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# PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

## RESTORE I - Northwest Syria, 2020-2021

October 2021

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# **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION – RESTORE I PROJECT**

**INTEGRATED RESPONSE TO FOOD SECURITY, MPCA,  
NUTRITION, SHELTER, AND WASH IN NORTHWEST SYRIA**

October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## **DISCLAIMER**

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

# CONTENTS

- Figures and Tables ..... 5
- Acronyms..... 6
- Executive Summary ..... 7
- Project Background..... 12
  - Context of operation – 2021 ..... 12
  - Project rationale ..... 13
    - Food Security (food kits, vouchers, RTEs, bakery support) ..... 14
    - Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)..... 14
    - Shelter ..... 15
    - Nutrition..... 15
    - WASH..... 15
- BHA Agenda in Syria..... 16
  - Overview..... 16
  - BHA Focus areas for Syria in 2021 ..... 16
  - Cross-Cutting Areas ..... 17
- Evaluation Methodology..... 19
  - Purpose..... 19
  - Methodology concept ..... 19
  - Sources of information ..... 20
- Profile of surveyed beneficiaries..... 22
- Challenges & limitations ..... 24
- Findings..... 25
  - Relevance ..... 25
  - Effectiveness ..... 32
  - Coherence ..... 38
  - Efficiency..... 41
  - Impact ..... 45
  - Sustainability ..... 55
  - Learning..... 58
- Conclusive Recommendations ..... 62
- Annexes ..... 67

# FIGURES AND TABLES

- Figure 1 - Map: USAID USG Response to the Complex Emergency in Syria..... 18
- Figure 2 - Relevance of assistance to the needs of children within the beneficiary HH, by aid modality..26
- Figure 3 - Relevance of assistance to the needs of Persons with Disabilities, by aid modality.....27
- Figure 4 - Relevance of assistance to the needs of elderlies (65+) within the beneficiary HH, by aid modality..... 27
- Figure 5 - Beneficiary’s satisfaction with the transition from paper to e-vouchers..... 28
- Figure 6 - Top 2 categories of spending for beneficiaries of MPCA and voucher .....29
- Figure 7 - Beneficiaries informed about the modality and time of assistance in a timely fashion.....36
- Figure 8 - Familiarity and use of the CRM System..... 37
- Figure 9 - Household Hunger Scale (HHS) score, by aid modality..... 46
- Figure 10 - Sufficiency of food stocks to meet household needs in the previous seven days..... 48
- Figure 11 - Capability of beneficiary HH to meet its priority basic needs in the past month, by aid modality..... 49
- Figure 12 - Accessibility of Distribution Location and Accountability of Distribution Process.....51
- Figure 13 - HHs holding adequate access to NFIs, by aid modality.....51
- Figure 14 - MPCA/Voucher and MPCA standalone HHs observing a change in WASH related expenditures ..... 52
- Figure 15 - Short and mid-term impact generated by the Project, by assistance modality .....56
  
- Table 1 - Food Consumption Score of beneficiary HHs, by aid modality..... 47
- Table 2 - Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) of targeted households, by aid modality ..... 47
- Table 3 - % of BNFs reporting a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory (SAAP) manner ..... 49
- Table 4 - Age, Sex, diversity disaggregation of BNFs reporting SAAP .....50
- Table 5 - Average days of application of food consumption coping strategies over the previous week...56

# ACRONYMS

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (Turkey)
AQ	Al-Qaeda
AoO	Area of Operation
ARR	Annual Results Report
ARF	Assistance Received Forms
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BMS	Breast Milk Substitutes
CARI	Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security
CBR-TWG	Cash-Based Responses Technical Working Group
CM	Cost Modification
CoH	Cessation of Hostilities
DDP	Delivery Duty Paid
DFID	UK Department for International Development (merged into FCDO)
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
FAO	U.N Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFP	Office of Food for Peace (merged into BHA)
FFR	Family Food Rations
FSA	Free Syria Army
FSL	Food Security and Livelihood
FY	Fiscal Year
GoR	Government of Russia
GoS	Government of Syria
HH	Household
HLG	Humanitarian Liaison Group
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
HNO	UN Humanitarian Needs Overview
IDP	Internal Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISIS	Islamic State in Syria and Iraq
JAN	Jabhat Al Nusra
JFS	Jabhat Fateh al-Sham
JMM	Joint Market Monitoring
LC	Local Council
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL/MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning / Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance

MT	Metric Ton
M-IYCF	Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition
MUAC	Middle Upper Arm Circumference
NCE	Non-Cost Extension
NFI	Non-Food Item
NLF	National Liberation Front
NSRF	North Syria Response Facility
NWG	Nutrition Working Group
OCA	Organization Capacity Assessment
OFDA	Office of U.S Foreign Disaster Assistance
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PIMS	Program Information Management System
PLW	Pregnant or Lactating Woman
PV	Paper Voucher
PWD(s)	Persons with Disabilities
RC	Relief Committee
RDA	Recommended Daily Allowance
RuAF	Russian Airforce
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
SYP	Syrian Pound
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VAT	Value Added Tax
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
WFP	World Food Program
WoS	Whole of Syria

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The overarching purpose of the evaluation was to assess GOAL’s performance and delivery of the RESTORE I Project (“the Project”), with a multisectoral focus (Food Security, MPCA, Nutrition, Shelter and Settlements, and WASH sectors combined). The evaluation tested the Project’s Theory of Change (ToC) and assumptions; it assessed the Project’s relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, sustainability and learning against the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria; and established progress against key indicators. This exercise intended to help GOAL to improve its future programming through the identification of lessons learned and best practices generated under this Project. The evaluation aimed at complementing the Project’s internal monitoring, by providing an external independent assessment of GOAL’s performance as an exercise of accountability towards the donor and the beneficiaries at its final implementation stage. The key audiences for the evaluation include GOAL’s Project teams, technical and senior management teams, technical advisors/director at HQ level as well as the three partners Big Heart, IhsanRD, and Shafak. Indirect users include USAID/BHA, other donors, federal, regional, and local governments, ministries; United Nations Agencies and FS global clusters, NGO consortia, as well as humanitarian learning platforms (i.e., ALNAP).

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Starting from June 2020 up to August 2021, GOAL and its Syrian partners (IhsanRD Big Heart, Shafak) implemented the RESTORE Project (“the Project”) – as continuation of previous Program SUSTAIN II, with expanded sectoral response - supported by the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) office of USAID. The Project aimed at increasing the resilience of conflict-affected and vulnerable households (HHs) through the delivery of an integrated package of assistance that addresses Food Security, Nutrition, Shelter, WASH, and basic needs. The Project targeted several locations across Idleb and Aleppo Governorates, with a view to maximizing impact and the numbers of vulnerable people reached. To achieve in the above, the Project aimed at focusing on five thematic areas governed by their set of purpose indicators:

Sector	Purpose indicators	Modalities
<b>Food Security</b>	Targeted HHs have increased access to diverse and nutritious food	Food kits, vouchers, cash for food, ready to eat kits (RTEs), bakery support
<b>Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)</b>	Targeted HHs report an increased capacity to meet their HH needs	MPCA for basic needs (as a complement to food assistance, as well as a one-time response after an emergency event.)
<b>Shelter</b>	Targeted displaced HHs have safe and dignified housing	Shelter repairs and winterization assistance
<b>Nutrition</b>	Reduce the risk of malnutrition amongst children under five and women of reproductive age and enable the target group to identify it early and seek treatment	Maternal Infant and Young Child Feeding (M-IYCF) and Middle Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) training
<b>WASH</b>	Targeted HHs have access to adequate water and sanitation services enabling them to maintain health	Water supply, Camp support (Sanitation, Hygiene promotion, hygiene kits, environmental health, waste collection)



## EVALUATION QUESTIONS, DESIGN, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Given the multisectoral nature of the Project, the evaluation gathered evidence of the overall performance against the OECD-DAC criteria by deploying qualitative and quantitative approaches and comparing collected data against intended outcome indicators. The quantitative methods of gauging purpose indicators ensured consistency with GOAL's internal reporting and baseline calculations. The evaluation against OECD-DAC criteria reviewed the Project in its entirety, without analyzing and presenting results on sector level. To satisfy the spectrum of information required within the scope of the evaluation, MECS collected and analyzed both secondary and primary data sources. Based on the evaluation questions and GOAL's requirements, MECS developed an analysis framework during the inception phase, containing a set of indicators designed to inform the development of the primary data collection tools. The framework informed the set of questions and tools developed to guide secondary data analysis, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Household (HH) level interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Once collected, the findings of the different information sources were coded and processed, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques, according to a combined analytical approach. The analysis framework also informed the analytical approach, and triangulation of different sources of information.

