the needs and already made the works of registration of in-need households, and, when possible, provide the little help they can, such as bread, food or mattresses distribution. Hence, SI is working in close cooperation with them regarding needs identification, provision of demographical data and management of complaints.

5.1 Selecting the Beneficiaries

Selection criteria

The **selection criteria** were defined by SI's teams based on an understanding of the area and the causes of vulnerability to food insecurity. These criteria were

- Close to SI's current area of intervention, so that SI's teams could travel there safely on a daily basis.

The volatile security situation meant that SI's teams had to be flexible. Indeed, the sudden outbreak of fighting and/or shelling within the area of intervention potentially threatened all planned operations and meant that the implementation process needed to be able to be modified while managing the expectations of local representatives and communities. Thus, the evolution of the conflict was monitored closely at both a local and regional level before and during the intervention.

Introductory and preparatory meetings with local communities

After deciding on several potential locations for intervention, SI's teams met the local representatives and communities in order to present the project and its objectives, and evaluate the interest of the local population and the possibility of conducting Cash For Work and Unconditional Cash Grant activities. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was then discussed and signed to formalize the collaboration with SI. As well as detailing the responsibilities of SI and the local representatives, this document specified the humanitarian principles underlying SI's operations. By signing this document (both in Arabic and English) the local representatives recognized the collaborative structure of SI, its principles and the responsibilities of each party. The collaboration could have been stopped at any point if any part of the MoU was not respected.

continuously discussed with all local stakeholders and humanitarian organizations and could be adapted to changes in the situation. All of the following criteria were detailed in the MoU signed with the local representatives:

- Number of people in the household;
- Number of people able of work (households with no sources of income);
- Families living in schools, unfinished buildings and other inadequate dwellings;
- Households headed by someone with a disability and households with members suffering from serious health problems (e.g. people with disabilities, people injured during the conflict);
- Female-headed households;
- Households with children under 5 years old;
- Households not receiving any other form of assistance.

According to the household members' ability to work, the households targeted could be identified as either:

- **Cash For Work** beneficiaries for households with an individual over 16 years old able to work.
- **Unconditional Cash Grant** beneficiaries for households without any members capable of work.

Registration phase

Local representatives were able to provide ready-to-use lists of potential beneficiaries, as they had already recorded the names of the households that were most in need. Then SI's teams visited 100% of the

5.2 Cash For Work Activities

The works to be conducted during the rotation were selected after consultation with the local representatives and communities. This consultation aimed to ensure the usefulness of the operation and its feasibility with regard to the time-frame and resources available. It was also necessary that the activities chosen were not already being done by the community for free or as part of community service.

During CFW activities each beneficiary was asked to work 4 hours per day, 5 days per week.

During this project, 37 rotations were completed between May 2014 and March 2015 and included:

households on the list to check that they met the required criteria through a short questionnaire. This questionnaire was also used to gain a clearer picture of the living conditions in the households. After this 30 min interview if the household met the selection criteria, SI registered the head of the household as a beneficiary and provided him/her with the information related to the implementation of activities (planning, working hours, payment, etc.).

Once all proposed households had been interviewed, the list of beneficiaries was finalized. Each head of the household identified as a beneficiary signed a MoU with SI, both in Arabic and English, setting the conditions of the operation and providing contact details in case of complaints or questions. If needed, once the registration phase was completed, SI team was still able to ask the local representatives to modify the list if the data gathered during the registration phase highlighted that some beneficiaries did not meet the selection criteria or were not amongst the most vulnerable people.

Once registered each beneficiary received a unique SI number to ease identification during the monitoring and payment phases which enabled SI to reduce the risk of duplication and to better identify the households benefiting from several activities.

- Waste management;
- Cleaning and restoration of streets (more than 100 km);
- 'Light' restorations (sewer system, roads);
- Cleaning and restoration of public premises (including schools, mosques, etc.);
- Graveling and digging watercourses in an informal settlement in the Azaz district, completed thanks to a combination of CFW activities and the intervention of a specialized company. Activities were specifically aimed at preparing for the winter season (characterized by heavy rains) and benefited 500 families living in the camp.



