



**Evaluation for project titled: “Life-saving Cash Support to Conflict-Affected Communities in Northeast Syria”**

**Background:** DCA has provided life-saving support to conflict affected communities in North East Syria (NES) since 2015 through the delivery of shelter, NFIs, food security, multipurpose cash, protection, and humanitarian mine action (HMA) support. With funding from the USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), DCA provides monthly Cash for Food (C4F) support to approximately 4,100 (CL5) households in order to address the food needs and improve the well-being of conflict affected families in target areas.

**Evaluation purpose:** The overarching objective of the final evaluation focuses on the assessment of the appropriateness, timeliness, relevance, and overall effectiveness of the intervention to achieve its objective of enabling vulnerable and displaced HHs to meet their food needs through the distribution of cash for food, both supporting HH access to essential goods and services while also stimulating local markets in conflict-affected urban communities. Additionally, the evaluation will aim to assess outcomes of the project in line with project indicators (as detailed below).

**Objective of evaluation:**

- a) Achievements of the activity in relation to the goal, sector objectives, and targets;
- b) Relevance of cash for food as modality for improving food security amongst vulnerable HHs in NES, including its value in providing a transition to medium term resilience building;
- c) Process evaluation against PANEL principles (participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and linking to rights);
- d) Best practices, lessons learned, strengths, and challenges in the activity design;
- e) Changes - expected and unexpected, positive and negative - were experienced by the targeted beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

**Evaluation Criteria:** The evaluation will be informed by and structured around the OECD/DCA criteria with questions framed to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of actions and achievements.<sup>1</sup>

**The main audience of the evaluation and dissemination of report:**

- DCA - Syria country office and globally
- Food Security and Cash working groups in NES, and other Working Groups which might benefit from the disseminated report;
- USAID and other potential DCA donors.

DCA will, internally and together with partners, discuss findings and take them into account in the design, planning and implementation of the future programming.

By the end of the evaluation, DCA will discuss the general findings as mentioned above and will take concrete actions on recommendations relevant for their respective activities.

**Evaluation type:** The evaluation will be a summative evaluation of the project`s processes, relevance and effectiveness made with regard to improving access to food, basic goods and services, and reducing use of negative and irreversible coping strategies by the assisted population.

<b><i>Table 1: Project Outcome Indicators to be measured</i></b>
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Indicator	Target value	Type of assistance
% of HHs with poor, borderline, and acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS)	Acceptable >30% Borderline >35% Poor < 35%	C4F
Mean and median Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI)	<10	
% of HHs with moderate and severe HH Hunger Scale (HHS) scores	< 20%	
% of HHs where women/men reported participating in decisions on the use of food assistance	>50%	

**Table 2: Evaluation questions (guiding) <sup>2</sup>**

Criteria	Questions
Relevance	Was the planning and timing of the Cash Transfer (C4F) adequate to the local context? How was this perceived by different groups?
Effectiveness	To what extent were the project objectives achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the project objectives? What approaches did the project use to include gender, age, disability and what was the impact of the project on the gender equity and related issues? How far the coordination mechanism contributed efficiently to the achievement of the project's objectives and what was DCA's contribution towards enhancing active participation in the relevant coordination mechanisms?
Efficiency	How cost- effective was the project? Was the project implemented in the most efficient manner and with the best use of the existing resources? What other cost- effective alternatives could have been used taking into consideration the lesson learnt from this project?
Sustainability	Is the project sustainable for the targeted population? How would you improve/ complete the project with other activities, so the intervention is more sustainable in the future? What exit strategy options were to put in place to ensure that the end of the project does not negatively affect the welfare of the assisted people?
Impact	What were the intended and unintended, positive and negative impacts of the project, as perceived by the assisted people, on their lives and on their communities? Has the intervention enhanced resilience for the BNFs, are they better equipped to (after this intervention) ready to build upon this intervention?

**Evaluation methods:** The evaluation requires collaborative and participatory mixed methods approach that was drawn on both existing and new quantitative and qualitative data to answer the evaluation questions.