The evaluation was launched in mid-May 2021, with the tentative plan to conduct data collection activities by early July, and to conclude the analysis and reporting by the end of July. The initial timeframe would have allowed collecting data from beneficiaries right upon the distribution of assistance, and delivery the final evaluation report earlier during the initial phases of RESTORE II Project. The inception phase of the evaluation, however, required longer than expected, taking up to two months to complete the inception report and the data collection tools. The delay in the finalization of the inception phase pushed the start of the data collection activities, as well as the finalization of the report, and affected the quality and relevance of some elements of the evaluation. On the other hand, pushing the data collection activity enabled the inclusion of Shelter and Nutrition components, which would have been otherwise excluded by the evaluation in case all primary data was collected by early July 2021.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

OECD-DAC criteria	Summary findings
<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, the assistance under this Project was found largely relevant to the needs of the beneficiary HHs, including children, Persons with Disabilities, older people, and women</li> <li>With a focus on food security, the Project responded to the highest priority needs of the population</li> <li>GOAL and partners successfully mitigated tangible challenges associated to the beneficiary selection process</li> <li>The targeting criteria were effective to allow for the targeting of the most vulnerable HHs – albeit not all the vulnerable HHs</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Project met most of the target and impact indicators, except for the MPCA/voucher modality, where not all impact indicators were achieved. This, however, might have been affected by a technical limitation of the evaluation process, namely the delayed data collection</li> <li>GOAL and partners managed to develop several solutions and adaptations to the fluid security situation and delivered its intended outputs, with limited delays</li> </ul>

	<p>to some activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The communication with beneficiaries regarding the Project delivery was generally effective, but more effort is needed to inform voucher beneficiaries on the modality</li> </ul>
<b>Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Project aligned with the key priorities set by BHA as well as by the UN for the humanitarian response in northern Syria, and its design maximized synergies with other activities implemented by GOAL</li> <li>The coordination among GOAL and IPs was instrumental; the participation in the cluster mechanisms promoted transparency and assisted in the coordination with other actors</li> <li>The Project team undertook regular and open communication with the local authorities, with differences between the governorates</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Project modalities promoted extensive synergies, complementing different types of assistance for the same beneficiary HHs, and transitioning beneficiaries from emergency assistance to medium-term support</li> <li>The Project modalities were suitable to the local market conditions, especially food kits, vouchers/MPCA, bakery support, and Shelter support</li> <li>The voucher/MPCA modality was particularly cost-efficient, considering the costs related to its mobilization, its alignment to the local market conditions, and the ability to cover multisectoral needs</li> <li>The quality of the human resources deployed by GOAL and partners under the Project were strong in most departments, while some shortages in human resources were observed</li> <li>The Project had sufficient financial scale to deliver its intended outputs</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance under this Project was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner, with no difference observed around any specific modality or sector of assistance</li> <li>The Project succeeded in reaching its targets when it comes to the rCSI and HHS scores</li> <li>The cash distribution modality was flexible to the beneficiaries' needs. While the e-voucher system suffered from temporary suspension and technical challenges, cash ensured a continuous assistance flow</li> <li>Project modalities that applied eligibility criteria, such as food kits distribution or vouchers/MPCA, caused some tensions at community level for non-beneficiaries</li> <li>An unintended negative effect caused by the Project was the beneficiary's dependance on GOAL's assistance</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some elements of the Project contributed to the sustainability of the living situation of beneficiary HHs, especially the WASH and Shelter components</li> <li>The provision of regular food assistance generated only limited sustainability</li> <li>The Project did not have an exit strategy in place. GOAL continued some of the operations under a new grant (WASH), other activities changed the beneficiary lists based on revised vulnerability criteria</li> <li>The main sustainability consideration while transitioning Project activities to</li> </ul>

	RESTORE II was the introduction of Livelihood support activities
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Project team conducted multiple learning initiatives and dedicated increasing attention and resources to this process across the different departments and partner organizations</li> <li>• GOAL conducted several programmatic reviews during Project implementation. Most of these considerations contributed to the revised design of the subsequent RESTORE II grant</li> <li>• GOAL program management and the M&amp;E and Learning departments were engaged in extensive consultations and regularly communicated their findings on the progress of field activities internally and externally</li> <li>• The final evaluation of the previous grant was undertaken after the closure of the previous grant, and the evaluation report was finalized at a time when RESTORE I had already started. Drawing from this experience, GOAL launched the inception phase of the final evaluation of RESTORE I a couple of months before the original end of the grant</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

*(For a comprehensive description of recommendations, please refer to p.62)*

### **Programmatic:**

- The procurement of external advisory services should always consider the programmatic and operational needs of PM/coordination staff (for example, by involving project managers and coordinators in the development of terms of references for these services)
- The availability of teams from different departments to support each other is an important risk management measure, but the Project team should aim at recruiting staff as early as possible ahead of Project start (for example, to advertise positions with the note that recruitment is subject to the availability of funding)
- Ensure that actors engaged in the distribution and in the use of cash are always aware of COVID-19 preventive measures. This includes ensuring that safe distancing is applied, and that sufficient information on the importance of preventive measures is provided to the beneficiaries

### **MPCA/Voucher assistance:**

- E-vouchers are preferred to paper vouchers, but initially, their system caused temporary interruptions, and its functioning needs improvement. This includes missing features of the E-voucher technology, for example the information how much credit is left for the beneficiary
- The MPCA/voucher modality is highly relevant to the needs of the community, but the use of impact indicators should be revised
- To promote the sustainability of livelihoods, the impact of multi-purpose cash assistance could be maximized by training the beneficiaries on spending of cash assistance for the improvement of their livelihoods, improved financial planning, and opportunities of investment
- Sharing the same categories of beneficiaries between different modality improves the efficiency of assistance
- Community members needs to be better informed about eligibility and exclusion criteria

## **WASH:**

- Access to water in camps should be enhanced, and awareness sessions on hygiene and sanitation should continue
- Beneficiaries of WASH activities in Kaebbeh camp need to be better familiarized with formal CFM
- Internet connectivity with local water units need to be improved

## **WASH/Bakery support:**

- The WASH and the bakery components strengthen GOAL's access and acceptance and reputation at community level and should continue as a strategic priority

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning:**

- The experience of the learning review workshop was valuable to the team and should be brought to larger scale
- Final evaluation exercises expose their full potential when delivered before the Project ends, and before the upcoming grant starts. This should be taken into consideration for the next evaluation.

# **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

## **CONTEXT OF OPERATION – 2021**

As to beginning of 2021, continued civilian casualties and forced displacement due to ongoing hostilities, in addition to reduced access to already degraded basic services, limited and inadequate housing and shelter options, and a wide array of specific protection risks, and concerns continued to cause and perpetuate humanitarian needs among the population inside Syria.

According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO),<sup>1</sup> in Northwest Syria (NWS), the ripple effects of the economic downturn - including the loss of income and livelihoods, sharply reduced purchasing power, and resulting financial unaffordability of food and other basic goods - had exacerbated living conditions for people who were already in humanitarian need, and had tipped previously less affected segments of the population into humanitarian need, including food insecurity, across the country. The economic deterioration had financially squeezed families further. Of the assessed households in Syria, 82% reported a significant deterioration in their ability to meet basic needs since August 2019, mainly due to price increases and loss of income.<sup>2</sup>

With the WASH, Health and Education infrastructure considered poorly or non-functional in 48% of all sub-districts,<sup>3</sup> access to basic services was severely hampered and increasingly unaffordable. This is particularly the case for over 1.9 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) sheltering in informal

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<sup>1</sup> UN-OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) – Syrian Arab Republic, March 2021

<sup>2</sup> UN-OCHA Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA), October 2020

<sup>3</sup> HNO for Health, Education and WASH Sectors, January 2021, based on a composite severity indicator capturing the functionality of primary health care centers, piped water access and ratio of fully functioning classrooms to school-age population at sub-district level.

settlements, spontaneous displacement camps and collective shelters, which offer inadequate protection against the elements and increase the risk of epidemic-prone diseases among this population.

At the same time, millions of people across Syria continued living in damaged housing, particularly along former frontlines, with those paying rent now struggling more than before to do so. Facing deteriorated living standards, families were increasingly adopting harmful coping mechanisms. Since August 2019, 71% of households and 75% of female-headed households have taken on more debt.<sup>4</sup>

About one-third (28%) of assessed families adopted ‘crisis’ or ‘emergency’ food related coping strategies, including withdrawing children from school to have them work instead, selling property, migrating due to lack of food and early child marriage.<sup>5</sup> Worsening living standards and an increase in harmful coping strategies had led additional segments of the population to develop life-threatening physical and mental health needs.

These included a 57% increase in the number of food-insecure people to 12.4 million (up from 7.9 million in early 2020). Of these, 1.27 million people were considered severely food insecure – twice as many as in early 2020.<sup>6</sup>

In line with this trend, malnutrition rates had continued to peak, with more than 500,000 children under the age of five chronically malnourished and 90,000 acutely malnourished.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the country with nearly 47,000 cases confirmed in Syria, including at least 1,972 deaths as of mid-March 2021, further straining the health system and reducing people's access to both emergency and non-emergency care. In 2021, the increased scope and inter-linked nature of humanitarian needs among the population in Syria required a comprehensive response across all sectors to save lives, protect people and prevent further deprivation (HNO 2021).

For a detailed context analysis, please refer to sections 2.1, 2.2 of the Inception Report [see Annex II]

## PROJECT RATIONALE

Starting from June 2020 up to August 2021, GOAL and its partners (IhsanRD Big Heart, Shafak) implemented the RESTORE Project – as continuation of previous Program SUSTAIN II, with expanded sectoral response - supported by USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

The Project aimed at increasing the resilience of conflict-affected and vulnerable households (HHs) through the delivery of an integrated package of assistance that addresses Food Security, Nutrition, Shelter, WASH, and basic needs. The Project targeted several locations across Idleb, Northern Aleppo, and Western Aleppo Governorates, with a view to maximizing impact and the numbers of vulnerable people reached.