Figure 3: Picture of the informal settlement before (left) and after (right) the graveling activity

At the end of the rotation, an informal evaluation of the work done was conducted by SI in conjunction with the local representatives and community leaders in order to identify potential issues or to comment on the activities. In addition, the tools SI brought which remained in a good state were donated to the local representatives provided that (i) the tools would only be used for the common good and were not given to

5.3 Payment Process

Rationale

The remote payment mechanism was designed to mitigate the risks related to the highly insecure and volatile environment:

- Presence of different armed groups resulting in an increased risk of robbery and attacks, numerous checkpoints and difficulties in moving freely;
- Risk of unpredictable shelling, bombing and attacks targeting any location in the area of intervention;
- Risk of fraud and diversions;
- Trying out the procedure in the field was not possible.

Each beneficiary payment conducted during the Cash Transfer Program was made according to a systematic and clear process mastered by SI's team which involved a certain level of unpredictability. It aimed to ensure the safety of the beneficiaries, SI's teams and all the people involved in the process as much as possible. The preparation of the payment procedure involved several steps, including the national team in the field and the expatriate staff working remotely. The administrative coordinator, in coordination with

one individual for personal gain and (ii) the tools would be available to SI in case of future operations.

During the 37 rotations, SI supported 3,708 households with cash as well as tools and materials. Approximately half of the tools were donated (51%) as the rest was not functional any more...

the program manager, was responsible for deciding how much money to deliver and to whom as well as the time and location of the delivery. The program manager then informed the team leader of the time and location of the delivery and informed the money changer – *hawala* system – of the amount of money at very short notice. The payment itself was secured and demanded that the procedure was respected precisely to ensure the safety of the beneficiaries.

Frequency of payments

Beneficiaries' payments were made on a regular basis. Though ideally daily or weekly payments would be fairer for the beneficiaries, meaning a one day work-one day pay system, this option was rejected due to cash-provision constraints, and the risks related to storing and carrying consistent amounts of money. Nevertheless, paying beneficiaries at the end of the rotation did not seem fair either due to the immediate needs of the populations targeted.

Due to security issues, SI almost never paid beneficiaries on an exact one-week basis. The actions being publicly known, paying so regularly could expose both SI's teams and the beneficiaries to extra-

risk. So far, the frequency of payment was decided based on needs of the beneficiaries and according to the security constraints of the area of intervention. SI's team inform the beneficiaries of the day onto

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Since May 2013, international staff are no longer able to access the field. Therefore, a remote management organization has been set up to control the activities from Turkey. SI has developed a comprehensive set of tools and procedures aiming to provide transparency, monitoring and accountability whether in terms of operations, administration or logistics, which the team gives particular attention.

Beneficiaries follow-up

Due to the use of remote management in a highly insecure context with a highly mobile population, a detailed follow-up of SI's beneficiaries was needed in order to reduce the risks of duplication and to better identify those beneficiaries participating in several activities. After each distribution Post-Distribution Monitoring was implemented to monitor how the support was used and to assess the quality of the implementation process for both Cash For Work and Unconditional Cash Grant support.

6 OUTCOMES

In total, this project provided a "one-shot" cash grant to 4,656 households – i.e. 23,542 individuals – between May 2014 & April 2015 in Aleppo governorate.

which the payments is about to be conducted at short notice to reduce the risk of a potential planned robbery.

Market survey

Since June 2013, SI has monitored the evolution of the price and availability of basic commodities on the local markets on a monthly basis and as part of the Cash-Based Response Working Group the data collection followed a standardized methodology shared by all the member organisations and focused on the items included as part of the Survival Minimum Expenditures Basket.

This monitoring aimed to adapt the amount of the allowance to the inflation or deflation of the prices of SMEB items and to the amount of the daily wage on the local markets.

Apart from bread, basic commodities were generally available in all local markets. Nevertheless, this availability was negatively impacted by the evolution of the conflict (access constraints, closure of the Turkish border).

