

WINNER'S

CASE STUDY



Category **Overseas Project of the Year 2015**

Winner **TAMKEEN Syria: Creating Change**
Adam Smith International

Sponsor



Overview

As other nations launch air strikes on terrorists in Syria and search for a solution to that country's brutal civil war, Adam Smith International has been helping devastated communities to get back on their feet.

Over the past three years 210,000 people have died. Infrastructure has collapsed, basic services have disappeared and nine million have fled. The violence continues, as differing militia fight for control in one of the most complex conflicts of recent times.

The Tamkeen Al Mubadarat Al Mahalia (Empowering Local Initiatives) project is the first major UK non-

humanitarian programme in Syria. Since November 2013, funded by the UK Conflict Pool and the European Union, Adam Smith International has been working in partnership with communities in moderate opposition and contested parts of Syria – Aleppo and Idlib to the north and Dera'a and rural Damascus to the south.

They have no formal governance, limited public services and are plagued with hundreds of armed militia. So how do you build local governance structures in places like these?

This was the challenge that the Tamkeen project set out to meet in a fluid, complex and dangerous landscape.

Objectives

The purpose was to help moderate opposition areas to meet their basic needs and to strengthen an emerging system of local governance, with all services owned by each area's committee, council and community.

Tamkeen also aimed to hold decision-makers to account and reduce conflict by bringing fractured communities together for a common goal. If it could deliver services that were accountable and transparent, it would generate a demand for good governance and create an enabling environment for formal governance.

The model focused on Syrian ownership, from the initial community needs assessment to the oversight of service delivery and lessons learned. Being considered Syrian was to be a key strength of the programme.

Adam Smith International's adaptable approach to changing conflict dynamics has enabled the continuing implementation of these projects."

Matthew Wyatt, Head of DFID's Syria Crisis Unit

Challenges

There were enormous operational challenges, not least that the areas were insecure and inaccessible to non-Syrians and with a high risk of kidnapping and fatality, with constant presence of numerous armed groups. Because of the security issues, the project needed to be managed from outside Syria and find the right people to work with on the ground.

The situation in Syria was complex. Understanding who the key stakeholders were in each community and the dynamics among them was necessary to successfully engage with the community.

Getting money safely to the intended communities posed further problems in the total absence of banks in opposition-held parts of Syria. Carrying the cash was too dangerous so the only viable way was through the informal Hawala process, based purely on trust.

Resources

To ensure neutrality and reduce the risk of misuse or diversion of money and resources, an international team of experts was based in neighbouring Turkey and Jordan to manage the work and to support the field team of officers, researchers and specialists

Area managers – mostly Syrian and based along the border to ensure neutrality – provided a critical link between field staff, supporting technical teams, project managers and other team members working remotely.

Coordination and cooperation

Regular communication with and investment in field officers was extremely important as they could make or break the project.

Local Tamkeen community committees were formed collaboratively with local councils, councillors, influential community stakeholders and non-governmental organisations to assess community needs together. The team of field officers included two women responsible for ensuring female participation and representation.

Success was reliant on relationships, trust and networks so it was important to be patient and find the right people to protect the programme. The process was opened up to ensure transparency and tapped into Syria's powerful online social network community.

The entire project was built around the principle of empowerment, encouraging full Syrian ownership of all grants.

Results

Despite the challenges, Tamkeen has just begun its fourth cycle of funding, during which it will partner with 37 communities inside Syria. Since February 2014 the Tamkeen programme has reached 1.6m people who have directly benefited from projects funded by USD4.86m in UK grants. Projects are delivered by Syrians themselves who identify, design and implement following a process that demands and rewards transparency, participation and accountability. Tamkeen is predominantly delivered by Syrians. Of the 111 staff on the programme 105 speak Arabic fluently and 93 are Syrian (85%).

Tamkeen is also breaking the taboo of female involvement in governance. We have worked to empower Syrian women to deliver projects with a value of over USD860,000, reaching 238,000 beneficiaries, the majority of these projects directly benefitting women and girls.

Communities where local people have used Tamkeen funding to deliver basic services have achieved the following results:

- 100,931 children benefitting from repaired or heated schools and teachers whose salaries are being paid
- 141,204 Syrians have benefitted from repaired and equipped medical facilities
- 57,065 Syrian women have accessed repaired and equipped maternal child health centres
- 225,000 Syrians have improved access to electricity
- 226,000 Syrians have improved access to water

Attitudes and behaviour have changed too. Local councils in opposition-held areas want to adopt Tamkeen's transparent financial and procurement models. By bringing representatives together for a common goal, animosities and infighting between groups are channelled into healthy discussion.

Tamkeen is a pioneer in the UK's approach to delivering stabilisation projects in conflict zones. It has exceeded all its performance targets for the Department for International Development and in its last Annual Review received an A++.



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