The Theory of Change of the Project stated:

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<sup>4</sup> UN-OCHA MSNA, October 2020

<sup>5</sup> Households reported employing one or several of these strategies in the 30 days prior to being surveyed. HNO for Food Security and Agriculture (FSA) Sector, January 2021

<sup>6</sup> HNO for FSA Sector, January 2021

<sup>7</sup> HNO for Nutrition Sector, January 2021

*“If households are supported with food and basic needs assistance through market-based programming and investments are made in maintaining and extending public infrastructure that provides shelter, clean water, and sanitation then IDP and host community households will be able to meet their basic needs and strengthen household coping strategies enabling them to navigate future displacement and future shocks”*

To achieve in the above, the Project focused on five thematic areas and their set of purpose indicators:

### **Food Security (food kits, vouchers, cash for food, ready to eat kits (RTEs), bakery support)**

Purpose: Targeted HHs have increased access to diverse and nutritious food, via the following modalities:

- **Food kits:** GOAL, in partnership with Big Heart and Shafak, aimed at distributing in-kind food kits to HHs where markets were not functional or accessible, with the plan to gradually shift the modality from food kits to cash/vouchers in Idlib governorate and in three out of four camps in A'zaz. In Afrin district, in-kind modality of food kits was to be maintained.
- **Vouchers:** GOAL planned to transition HHs and communities from the food kit modality towards the use of voucher assistance in locations where market conditions and the security conditions allowed this shift. By the last quarter of implementation of the Project GOAL anticipated that 95% of food assistance would be delivered via vouchers. GOAL planned to distribute e-vouchers (smartcards) to voucher beneficiaries (up to 18% of vouchers beneficiaries). IhsanRD engaged in the e-voucher modality since the start of RESTORE.
- **Cash for Food:** HHs were provided combined cash for food and MPCA for a total of 100 USD with the additional food assistance provided via voucher, depending on HH size.
- **Emergency food assistance:** Under the Project, newly displaced HHs were expected to receive RTEs, cash (MPCA for emergency), and/or food kits via GOAL's emergency response mechanism – the North Syria Response Fund (NSRF).
- **Bakery support:** Under the Project, GOAL planned to provide flour and yeast in exchange for the bakeries producing and facilitating the distribution and sale of bread at subsidized rates. GOAL aimed at supporting 24 bakeries in Idlib for up to 10 distribution cycles in its current food security areas of operations, to enhance access to bread at affordable prices. In Afrin, GOAL planned to support four bakeries in eight distribution rounds, and four bakeries in Afrin in three distribution rounds. In total, 32 bakeries were expected to be supported under the Project.

### **Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)**

Purpose: Targeted HHs report an increased capacity to meet their HH needs, via the following modalities:

- **MPCA for basic needs:** Under the Project, GOAL planned to transfer cash to vulnerable HHs alongside vouchers. GOAL aimed at combining the MPCA and vouchers distributions in double/bi-monthly cycles with 100 USD to each HH. This value accounted for MPCA for NFIs (64%) as well as for Cash for Food (36%) assistance. This dual approach aimed at expediting the distribution process and to increase satisfaction among the beneficiaries. This evaluation termed the modality as 'MPCA/Voucher'.  
In exceptional cases, GOAL aimed at distributing a combination of MPCA and Cash for Food, without vouchers, to single-person HHs (for about 6% of the total sample of MPCA assistance). This evaluation termed the modality as 'MPCA standalone'.

## Shelter

- **Conflict-affected population occupied shelters** - GOAL planned to conduct shelter repairs of 150 owner-occupied residential houses with an average value of the repairs at 1,000 USD/house.
- **IDP-occupied shelters and collective centers** – GOAL aimed at repairing 150 residential houses and 10 collective centers (with an average of 15 HHs per collective center), for a total of 450 HHs. Where GOAL could not identify enough collective shelters in need and meeting the inclusion criteria, GOAL retained the flexibility to instead increase the number of IDP single shelters targeted with shelter repair assistance to reach additional HHs.
- **Winterization** – the winterization activity under the Project was expected to complement GOAL's ECHO and other donors current support (15,000 HHs) by reaching an additional 3,000 HHs in 2020. GOAL planned to provide winterization in the form of a one-off winter cash grant to targeted beneficiaries to meet their fuel needs for the 40 coldest days of the year.

## Nutrition

- **Maternal Infant and Young Child Feeding (M-IYCF) in Emergencies** - GOAL aimed at providing a package of M-IYCF messaging alongside the Family Middle Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) training to the most vulnerable HHs with children under 5 and/or women of reproductive age, who were receiving a modality of food assistance . The primary focus was to reduce the risk of malnutrition amongst children under five and women of reproductive age and enable the target group to identify it early and seek treatment.

## WASH

Purpose: Targeted HHs have access to adequate water and sanitation services enabling them to maintain health, via the following modalities:

- **Water supply** - Water supply activities in both Idleb and Northern Aleppo governorates were planned to include upgrading the water supply infrastructure in Kaebeh camp and Kaebeh village to increase access to improved water. Under the Project, GOAL also aimed at replacing one generator at Sijer water station serving Idleb city. Under the Project, GOAL also planned to provide upgrades and rehabilitation works via the Infrastructure Stabilization component, starting in quarter four, to fund the costs associated with ensuring water pumping to reach supply of 30 L/P/D from June 2020 in Idleb, and to fund the full costs of operating 50 water stations in Idleb in April, May and June 2021. And only 31 stations out of the 50 water stations in July and August as the rest of the stations were supported by other donors starting from 1 July.
- **Camp only - Sanitation** - GOAL's sanitation activities were planned to focus on Kaebeh camp in Northern Aleppo including foul water network installations and repairs, and new connections to selected HHs.
- **Camp only - Hygiene promotion** - GOAL planned to employ four hygiene promoters in Kaebeh camp. The hygiene promoters carried out household visits, organize FGDs, and events in the camp. COVID-19 prevention messaging should be incorporated into all hygiene promotion activities.
- **Camp only - Hygiene kits** – Under the Project, GOAL aimed at distributing comprehensive hygiene kits, every 2 months starting from December 2020 to affected people living in Kaebeh camp.
- **Camp only - Environmental Health** - GOAL was expected to provided fuel inputs to the local council in Tal Arr to facilitate weekly collection and disposal of waste and organize

- quarterly camp clean-up days. Local authorities were responsible for disposal site management.
- **Camp only - Community Waste Collection** - On a quarterly basis, GOAL, in collaboration with camp management and camp leaders, planned to organize community clean-up events to collect debris that is not in receptacles, fill in areas where there is standing water, and cut back on brush or long grass. Community residents were planned to be organized into quadrants and provided with basic tools as needed.

# BHA AGENDA IN SYRIA

## OVERVIEW

In 2020, the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) was established to streamline USAID humanitarian responses, bringing together the expertise and resources of the former USAID Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Food for Peace (FFP).

BHA provides life-saving humanitarian assistance - including food, water, shelter, emergency healthcare, sanitation and hygiene, and critical Nutrition services - to the world's most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach people, including Syrians. This includes helping internally displaced people who have been forced to flee their homes, as well as providing food assistance to refugees who have crossed national borders.

As the lead federal coordinator for international disaster assistance, BHA also collaborates with a network of global humanitarian partners - including UN agencies, other donor governments, NGOs, the private sector, local governments, affected communities, the U.S. military, and other U.S. agencies - to respond to urgent humanitarian needs.

According to its official mission statement<sup>8</sup>, BHA goes beyond the response to disasters. BHA helps crisis-affected communities by building on our humanitarian responses and supporting early recovery efforts that restore and protect basic systems and services. BHA invests in risk reduction programs that prevent or reduce risks associated with chronic and recurrent hazards. It builds the resilience of people, communities, countries, and systems by helping them mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a way that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.

## BHA FOCUS AREAS FOR SYRIA IN 2021

Given the protracted nature of the Syrian conflict, along with the recent economic downturn and health-related shocks caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, USAID/BHA's priorities for the Syria response in FY 2021 are to continue to provide lifesaving assistance that meets Emergency Food, WASH, Health, and Shelter needs.<sup>9</sup>

- **Food assistance**
  - Rapid emergency response - transitioning between emergency response food assistance modalities, including in-kind ready-to-eat rations (RTEs), food vouchers, and cash transfers
  - Monthly food assistance - locally, regionally, and internationally procured (LRIP) in-kind food

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/what-we-do>

<sup>9</sup> Idem



baskets and cash and voucher assistance (CVA) for a minimum of eight months of regular assistance

Bakery intervention - provision of locally or regionally procured flour and yeast to bakeries (provision of up to 50 percent of an existing bakery's flour inputs and financing for maintenance or minor repairs of bakeries and mills)

Supplementary food assistance - to improve the dietary quality of specific groups who have increased nutrient requirements or nutritional risks. This includes children under five, pregnant and lactating women, people with disabilities, the elderly, and others who are at risk of nutritional deficiencies.