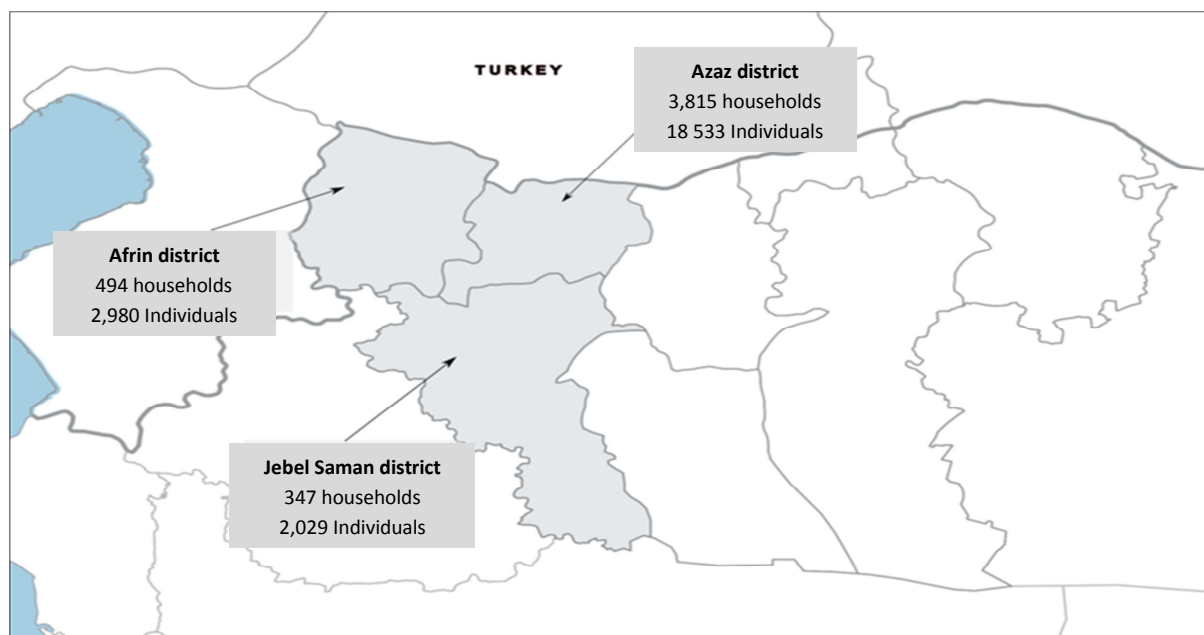


Figure 4: Total number of SI's beneficiaries

6.1 Profile of the Beneficiaries

During this project SI interviewed almost 100% of the 4,656 households targeted by the Cash Transfer Program during the selection of beneficiaries. The questionnaire aimed to ensure that the beneficiaries' households met the vulnerability criteria and to gain a better understanding of living conditions. The following data comes from the interviews of 4,583 households between July 2014 and March 2015, of which:

- 44.8% were IDPs and 55.2% hosts;
- 16.6% were female-headed households

Based on the general trends identified during these interviews, the following data presents the main characteristics of both IDPs and host households benefiting from SI activities. However, as the sample is not representative, the data cannot be extrapolated to the situation of northern Aleppo governorate as a whole.

Beneficiaries per gender & age

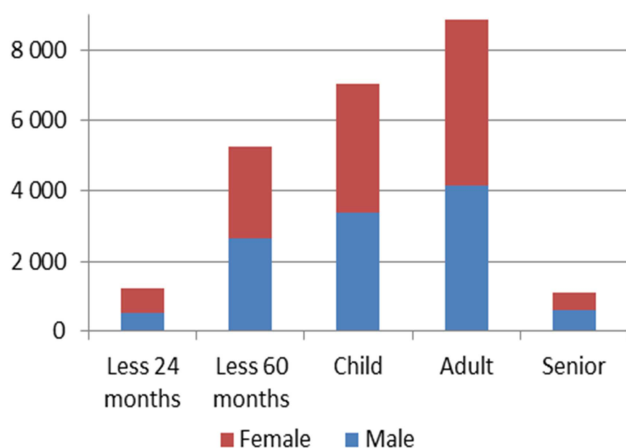


Figure 5: Beneficiaries breakdown by age & sex

Through this project, SI reached 4,656 households and a total of 23,542 individuals, of which 52% were female, and 28% were infants below 5 years old. 27% of the households interviewed included individuals below 5 years and above 60 years old. No major differences can be observed in the composition of the households between IDPs and host communities.

Additional vulnerabilities

18% of the heads of the households interviewed suffered from additional vulnerabilities, mostly related to age and physical disabilities. The prevalence of household heads with additional vulnerabilities was more significant amongst the host communities than the IDPs with 11.4% and 6.6% of households affected respectively. The same prevalence was observed amongst the individuals in those households. Indeed, 7.8% of the IDPs and 11.4% of the host households included one member with additional vulnerabilities, mainly related to old age and physical disabilities.