**Quantitative:** Quantitative aspects of project aim to measure the project outcomes by using monitoring reports and collecting data from the targeted beneficiaries, ensuring equal gender representation wherever possible.

<sup>2</sup> These are guiding questions for the external evaluation, final survey questions will be defined in collaboration with the external evaluation consultant, once contracted.

Quantitative data collection tools to be utilised include:

- HH Surveys- direct beneficiary surveys conducted assessing HH food security and vulnerability against assessment / baseline and post distribution monitoring (PDM) data – beneficiary- based surveys (BBS).
- Trader and Consumer Surveys- non-beneficiary (community member) surveys with traders and consumers within markets where cash was distributed will aim to see trader capacities (storage, restocking, etc.), price trends, and challenges in supply chain and changes in the market since the cash intervention was implemented.

**Qualitative:** This is to acquire in-depth information based on the evaluation areas and around the overall and specific objectives of the program. A suggestion is to use sex and age disaggregated focus group discussions (FGD) and be gender balanced when conducting FGDs and Key informant interviews.

Qualitative data will include:

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**- these will be held with community leaders, community groups' members, local authorities and civil society heads, informing on the larger impact of the cash programming at the community level.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**- will be held with both beneficiaries (participants) and non-beneficiaries (community members) from CL4, CL5 and CL6 from various demographic groups, including women, men, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. Similar to KIIs, FGDs will look at the community level impact and perceptions of the intervention and how these perceptions vary amongst various demographic groups.

### **Sample Size Calculation**

An external consultant will be responsible for devising data collection tools and establishing plans for data collection including targeted number of respondents. While the exact data collection plan will be provided by the consultant, DCA will require a minimum of 360 HH surveys be conducted for the end-line evaluation. The sample of 360 HHs will be chosen among the overall estimated target beneficiary population of 4,100 HHs (CL5) based on 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Random sampling will be used in the PDM data collection, convenience sampling with the Consumers and purposive sampling with the Traders.

An external consultant will also share the detailed plan outlining the sample and methodology for qualitative data collection (DCA will require to conduct a minimum of 9 FGDs (3 per locations) and 15 KIIs (5 per location) including local authorities, community leaders and representatives, DCA staff). Purposive sampling will be used for the KIIs and FGDs.

The data within the tools will be collected using local enumerators, who will be trained by the evaluation consultant. Data collection will be done using tablets, compiled onto the KOBO online data platform, cleaned, and analysed by the external consultant.

### **Beneficiary participation (stakeholders to interview):**

The evaluation will include interviews with relevant stakeholders both in the target area, more specifically key informants for individual interviews and focus groups should include:

- Beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, IDPs, host community and returnees (HH who received cash)
- Local Authorities (Humanitarian Affairs Office - HAO)

- Community Leaders (Kumins) and representatives (women's groups, youth groups, traders)
- Program team members

The methods applied shall include participatory techniques and tools like mapping, surveys, focus group and semi-structural in-depth interviews with key informants and target population.

**Ethical guidelines:** It is expected that the evaluation will adhere to ethical guidelines as outlined in the Code of Conduct for contractors (ethical principles and standards will be shared with the consultancy contract). It will include the following:

1. **Informed Consent:** All participants are expected to provide informed consent following standard consent protocols.
2. **Systematic Inquiry:** Evaluators conduct systematic inquiries.
3. **Competence:** Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
4. **Integrity/Honesty:** Evaluators display honesty and integrity in their own behaviour, and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
5. **Respect for People:** Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders. It is expected that the evaluator will obtain the informed consent of participants to ensure that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate.
6. **Responsibilities for Information Management:** Evaluators act and take into account the necessity to manage sensitive information on location, scope and connections of operation in line with the local and wider humanitarian community interest to not endanger lifesaving aid.

**Evaluation timeline and deliverables:** The evaluation is planned to kick off from 2<sup>nd</sup> week of July 2023. The approximate time of the assignment is 8 weeks.