- **Health** - Support to health facilities that provide essential primary care, including reproductive and maternal and child health care, prevention and treatment of communicable diseases, care for non-communicable diseases, and mental health care.
- **Shelter and Settlement** - A variety of shelter modalities (i.e emergency shelter kits, light rehabilitation, and repairs) as appropriate to provide an adequately covered living space for the most vulnerable IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable populations without adequate shelter
- **WASH** - A mixture of modalities to address the emergency WASH needs of the most vulnerable populations, such as improving access to WASH facilities, services, and hygiene items.
- **Agriculture** - Livelihood strategies directly related to food production for key agricultural value chains (crops, horticulture, and animal-sourced foods), through targeted assistance packages consisting of critical inputs such as seeds, tools, animals and/or fodder
- **Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS)** - A support for starting or restarting micro-businesses, employment linkages, cash-for-work, market infrastructure rehabilitation, and support to critical market systems.
- **Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)** - MPCA to address recurring basic needs that fall across multiple humanitarian sectors. USAID/BHA also supports one-off, multi-purpose cash interventions as an emergency response
- **Nutrition** - Focus on Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition in Emergencies (MIYCN-E), management of acute malnutrition, and supplemental nutrition assistance.
- **Protection** - Comprehensive, service-based protection programs addressing the overlapping and intersectional needs of affected populations, particularly in the areas of gender-based violence (GBV), mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and child protection.

USAID/BHA grantees engaged in different sectoral responses in FY2021, as outlined in the map below.<sup>10</sup> In the Northwest governorates (Idleb, Aleppo), such response entailed food assistance, health, humanitarian coordination and assessments, livelihoods, MPCA, Nutrition, protection, Shelter, and WASH.

## CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

BHA policy recommends a range of programmatic keys<sup>11</sup> to its grantee organizations, applicable to all sectors of operation:

- **Multi-Sectoral Integration** - integrate activities across sectors to reach those most in need more effectively and efficiently

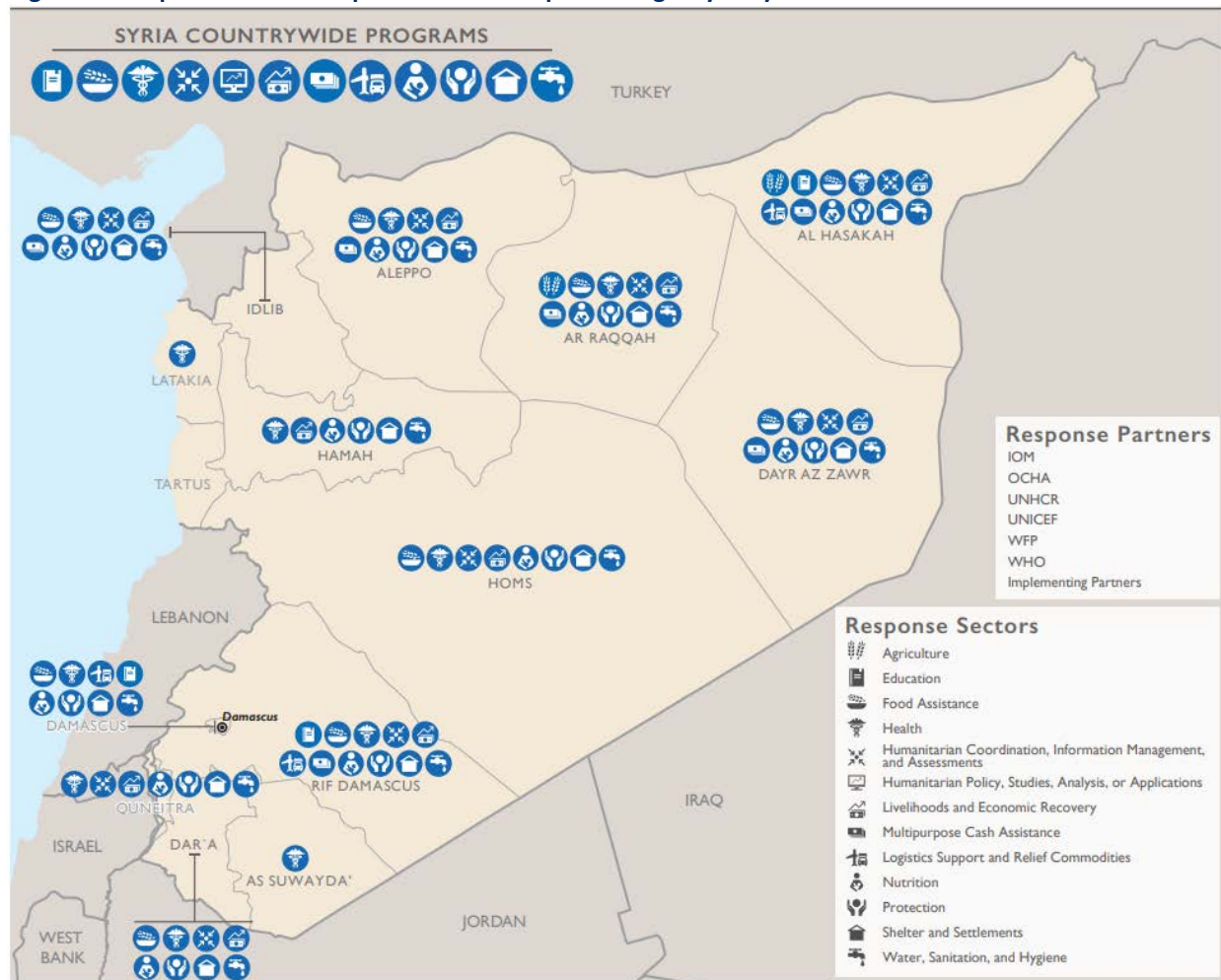
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<sup>10</sup> USAID – USG Syria Complex Emergency Program Map (06.03.2021)

<sup>11</sup> USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) - Supplemental Guidance for Partners in Syria, Fiscal Year 2021

- **Harmonization and Coordination** - harmonization of assistance modalities in line with sectoral guidance in each geographic hub
- **Beneficiary Transfer Ratio** - For all direct transfers of goods or cash/vouchers to beneficiaries (whether one-off or recurrent), most of the budget should be transferred to beneficiaries
- **Flexible Programming** - shift between modalities and sectors across all activities as changing conditions and population displacement may necessitate
- **Evidence-Based Approach** - design and implement programs based on strong evidence, with decisions informed by the triangulation of information from multiple sources
- **Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)** – support of sector-specific standard operating procedures (SOPs) and agreements with local authorities to ensure that the provision of assistance is free of political influences and based on fair vulnerability criteria
- **Safe Programming** - USAID/BHA will prioritize applications that demonstrate meaningful integration of protection mainstreaming/safe programming principles
- **COVID-19 Response** - USAID/BHA leads USAID’s efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 in complex emergencies and address the humanitarian consequences of the pandemic.

Figure 1 – Map: USAID USG Response to the Complex Emergency in Syria



Partner activities are contingent upon access to conflict-affected areas and security concerns.

# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess GOAL's performance and delivery of the RESTORE I Project ("the Project"), with a multisectoral focus (i.e. Food Security, MPCA, Nutrition, Shelter and Settlements, and WASH sectors combined). The evaluation tested the Project's Theory of Change (ToC) and assumptions; it assessed the Project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, sustainability and learning against the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria; and established progress against key indicators. For a full list of the evaluation questions addressed by the evaluation, see [Annex I].

This exercise intended to help GOAL to improve its future programming through the identification of lessons learned and best practices generated under this Project. The evaluation aimed at complementing the Project's internal monitoring, by providing an external independent assessment of GOAL's performance as an exercise of accountability towards the donor and the beneficiaries at its final implementation stage.

The analysis covered the complete period of implementation (June 01, 2020 – August 31, 2021), approaching the different sectors of operation: **Food Security, MPCA, Nutrition, Shelter and Settlements, and WASH combined.**

The evaluation aims at supporting GOAL's Project teams, technical and senior management teams, technical advisors/director at HQ level as well as the three partners Big Heart, IhsanRD, and Shafak. Indirect users include USAID/BHA, other donors, federal, regional, and local governments, ministries; United Nations Agencies and FS global clusters, NGO consortia, as well as humanitarian learning platforms (i.e., ALNAP).

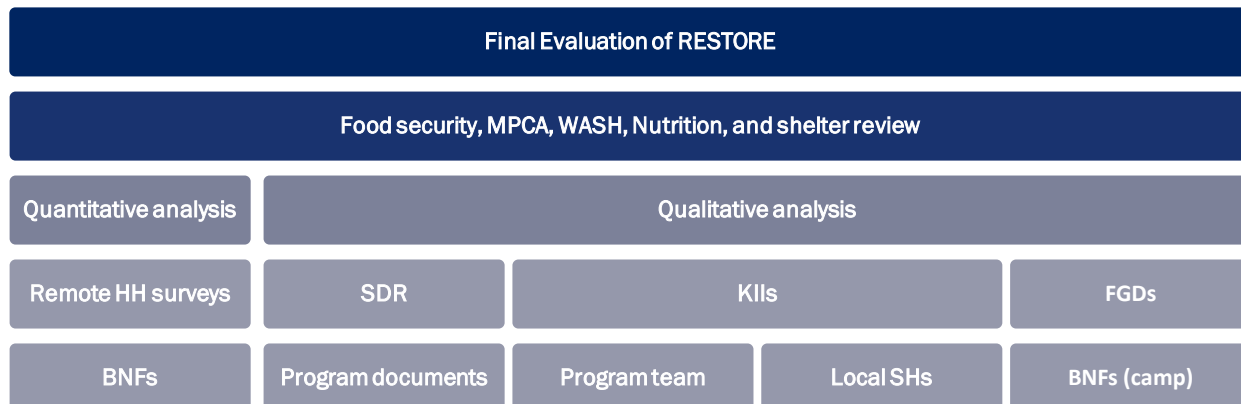
## METHODOLOGY

Given the multisectoral nature of the Project, the evaluation gathered evidence of the overall Project performance against the OECD-DAC criteria by deploying qualitative and quantitative approaches and comparing collected data against intended outcome indicators. The quantitative methods of gauging purpose indicators ensured consistency with GOAL's internal reporting and baseline calculations. The evaluation against OECD-DAC criteria reviewed the Project in its entirety, without analyzing and presenting results on sector level. However, in case of critical evidence emerging from primary data sources, the evaluation illustrated gaps or critical dynamics associated with a specific sector.