Displacement of IDPs

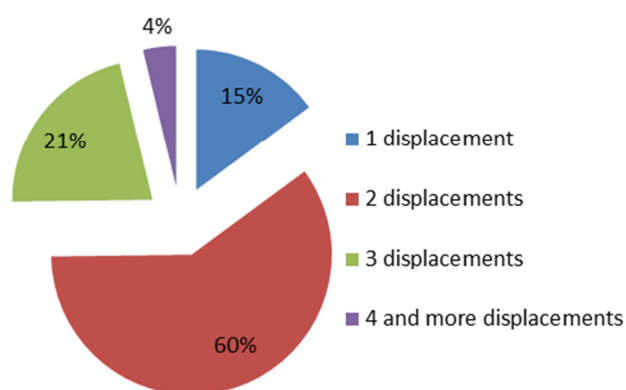


Figure 6: Number of location changes made by IDP households

95% of the IDP households interviewed came from Aleppo governorate, mainly from Jebel Saman district. The remaining 5% came from all over Syria (Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, As-Sweida, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Idleb and Lattakia). On average they had to change location twice and 60% arrived in their last living place between December 2014 and March 2015.

Economy of Household Heads

72.4% of male household heads within IDP households were working before the conflict mainly as construction workers, farmers, or traders while 97.3% of the female household heads were not working before the conflict.

In the **host** communities, 98.5% of the male household heads were working before the conflict mainly in construction or industry whilst 18.8% of the female household heads were working as a cleaner or in industry.

This data highlights that the IDPs were already amongst the most vulnerable populations before the conflict and thus had fewer coping mechanisms once the conflict started, especially households headed by women. Thus, the conflict reproduced and exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities which had to be taken into consideration when defining the humanitarian assistance to be provided. Indeed, this could negatively impact the activities implemented especially, for example, with regard to the inclusion of women in Cash For Work activities.

Despite reproducing pre-existing vulnerabilities, the economic situation of households in both communities decreased dramatically. Indeed, as of 2015, 99.7% of the households interviewed (both IDPs and host) were not working and only 5% had other incomes sources, mainly charity (*Zakat*) or petty trade.

With regard to savings, 5.4% of the households from IDPs communities still had savings and 31.8% had had to sell their assets during the month before the interview in order to survive. 4.1% of the households in the host communities still had savings but only 11.7% had had to sell their possessions to survive. It seems that, the households from IDPs with slightly more savings had had to a resort to negative coping strategies more often in order to survive.

90.7% of the IDPs and 97% of the host households received between 1 and 2 kinds of assistance during the month before the interview, mainly food baskets and hygiene kits.

6.2 Monitoring

The analysis below is based on a comparison between the results of two Post-Distribution Monitoring surveys conducted in November 2014 and February 2015 following a one-shot cash grant.

Monthly expenditure patterns

The below chart shows the monthly expenditure patterns of the Cash grant beneficiaries.

In terms of use of cash, there is no significant variation between November 2014 and February 2015. Some of the main priorities remained the same between the two periods such as cooking gas (15%)

Shelter

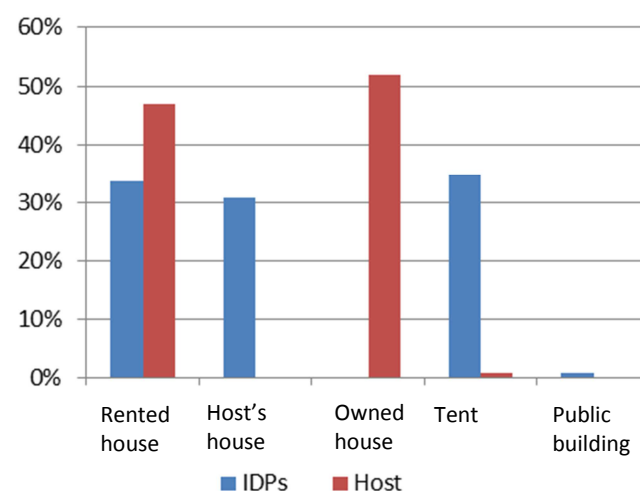


Figure 7: Types of shelter and occupancy

64.4% of the IDPs households interviewed lived in a house (rented or hosted) while 34.8% lived in a tent, a camp or outside, and 0.7% in a school, warehouse or unfinished building. They paid an average of 5,000 SYP per month, ranging from 500 to 15,000 SYP, to rent a place to house an average of 13 people.

99% of the host households interviewed lived in a house, amongst these 52% owned their houses and the others rented. The rest of the households lived in a tent or an unfinished building. They paid an average of 5,000 SYP per month, ranging from 2,000 to 12,000 SYP, to rent a place to house an average of 12 people.