The Key outputs expected from the evaluation are:

- Evaluation tools in English and Arabic
- Enumerator training
- Findings of programme achievements in improving self-sufficiency
- Recommendations for improving food security programming
- Review of current targeting criteria for the vulnerable population, and identification of improved entry points for the vulnerable people who are in need, but not qualified for assistance
- Final evaluation report (addressing DCA's comments)

A final report outlining the evaluation, recommendations, and next steps (lesson learnt) will be provided by the evaluator within 3 weeks of the last data collection (sample structure of the report is as below). As well, evaluation design should be shared prior to the task and evaluation data made available to DCA in an easy-to-read format that is organized and fully documented for use by those not familiar with the project or evaluation. DCA has sole ownership of all the final data and any findings shall not be reproduced or shared without the written permission of DCA.

- 1) Executive Summary
- 2) Introduction
- 3) Methodology, including sampling frame
- 4) Limitations of the evaluation

- 5) Analysis and findings of the study, both quantitative and qualitative. Should specify how the qualitative data was analysed, and how the data compared to desk reviews.
- 6) Evidence of success/failures
- 7) Conclusions, recommendations, lessons learned and best practices
- 8) Annexes
  - a) Relevant maps and photographs of the study areas
  - b) Bibliography of consulted secondary sources
  - c) Finalized data collection tools (in English and Arabic)
  - d) A clean dataset including all interview transcripts and recordings (both quantitative and qualitative) in agreed format.

**Table 4: Proposed evaluation timeline**

Duration	Activity	Evaluation deliverables
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inception meeting between DCA and Consultant to review ToRs, clarify timeframe and deliverables, expectations and logistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minutes of meetings</li> <li>▪ Inception report</li> </ul>
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake desk review of the relevant program documents.</li> </ul>	
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hire Enumerators/Surveyors.</li> <li>▪ Train Enumerators/Surveyors; Pre-test data collection instruments.</li> <li>▪ Finalize data collection instruments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluation tools in English and Arabic (HH survey, FGDs, KII) designed and tested</li> </ul>
Week 2-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct data collection</li> <li>▪ Oversee data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data collection completed in all targeted locations</li> </ul>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encode and analyse data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Database (raw data)</li> </ul>
Week 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepare draft evaluation report (including a success story and a learning story)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft evaluation report for DCA review</li> </ul>
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct debrief meeting to present draft report, collect initial feedback from DCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minutes of meeting with DCA to present key findings of the evaluation</li> </ul>
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DCA to provide detailed feedback to the draft report</li> </ul>	
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finalize report, produce presentation of findings, and share back with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Final evaluation reports with comments addressed (including executive summary, methodology, results and supporting analysis, lessons learnt and recommendation) including all raw data, original field notes for all in- depth interviews conducted</li> <li>▪ Presentations of results to DCA</li> </ul>

The final evaluation report should not exceed 40 pages, and offer a concise, readable, overview of the outcomes of the project. Recommendations will be structured towards different levels of responsibility: donors / DCA/ local partners / authorities. The evaluation report will be reviewed against the Evaluation Policy's "Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report" as described in Appendix I of the USAID Evaluation Policy.<sup>3</sup>

**Logistics arrangements, and additional support:** DCA will provide the following references and resources - those relevant to the project - to the consultant:

- Project proposal
- Monthly and semi-annual reports
- Distribution monitoring reports
- Market assessments, Consumer and Trader`s Interviews, FGDs, baseline and Post Distribution Monitoring

Any further information can be provided upon request.

### **Evaluator profile:**

- *External evaluator (firm) requirements:*

#### *Essential:*

- Lead evaluator having university level education in research related field
- Background in the Middle East (NES will be preferred)
- Fluency in English and Arabic is required (Arabic for assistant consultant is acceptable, in case)
- Experience evaluating USAID funded programmes focusing on food security and cash-based interventions.
- 5 to 8 years of experience working in and knowledge of emergency contexts
- Proven experience in conducting programs evaluations or research (at least 6 previous projects)
- Demonstrated experience in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques, especially in emergency operations.
- Strong analytical skills and ability to clearly synthesize and present findings, draw practical conclusions, make recommendations and to prepare well-written reports in a timely manner.
- Experience in undertaking field-based research/evaluations
- Experience with gender sensitive programming and knowledge of gender-sensitive evaluation methods
- Willingness to travel to the field (given the specific context);

#### **Preferential requirements:**

- *Experience working in NES would be advantageous, but not required.*
- Proven experience in providing interactive trainings on cash assistance programming

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<sup>3</sup> Please see here: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>



### Management of the Evaluation

The evaluation will be directly implemented and managed by the selected consultancy firm in collaboration with DCA Syria. The MEAL Coordinator and Head of Programmes will monitor implementation and provide quality assurance throughout the process.