To satisfy the spectrum of information required within the scope of the evaluation, MECS collected and analyzed both secondary and primary data sources. Based on the evaluation questions and GOAL's requirements, MECS developed an *analysis framework* [see Annex III] during the inception phase, containing a set of indicators designed to inform the development of the primary data collection tools. The framework informed the set of questions and tools developed to guide secondary data analysis, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), HH surveys, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Once collected, the findings of the different information sources were coded and processed, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques, according to a combined analytical approach. The analysis framework [see Annex III] also informed the analytical approach, and triangulation of different sources

of information. The graph below summarizes the structure of this evaluation, including the primary and secondary data collection and analysis steps.



Within the primary data collection phase, MECS undertook the training of enumerators via VoIP due to security constraints and precautions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The primary data collection was carried out in September 2021. The HH survey required 14 days of fieldwork by a team of seven female and seven male researchers. All HH interviews were carried out via VoIP, except for bakery beneficiaries, which were interviewed face-to-face and on-site. Klls with local stakeholders were conducted in face-to-face by a team of three male and two female researchers over a period of eight days. The FGDs in Kaebah camp required one day of fieldwork by one moderator/ researcher and one notetaker.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**HH interviews** - Inside Syria, MECS surveyed beneficiary HHs with the aim to capture the changes in the situation of recipients compared to their situation prior to and during the Project. These tools allowed collecting adequate information to verify beneficiaries from selected geographical locations - including comparison of relevant beneficiary indicators (names, age, sex, marital status, etc.) - and monitoring satisfaction level of beneficiaries and major changes affecting their needs. In addition, HH level interviews aimed at measuring impact against the key purpose indicators of the Project.

The sample of beneficiaries covered under the HH interviews included the sectors of Food Security (food kits, vouchers, bakery), MPCA (combined with vouchers or as a standalone modality of single member HHs – see MPCA/Voucher and MPCA Standalone), Nutrition, and Shelter. The evaluation aimed to select a sample that was sufficient to ensure adequate representativity, with 95% confidence level, a margin of error of 5 at activity level (i.e., food assistance (kits and vouchers), bakeries support, and overlap between MPCA/Voucher), and a design effect factor (DEFF) of 1.25. The evaluation applied a simple random sampling technique, as the beneficiaries of food kits and MPCA/vouchers were remotely, which was limiting the ability to apply a cluster sampling technique.

To maximize representativeness and relevance of the information shared, the targeted HHs were selected from the lists of beneficiaries served under this Project in the previous three months (according to data shared by GOAL, distribution lists from 1<sup>st</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021). The rule did not apply to the beneficiary population of Shelter assistance, whose activities had recently ended, and to the beneficiaries of subsidized bread, which were selected directly in the field out of bakeries' catchment population.

The table below includes figures of the HHs sampled by the evaluation, by Project activity. For more information about the profile, gender, status, vulnerabilities, and location of the sampled beneficiaries, please see section [Profile of surveyed beneficiaries, p.22]

Activity	Beneficiaries	HH survey
Food kits	353,625 (ind.)	314
MPCA/vouchers <sup>12</sup>	98,325 (ind.)	310
MPCA Standalone (for single person HHs)	3,410 (ind./HH)	310
Bakery support	743,560 (ind.)	315
Shelter	4,150 (ind.)	53
Nutrition	9,600 (ind.)	(29 - Overlapping sample of FK, FV, MPCA)
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>1,302</b>

**Key Informant Interviews** - The evaluation deployed two categories of KIIs: a) the Project team, and b) local stakeholders inside Syria. The interviews focused on collecting information about Project activities, difficulties faced during implementation, coordination mechanisms applied between the different involved agencies and the relevant stakeholders in the field, achievements against plans, impact generated on the ground, and any other relevant topics extracted from the list of required evaluation questions and the analysis framework.

- **Project team KIIs:** the evaluation conducted 14 interviews over VoIP with Country-mission Project staff from GOAL and its partners Big Heart, IhsanRD, and Shafak, in addition to the BHA representative. For a full list of the profile interviewed, see [Annex IV]
- **Local stakeholders KIIs:** the evaluation team interviewed 29 stakeholders at field level inside Syria, including representatives of the Local Councils/Relief Committees, shop owners, bakery managers, and other informants such as camp managers and Nutrition specialists. For a full list of the profiles interviewed, see [Annex V]

**Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)** - The evaluation conducted six FGDs to collect feedback from beneficiaries of WASH-related activities (sanitation and hygiene promotion) in Kaebeh displacement camp. This data collection component of the evaluation informed a qualitative understanding of the situation of beneficiaries, particularly regarding access to water for all purposes and the sanitation and hygiene conditions in the camp. In addition, the discussions captured the feedback of beneficiaries regarding potential community-level tensions.

Each FGD entailed equal distribution between men and women, including eight participants per discussion. FGDs included persons from different age groups, especially elderly, and persons with disabilities [see also Annex VI].

**Site visits** - This element of primary data collection – not illustrated formally in the analysis framework and the evaluation outline – served to verify the presence of the services established under the Project,

<sup>12</sup> Cash for food is considered part of MPCA.

observing the supported bakeries, the rehabilitated water units, and the Shelter activities.

**Secondary data review** - As part of the inception phase, MECS reviewed available secondary information on the Project to gather a solid grounding of information contributing to and informing the analysis. This process entailed a systematic review of internal Project documents including activity reports, work plans, monitoring assessments, MEAL plans, operational and organizational SOPs, internal agreements, activity datasets, and operational checklists. The secondary data served to identify factors and programming strategies that impacted the Project during implementation. A list of the documentation reviewed versus required can be found in [Annex VIII].

## PROFILE OF SURVEYED BENEFICIARIES

As illustrated in the map below, the evaluation team surveyed a total of 1,302 beneficiaries, located in the areas served under the Project, and specifically recipients of food kits, MPCA/vouchers, MPCA standalone, Nutrition support (overlapping with food assistance), bakery support, and Shelter assistance.

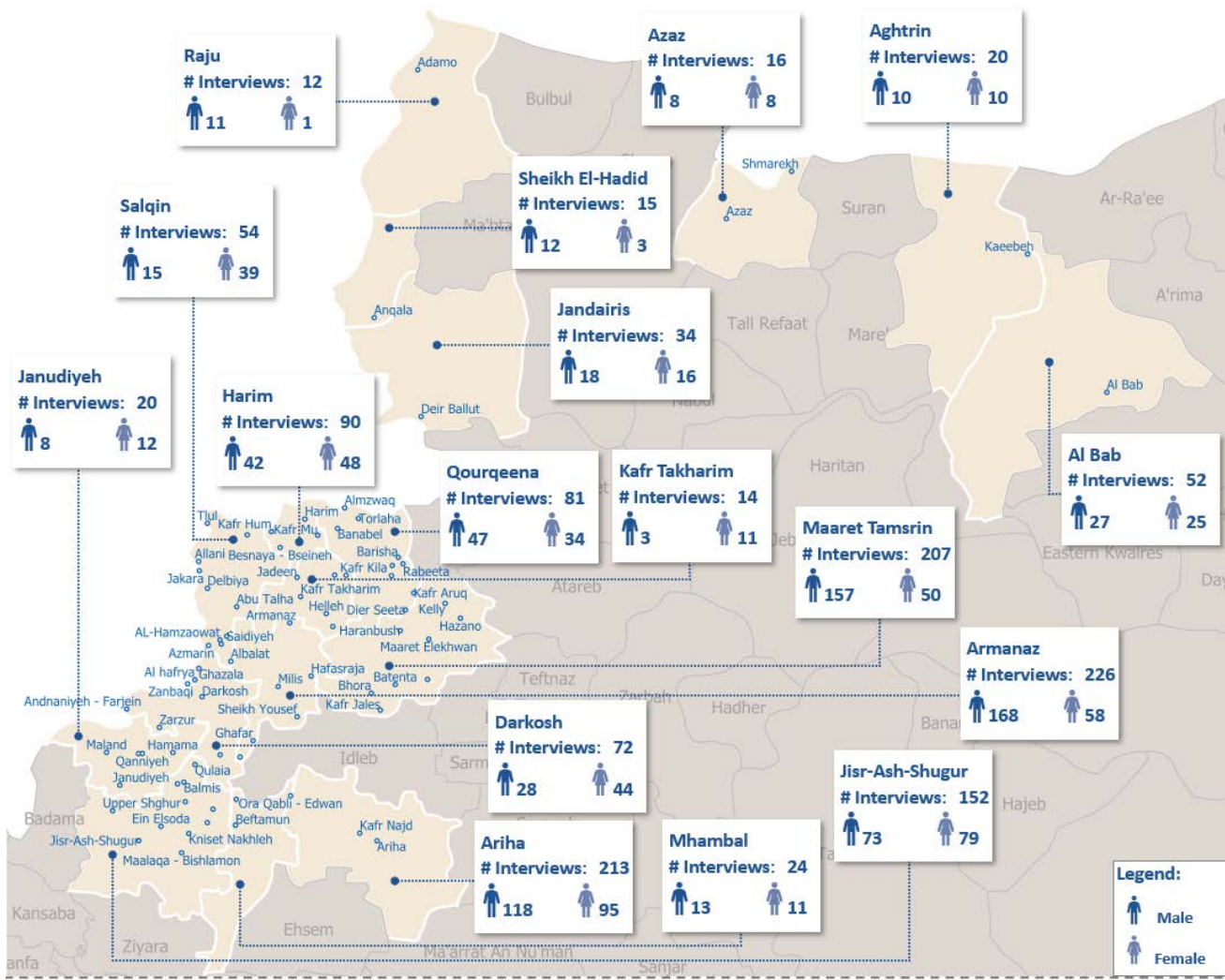
Beneficiaries were surveyed in the following sub-districts [see also Figure J, Annex VII]:

- Beneficiaries of food kits in Aghtrin, Ariha, Jandairis, Mhambal, and Rajo subdistricts
- Beneficiaries of MPCA/Voucher in Al Bab, Armanaz, Darkosh, Harim, Jisr-Ash-Shughur, Salqin sub-districts
- Beneficiaries of MPCA Standalone in Armanaz, Azaz, Darkosh, Harim, Janudiyeh, Jisr-Ash-Shughur, Kafr Takharim, Maaret Tamsrin, Mhambal, Quorqeena, Salqin sub-districts
- Beneficiaries of the bakery support (subsidized bread customers) in Armanaz, Jisr-Ash-Shughur, Maaret Tamsrin sub-districts
- Beneficiaries of Shelter assistance in Quorqeena sub-district

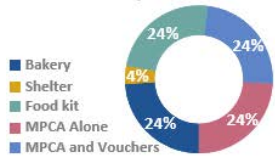
HH respondents included 58% of male-headed and 42% female-headed HHs (gender breakdown by subdistrict is displayed in the map). While the male-headed HHs were headed by men belonging to different age groups, most of female-headed HHs were headed by women over 50 years old (59% of cases). Further, the sample included 52% of IDP HHs, 39% of host community HHs, and 9% of returnee HHs.

The table below shows the type of assistance received by the HH respondents in each sub-district. All surveyed modalities covered at least three sub-districts, except for Shelter, which focused on Quorqeena sub-district only.

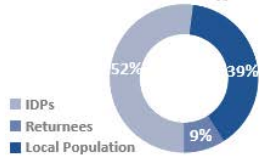
The average size of beneficiary HHs was 4.7 family members. This value largely varied, depending on the modality of assistance received by the HHs, as HHs receiving MPCA Standalone support included one member only. When comparing the average HH size by sub-district, the largest number of HH members was observed in the districts of Raju (9.9) and in Sheikh Al Haddad (6.1), where respondents included food kits beneficiaries, and in Al Bab (6.4) where respondents received MPCA/Voucher assistance. At average, beneficiary HHs included 2.4 children. In some locations, however, the value was significantly higher (Raju sub-district, with an average of 6.3 children per HH) [See Figure J, Annex VII].



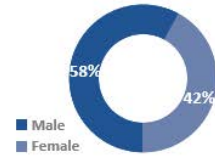
Modality of assistance received



Household Type



Gender of the Head of Household



# CHALLENGES & LIMITATIONS

The evaluation was launched in mid-May 2021, with the tentative plan to conduct data collection activities by early July, and to conclude the analysis and reporting by mid-August. The initial timeframe would have allowed collecting data from beneficiaries right upon the distribution of assistance.

The inception phase of the evaluation, however, required longer than expected, taking more than two months to complete the inception report and the data collection tools. The main reason for this delay (when compared to the initial timeframe) was the complexity of the Project itself, which was underestimated in the scope of work included in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) [Rec. 14]. The initial Project documentation received by MECS was not updated, and only partially covered the scope of work of the Project. Additionally, the identification of GOAL's information needs to be addressed by the evaluation required several weeks, and multiple rounds of communication with MECS.

The delay in the finalization of the inception phase pushed the start of the data collection activities, as well as the finalization of the report. This delay also affected the quality and relevance of some elements of the evaluation, *inter alia*:

- Due to the delayed data collection process, MECS surveyed MPCA/Voucher beneficiaries in September who they received their last assistance under the Project in June. Consequently, and as the nature of the impact indicators normally requires collecting data within 30-50 days following the receipt of assistance, the impact calculation of MPCA/Voucher modality was of reduced value/accuracy.
- Subsidized bread customers, which were surveyed in September, were not able to purchase subsidized bread in August. For this reason, they could not contribute to the calculation of the impact indicator '*Percentage of households in supported bakery catchment areas reporting that subsidized bread was available in the market in the previous month*'.



# FINDINGS

## RELEVANCE

- Overall, the assistance under this Project was found largely relevant to the needs of the beneficiary HHs, including children, Persons with Disabilities (PWD), older persons, and women
- About three out of four beneficiaries were satisfied with the transition towards e-vouchers, but some technical issues were impacting the accessibility of this delivery method
- The top category of spending of MPCA/vouchers was food for 83% of HHs, followed by pharmaceuticals, debt repayment, and NFIs
- With a focus on food security, the Project responded to the highest priority needs of the population
- The Project succeeded in reducing Shelter and WASH vulnerabilities of the targeted HHs
- GOAL and partners successfully mitigated tangible challenges associated to the beneficiary selection process
- The targeting criteria were effective to allow for the targeting of the most vulnerable HHs – albeit not all the vulnerable HHs. The Project targeted only 20% of community members, leaving the rest of the community unassisted and existing vulnerabilities unaddressed. This has caused some tensions and disappointment among the local communities and the Local Councils

### **I. Under which conditions and constraints are each of GOAL's assistance modalities appropriate for the most vulnerable populations including women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons? (Source: HH surveys, FGD)**

#### *APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ASSISTANCE TO THE LOCAL NEEDS*

Overall, the assistance was found largely appropriate to the needs of the beneficiary HHs, as confirmed by 97% of beneficiaries [see Figure A, Annex VII].<sup>13</sup> Less than 1% of beneficiaries found the assistance provided under the Project 'inappropriate' to their own needs, and another 3% reported that assistance was 'partially appropriate' to their needs. The reasons behind this consideration included the insufficient amount of support provided under the Project when compared to the needs, especially of large HHs. Other HHs reported missing items in the food kits such as rice, sugar, ghee and tea.<sup>14</sup> Shelter beneficiaries that reported assistance to be 'partially appropriate' to their needs were mostly owners of their dwellings. Beneficiaries of sanitation and hygiene promotion activities in Kaebah displacement camp (FGD) endorsed the relevance of the activities to the needs of the local population, benefitting all social categories and HH members.<sup>15</sup>

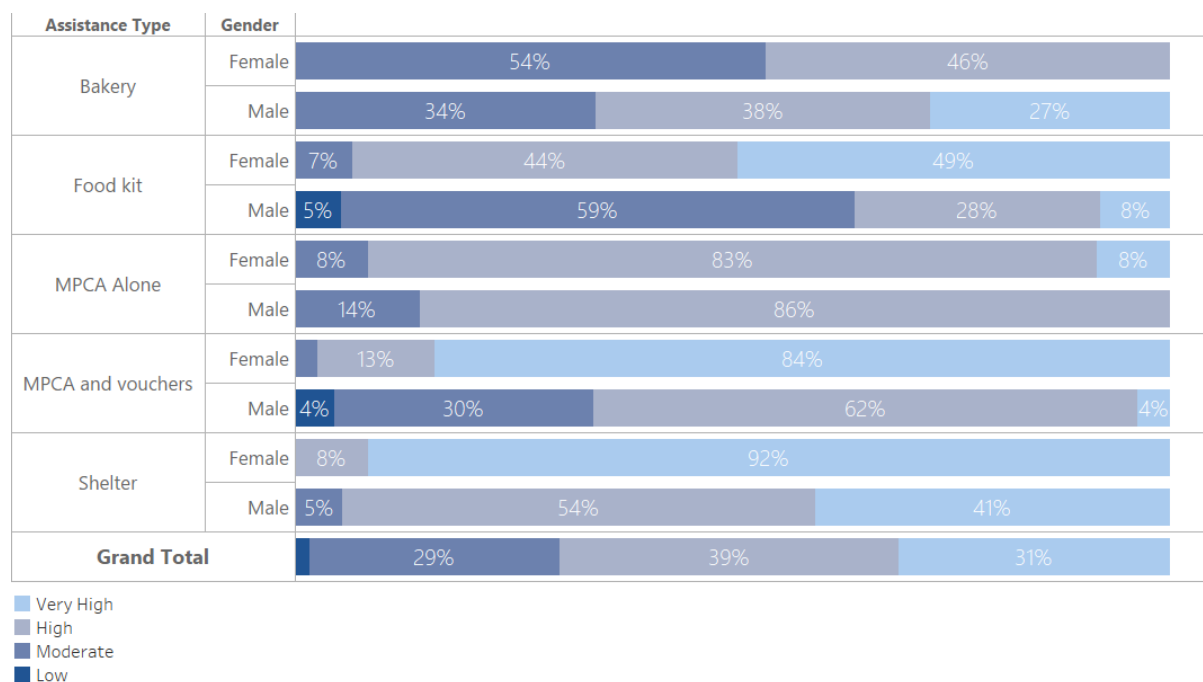
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<sup>13</sup> Figures responding to Q2 of the ECHO Protection Mainstreaming Index, see Annex VIII

<sup>14</sup> GOAL had intentionally removed the mentioned food items to adhere to regulations enforced by the Turkish government. However, GOAL ensured the nutritional value of the basket was not compromised by such a change, namely by proportionally increasing the amount of other key nutrients in the basket.