Among the 2,618 host households interviewed, only 1.5% admitted to hosting IDPs. It has to be noted that the answer to this question was affected by the fear that they would not receive as much assistance if they admitted to hosting another family. Indeed, by not declaring this, both the host and the IDPs household could receive twice as much help.

and fuel, while expenditures related to shelter (15%), debt reimbursement (13%), and clothes (11%) increased and food expenditures decreased (from 22% to 18%) even though it remained a top priority.

The cash distributed enabled the targeted households to have access to basic commodities (food, water, etc.) but did not seem sufficient to cover some needs – which were not included in the SMEB (debts, shelter

and transportation) despite the fact that supported households increased their expenditure from 32,000

SYP to 34,500 SYP between November 2014 and February 2015.

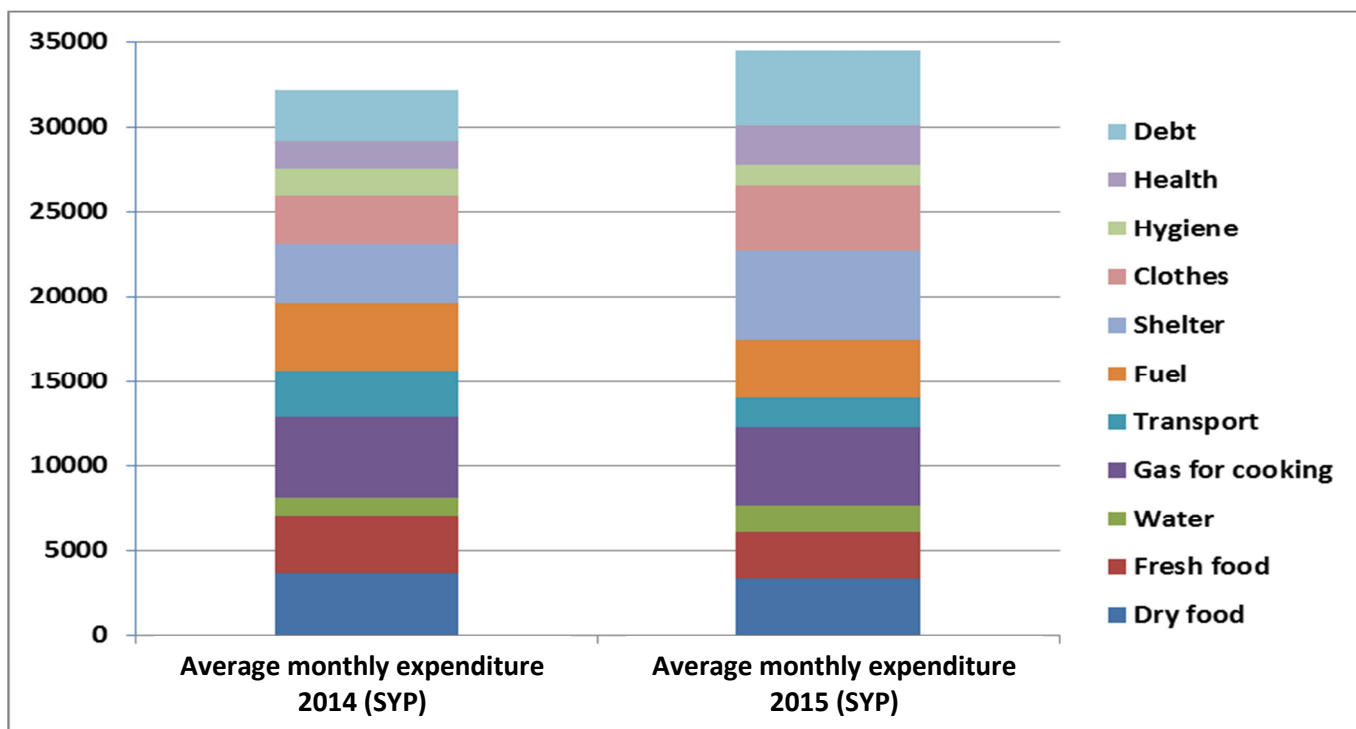


Figure 8: Monthly expenditure pattern

Monthly sources of income

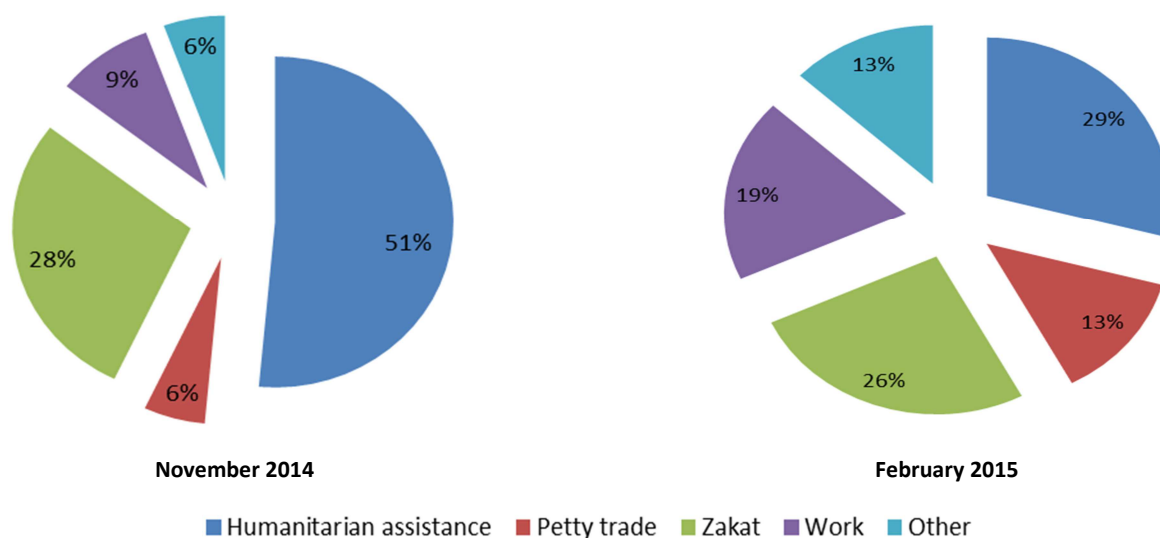


Figure 9: Sources of income in November 2014 (left) & February 2015 (right)

When comparing the variations in incomes between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, the 20% decrease in humanitarian assistance is notable. Simultaneously, the other sources of income increase by around 10% and Zakat remains stable. At this stage the key points to highlight are:

- The dynamism of the labour market: within a couple of months, the increase in job and business opportunities represented a positive change of 10% at household level. These job opportunities