### Application Process

Qualified firms are requested to submit technical and financial proposals. The proposals must include, but are not limited to, the following items:

- A. A corporate profile highlighting the bidder’s qualifications and relevant experience
- B. An outline of how this evaluation will be completed (remotely and / or using existing contacts in target locations within NES).
- C. A description of how the bidder will address the evaluation objectives and evaluation criteria.
- D. A detailed methodology including sampling approaches, a work plan and any suggestions to improve the outcomes of the assignment.
- E. Include at least two reports from similar evaluations that were accomplished by the bidder in the last three years with particular emphasis on projects of similar scope and effort. (in English) It is desirable that a summary of the past projects be included in the proposal. These reports or work products may be attached as an appendix to the proposal. Please include the following information:
  - Name of client
  - Title of the project
  - Year and duration of the project, including timelines between intermediate steps, such as time duration between RFP and proposal, proposal and project initiation, project initiation and first milestone, etc.
  - References / contact details (emails and telephone numbers) of organizations where the firm conducted similar evaluations

### Description of Personnel

For ease of reference, DCA has defined the following categories of consultants/personnel. Bidders are free to provide alternative titles/descriptions for each of the designations used below:

<i>Table 4: Description of Personnel</i>				
	<b>Role</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Number of Personnel</b>	<b>Names with Submitted Resumes</b>
1	Lead Consultant			
2	Assistant Consultants			
3	Junior Consultants			

### Evaluation Process

Each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on price. The proposal obtaining the overall highest score - after adding the scores of the technical and financial components – is that which offers best value for money, and thus selected for the contract.

Proposals submitted will be evaluated against the following elements:

### A: Technical Proposal

The total amount of points allocated for the technical component is 100. DCA evaluators will read the submission and give scores according to the table below. Only bidders that obtain 65 points and above from the technical evaluation will be considered for the financial evaluation stage.

<b>Technical Evaluation Criteria (80%)</b>		<b>Max. Points</b>
<b>1. Overall Response</b>		<b>35</b>
1.1	Completeness of the technical proposal with reference to requirements outlined in the <i>Application Process</i> section above	15
1.2	Quality and completeness of the proposed work plan to achieve the evaluation objectives	20
<b>2. Overall Experience of the Firm and Key Personnel</b>		<b>45</b>
2.1	Relevant experience in leading remote and large-scale evaluations for integrated projects in middle east or other humanitarian contexts	20
2.2	Quality of evaluation reports from previous engagements <sup>4</sup>	10
2.3	Capacity to provide sufficient team members in NES for the scale and scope of work required	15
<b>3. Proposed Methodology and Approach</b>		<b>20</b>
3.1	Detailed methodology that aligns with evaluation objectives and the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria	20

### B. Financial Proposal

The Candidate shall indicate in his/her proposal his/her proposed global remuneration for the performance of the Services. The proposed global remuneration shall cover all obligations of the successful Candidate under the Contract (without depending on actual time spent on the assignment) and all matters and things necessary for the proper execution and completion of the Services and the remedying of any deficiencies therein.

The total amount of points allocated for the price component is 20 and will be calculated as a weighted score inversely proportional.

In case of any inquiries, contact DCA MEAL Coordinator at: [alza@dca.dk](mailto:alza@dca.dk) keeping [ayle@dca.dk](mailto:ayle@dca.dk) in copy of the emails.

<sup>4</sup> DCA will conduct referrals check of the winning bidder once selected, thus recommendations from previous clients, preferably for evaluation assignments of a similar scope, will have to be provided.