<sup>15</sup> Exceptionally, one FGD participant (male) observed that the Project did not address the needs of people in his sector (10th), which was affected by critical sanitation and hygiene needs. After the discussion, MECS staff visited the 10th sector, accompanied by the FGD participant which mentioned the gap. MECS observed that the sector did

**Figure 2 - Relevance of assistance to the needs of children within the beneficiary HH, by aid modality**

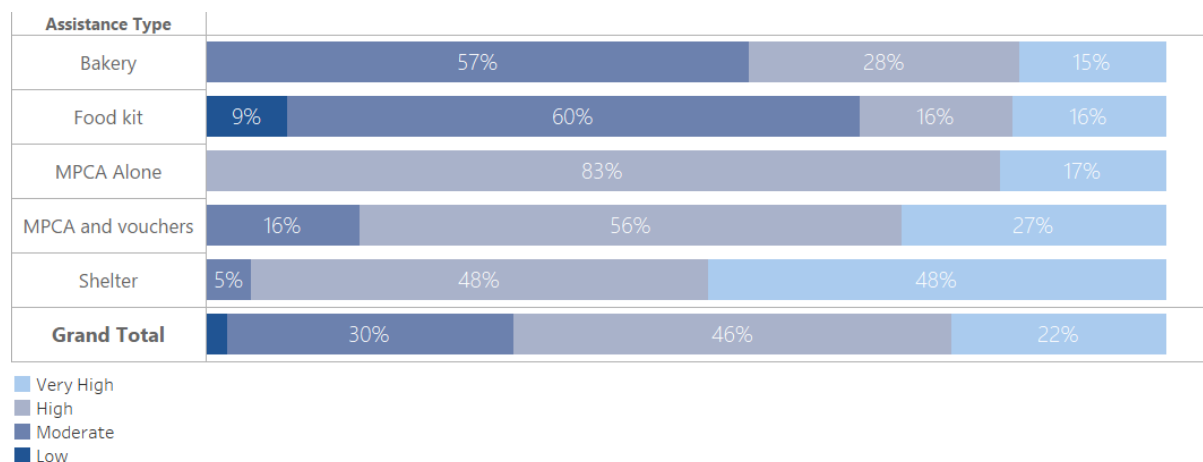


**Children** - Regarding the relevance of assistance to the needs of children, beneficiaries generally reported positive feedback, with only 1% of beneficiaries, mainly male-headed, beneficiary HHs of food kits and MPCA/vouchers, reporting that assistance was of low relevance to the needs of their children [see Figure 2]. These cases explained the low relevance of the fact that food kits do not contain any materials for children exclusively, noting that most of these cases had children under 5 years old. There were minor differences recorded between female and male headed HHs regarding the relevance of assistance provided to the needs of children, where the male-headed HHs observed a relatively lower degree of relevance to the needs of the children. Overall, male-headed HHs reported moderate relevance in 37% of cases, and low relevance in 3% of cases, whereas female-headed HHs observed moderate relevance in 7% of cases only, and none of them observed low relevance. Female-headed HHs showed higher relevance of assistance provided to children needs among food kits beneficiaries, and among MPCA/vouchers beneficiaries.

**Persons with Disabilities** - The relevance of Project assistance to the needs of Persons with Disabilities in the benefitting HHs (27% of interviewed HHs) was generally positive, with only 2% of these HHs that were recipients of food kits considering the assistance to be of 'low relevance'. [see Figure 3] The low relevance reported was mainly because food kits provided do not contain any items that are specifically addressing the needs of Persons with Disabilities.

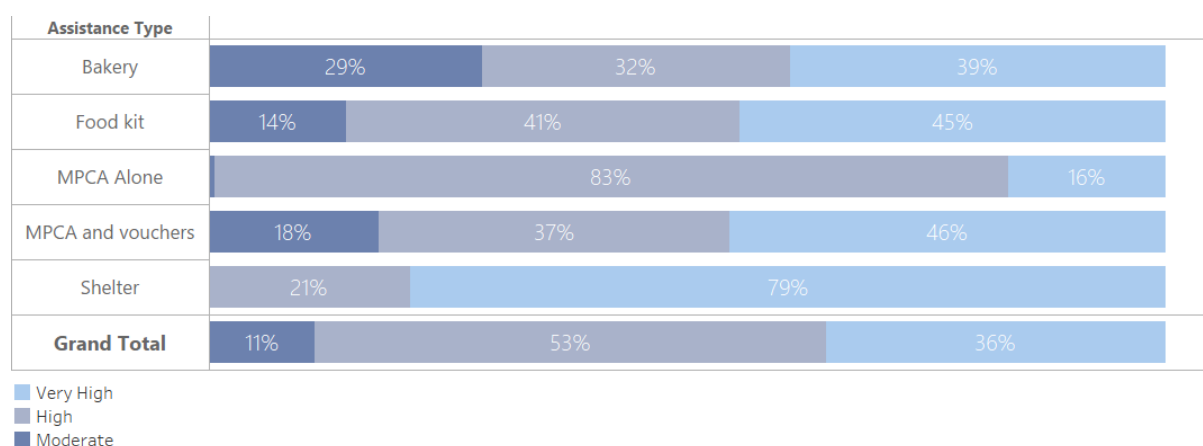
indeed not benefit from WASH assistance under this Project. About 50 families lived in the 10th sector under difficult hygiene conditions. They did not have individual water tanks, and they access water on a daily basis from a tank located in the middle of the 10th sector. The MECS team then met with a representative of the GOAL team, who confirmed that the 10th sector is not benefiting from the Project. The reason indicated was that new displaced people were transferred from Al-Rai camp to Kaiba camp after the start of the implementation of the Project. The MECS team was also informed that the 10th sector had been included under the subsequent RESTORE II Project.

**Figure 3 - Relevance of assistance to the needs of Persons with Disabilities within the beneficiary HH, by aid modality**



**Older persons** - The reported relevance of assistance provided to the needs of older persons was generally high across all beneficiary HHs that contain elderlies (40% of the sample) [see Figure 4].

**Figure 4 - Relevance of assistance to the needs of elderlies (65+) within the beneficiary HH, by aid modality**



**Nutrition program** - As the sampling plan of this evaluation relied a) on randomly selecting participants from existing beneficiary lists of MPCA, vouchers, food kits and Shelter assistance, and b) mainly on remote interviews with beneficiaries that had access to communication means, it was not possible to allocate a minimum sampling target of Nutrition beneficiaries. As a result, only 29 beneficiaries interviewed benefitted from the Nutrition component of the Project. Nutrition results of this final evaluation can therefore not be considered representative; however, they can provide an indication of the status of achievements and gaps of assistance in this Project segment.

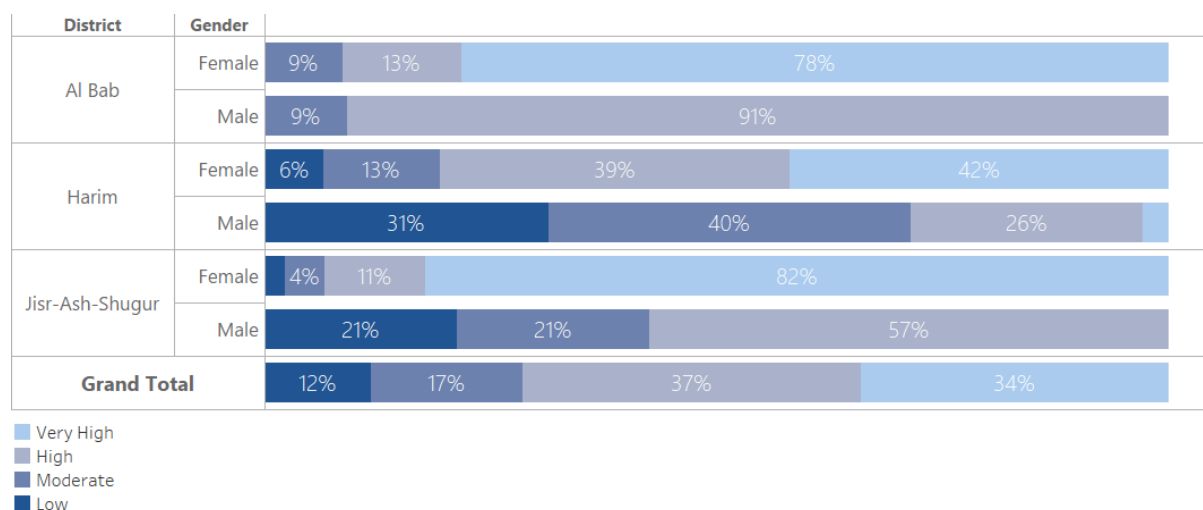
All Nutrition beneficiaries rated the information provided by GOAL during the Nutrition awareness sessions to be either 'very useful' or 'useful'. No negative feedback was provided regarding the topics covered in the Nutrition awareness sessions. The Nutrition awareness sessions reportedly provided all beneficiaries with information they were totally or partially unfamiliar with. This can be regarded as an indication of the relevance of the topics covered by GOAL in these sessions.