may only relate to occasional work and only on a short or medium-term basis but this change is nevertheless significant and illustrates the complexity of the situation in Northern Aleppo. In a humanitarian context such as this, subsistence strategies have to be analysed in greater depth at a household level in order to confirm this dynamism and identify the means to sustain it.

- Despite the market dynamism, Zakat, considered as a “non-market” gift determined by religious and social patterns, remained stable. Despite the

increase in sources of income, Zakat’s role did not change, meaning also that the social structures in charge of organizing the Zakat, at an individual or group level, remained mobilized and able to provide the same level of support. An analysis of the economy at household level in greater depth should include “out of market” dynamics such as *Zakat* but also all the other financial aid from diaspora, relatives or any other kind of organization able to support the affected population financially.

- Unfortunately this graph does not give an idea of the percentage represented by debt as source of income, which possibly increased as well.

Unmet needs

Despite the increase in expenditures and incomes, the supported population still had a significant amount of unmet needs in different sectors as expressed by 30% of the interviewed households.

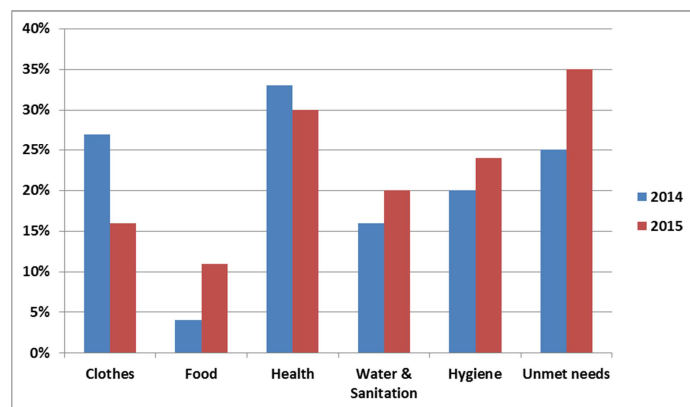


Figure 10: Percentage of households unable to meet their needs

Generally these unmet needs, in particular with regard to health, hygiene and WASH, remained consistent between 2014 and 2015. The most significant change seemed to be in the food sector. This increase of 8% in unmet needs in the food sector can be explained by a decrease in humanitarian assistance in this sector and the fact that the increase in incomes was not sufficient to fill the gap.

Generally, the key points to keep in mind are that around 30% of households declared that they were not able to cover their needs regarding health, clothes, hygiene, WASH and food.

7 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Selection of beneficiaries	Validation / endorsement of the lists
	A formalized validation of the lists of beneficiaries by the local authorities has not been possible due to the highly insecure situation in Northern Syria. The endorsement of the final list of beneficiaries by the local authorities could increase the transparency of the intervention and allow complaints and feedback from non-beneficiaries. This has to be organized according to the security context and the timeframe of the activities to avoid putting SI's teams and participants in at-risk situations.
	The inclusion of women in the Cash Transfer Program
	Currently, female-headed households are automatically benefiting from an Unconditional Cash Grant as it was the only way to provide them with assistance. The data gathered in the field highlights that most of the women were not working before the beginning of the conflict and that the work of women is perceived negatively. Thus, including women in the CFW activities requires a strategy of strong awareness and the identification of activities that are adapted to the cultural context. Home-based Income Generating activities seem to be better adapted to the social conventions.
CFW activities	Evaluation at the end of the rotation
	To better evaluate the works conducted through CFW, a meeting should be organized systematically with local representatives, beneficiaries, supervisors and community leaders to discuss and evaluate quality of the work conducted and the level of satisfaction of local stakeholders and the reaching of the objectives. A hand over document should then be signed by both parties.
	Evaluation at the end of the activities
	For CFW activities which require higher technical expertise, such as restoring schools or the gravelling of camps, an evaluation should be conducted 2 to 3 months after the completion of the works, involving the local representatives and the community leaders. This will enable SI to evaluate the quality of the works conducted, the level of satisfaction of local stakeholders and to adapt future activities.
Complaints mechanism	Since 2013, only a few complaints have been reported to SI's teams but there is a need to set up an anonymous complaint mechanism in parallel. Indeed, in such a sensitive environment, the identification of problems needs a dedicated system to strengthen the trust, safety and anonymity of the population. Due to the volatile context, it has not been possible to implement such a system; complaints and feedbacks are directly communicated to SI's teams on the field who transfer them to the program manager, without a real formalization.
The impact and sustainability of monetary transfer	<p>As previously mentioned the program implemented in Syria helped the most vulnerable households through a one-shot approach and did not aim to have a long-term impact. The amount of cash distributed allowed the beneficiaries to cover their basic needs for 30 to 45 days. The current context in Northern Syria calls for emergency solutions that do not always have sustainable outcomes: Cash injection programs and contingency stock are meant to deal with immediate needs of the most vulnerable people and are limited in their sustainability.</p> <p>In parallel, actions supporting the coping strategies of the population and the economy need to be developed by agencies, even if a better understanding of the dynamics is needed. Since August 2015, SI has started to implement a program aiming to reduce negative coping strategies and to improve the resilience of affected population in the North-Western District of Aleppo Governorate. Activities implemented are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting livestock production through a mobile veterinary clinic providing free veterinary treatment to breeders (poultry, goats, sheep and cows) ▪ Livestock restocking (poultry and small ruminants) ▪ Support for staple food production through the provision of agricultural goods (lentils, barley & wheat seeds and fertilizer)

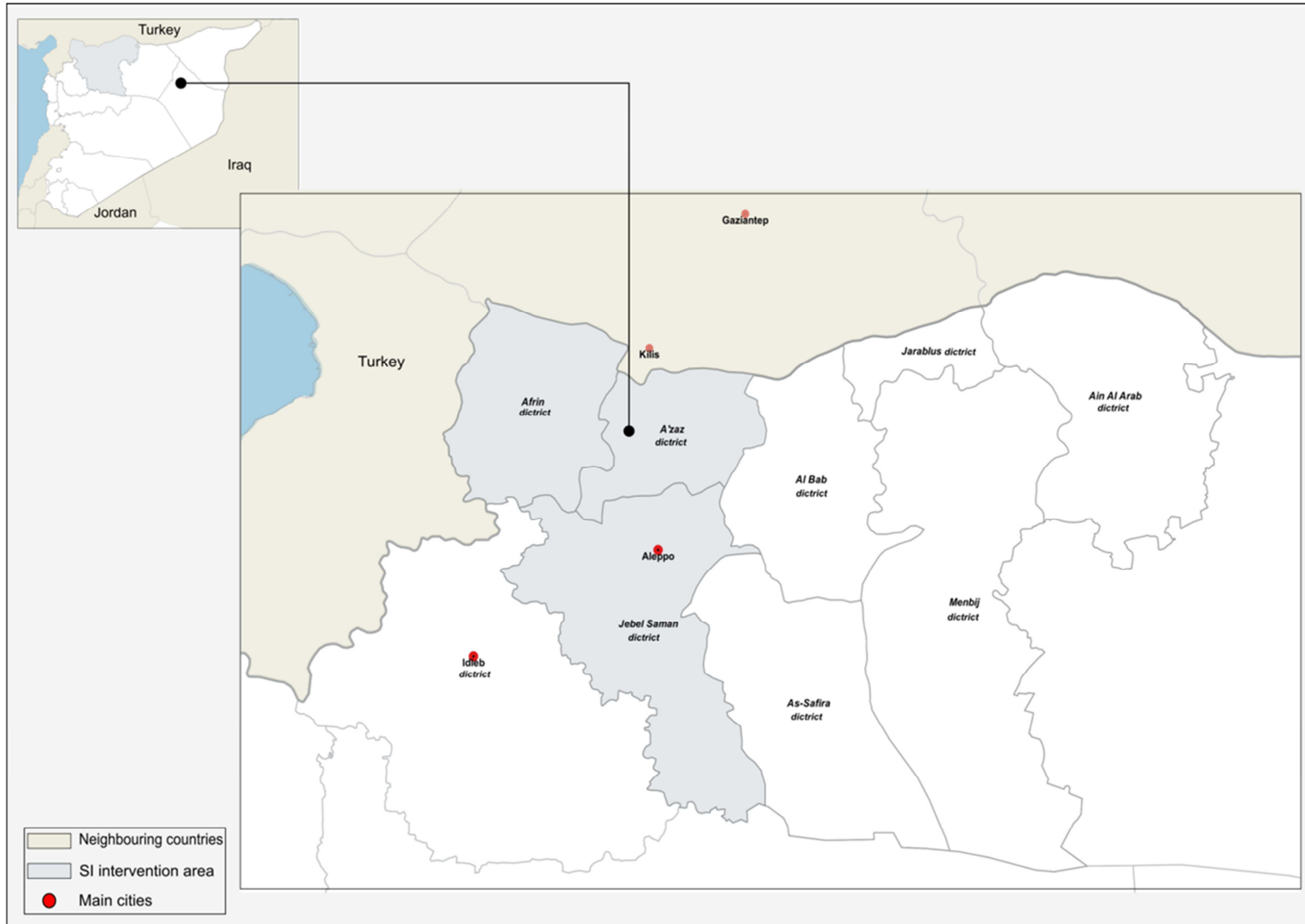
8 CONCLUSION

The implementation of a remote-managed Cash Transfer Program in Northern Syria is possible and has been successfully conducted by SI since 2012. Several factors explain the successful implementation of this activity and constitute many pre-conditions for conducting such activities in Northern Syria:

- National teams are trained for the process and are completely dedicated to the success of the project. Indeed, as the only representatives of SI in the field and suffering under a lot of pressure, the teams need to be fully trained and able to deal with complaints from the communities;
- The local population welcomes such initiatives and appreciates receiving assistance in exchange for work;
- The local representatives, fulfilling here the role of local authorities, are ready to participate and most of them understand the need for independence for an NGO such as SI;
- Mobile Data Collection enables efficient monitoring of the interventions, at a level that could not be attained using manual data collection. With trained teams and local populations familiar with new technologies, the use of such methods decreases the risks related to the implementation of Cash Transfer Program;
- A high standard of communication between all local stakeholders and humanitarian organizations intervening in the same areas in order to closely monitor the evolution of the situation and the needs of the population;
- The ability of money changers to adapt (hawala) and the access they have to the field is one of the key elements.

Nevertheless, after 4 years of conflict, a broader and more in-depth analysis is needed to better understand the impact of the Cash Transfer Program and to identify longer-term strategies that can be implemented by SI amongst other INGOs intervening in Northern Syria. An assessment of the whole of Syria and an Assessment launched by the FSL cluster will definitely lead to greater knowledge of the strategies developed by households with regard to livelihood management.

Appendix 1: SI's area of intervention



For more information on this publication,

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