## RELEVANCE CONSIDERATIONS AROUND MPCA/VOUCHER ASSISTANCE

**Transition to e-vouchers** - Among the sample of MPCA/vouchers (total of 310 beneficiaries), a total of 65% of interviewed HHs witnessed a transition to e-vouchers during the Project period. These cases are mainly found in Al Bab, Harim, and Jisr-Ash-Shugur districts.

Across these interviewed cases, a total of 71% of beneficiaries reported being satisfied with the transition, while 12% reported being unsatisfied with the transition. These discontented cases were largely concentrated in Harim and Jisr-Ash-Shugur districts, in Armanaz, Darkosh, Azmarin and Jisr-Ash-Shugur communities, and they are more frequently reported among male-headed HHs compared to female-headed HHs. The low satisfaction is mainly caused by technical issues faced by these beneficiaries following the transition to e-vouchers, including frequent breakdowns of the e-voucher readers in the designated shops, the inability to know the value of credit left, and difficulties faced by beneficiaries that did not know how to use the system [see Rec. 4].

**Figure 5 - Beneficiary's satisfaction with the transition from paper to e-vouchers**



Some of the interviewed beneficiaries also highlighted some critical matters to investigate, including cases of beneficiaries not knowing the prices charged by vendors when using e-vouchers, and some interviewed beneficiaries stated that they have been charged higher prices than the market prices by vendors, as vendors feel powerful enough to set their preferred prices, since beneficiaries are forced to rely on specific shops [see Rec. 4]. These cases require a follow up from GOAL to ensure that these complaints are followed-up upon, and that vendors are committing to the conditions of the Project.

**Top spending categories** - For MPCA standalone and MPCA/vouchers beneficiaries (a total of 620 sampled HHs), the top category of spending was food for 83% of HHs, followed by pharmaceuticals, debt repayment, and NFIs purchase. [see Figure 6]

Minor differences were noticed between different HH types. Differences were more noticeable between female-headed HHs and male headed HHs, where spending on pharmaceuticals, debt repayment, rent payment and NFIs as a top spending category was noticeably higher than male-headed HHs. Spending on food was the top spending category for both types of HHs. Pharmaceuticals and NFIs purchasing were the top two secondary categories of spending across different types of beneficiaries, followed by health care.

Interestingly, the use of MPCA for rent payments was not a primary or secondary category of spending for interviewed IDP HHs. MECS field teams attempted to gather further information of this matter from IDPs beneficiaries, who largely reported that currently, the cost of food and pharmaceuticals is significantly larger than the cost of rent, especially in the past six months prior to the interview.

MECS market data shows that there has been indeed a steady increase in the prices of food and non-food commodities across NWS, in addition to significant increases of the prices of pharmaceuticals. This can justify the increasing spending of average IDPs HHs on food, pharmaceuticals and NFIs, when compared to rent.

**Figure 6 - Top 2 categories of spending for beneficiaries of MPCA and voucher**

First Category of Spending	IDPs		Local population		Returnees		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Food	73%	97%	83%	96%	10%	100%	83%
Pharmaceuticals	8%	1%	8%	2%	29%	0%	6%
Debt repayment	7%	0%	2%	1%	33%	0%	4%
NFIs purchase	4%	0%	4%	0%	14%	0%	3%
Rent payment	5%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Education	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.3%
Health care	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.3%
Purchasing livelihoods inputs	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%
Other	1%	0%	1%	0%	14%	0%	1%

Second Category of Spending	IDPs		Local population		Returnees		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Pharmaceuticals	40%	27%	48%	55%	38%	13%	41%
NFIs purchase	26%	64%	29%	30%	33%	87%	38%
Food	10%	1%	9%	4%	5%	0%	7%
Health care	5%	1%	5%	10%	0%	0%	5%
Debt repayment	6%	1%	6%	0%	14%	0%	4%
Rent payment	8%	6%	1%	1%	0%	0%	4%
Education	3%	0%	2%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Purchasing livelihoods inputs	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%
Other	1%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0.5%

## **II. How well did the beneficiary selection process ensure due diligence regarding household eligibility? (Source: KII team)**

During beneficiary selection process, the Project was regularly exposed to the risk of fake or counterfeited information about beneficiaries of food kits, vouchers/MPCA, and emergency assistance, according to the interviewed GOAL and partners' staff. GOAL's accountability and verification teams mitigated this risk by a) 100% verification through the beneficiary selection team before inclusion in the beneficiary list, and 100% reverification through the verification team, on an annual basis; b) verifying HH status and IDs during distributions, c) interviewing community representatives, and d) regularly reviewing feedbacks and complaints reported by the community to the Project (via CRM). All interviewed staff considered such mechanisms effective to spot incongruencies and mistakes about the beneficiary HH status, and that triangulation from different information sources was very important to spot eventual issues.

As mentioned by the staff engaged in the food kits, vouchers, MPCA, and emergency assistance distributions, the Project team sometimes discovered cases of beneficiary HHs which were not eligible to receive assistance. Reportedly, such episodes happened because of inaccuracies in the lists submitted to GOAL by the LC, the manipulation of the beneficiary information, or to the lack of valid IDs at the beneficiary's hand.

As an example, in one case the LC did not update the list of beneficiaries and maintained the names of HHs that had left the location. Afterwards, the LC redistributed the assistance to other HHs, which were not in the list. In another case, the Project received multiple complaints from the community about beneficiary HHs which did not meet eligibility parameters. The Project team launched an investigation and conducted another 100% verification round of the beneficiary community to spot all incongruencies.

The Shelter team under the Project received the list of beneficiaries from other emergency projects; therefore, the recipients already underwent a degree of verification. Still, the Shelter team conducted an additional layer of verification by visiting the shelter site to verify the composition of the recipient HH, their housing rights (HLP) documentation, as well as the rehabilitation needs of the shelter. As the HLP documentation was not always available at HH level, the Project team verified the ownership rights by interviewing local authorities and community representatives.

## **III. Has the program addressed the highest priority needs of the affected population? Have the targeting criteria been sufficiently effective to allow for the targeting of the most vulnerable households? (Source: KII team, KII LSHs, HH survey, SDR)**

Food was identified as the most pressing need among 90% of beneficiary HHs, across beneficiaries of all modalities and across both gender groups. The second most pressing needs among different beneficiary HHs included health (37% of interviewed HHs) and NFIs (33% of HHs) [see Figure C, Annex VII]

Having 'food' reported as the most pressing need among different HHs confirms that the Project indeed responded to the highest priority needs of the population. For Shelter beneficiaries, Shelter or WASH assistance were generally not considered as the most pressing need, which serves as an indicator that the Project succeeded in reducing Shelter and WASH vulnerabilities of the targeted HHs.

Only 6% of the interviewed beneficiaries believed that vulnerable people deserving assistance were excluded from access to assistance under the Project<sup>16</sup>, which is an indication of the positive perception of the targeted community about the due diligence of the targeting criteria.<sup>17</sup>

According to interviewed GOAL and partner staff and considering the limited available resources and the widespread needs in the region, the targeting criteria applied under the Project were sufficiently effective to allow for the targeting of the most vulnerable HHs – albeit not all the vulnerable HHs. Reportedly, the Project targeted only 20% of community members, leaving the rest of the community unassisted: even though they were also in need, they did not match the eligibility and vulnerability criteria set for the Project. The local stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation corroborated the above opinion of the staff.

*The Project did target the most vulnerable groups and individuals in the communities. However, there were other vulnerable groups that the Project did not target, as they did not match the eligibility criteria of GOAL.*

*- LC representative*

The fact that a substantial number of community members that were reportedly in need for humanitarian aid remained unassisted under the Project caused some tensions and disappointment among the local communities and the LC, according to interviewed GOAL and partners' staff as well as local stakeholders. GOAL's staff explained that the Project tried to mitigate such challenge by coordinating with other humanitarian actors in its areas of operations, to ensure that vulnerable families falling out of its beneficiaries' selection criteria could be granted with some assistance. In addition, GOAL reportedly made efforts to explain and clarify its targeting criteria to the local authorities and the community, listening to the local expectations and clarifying the Project's targeting scope. [see more on the communication with the authorities in Coherence, p.34]. Another mitigation measure observed by the staff included the delivery of the bakery support, targeting the entire catchment population and strengthening GOAL's liaison with the community on the local level [see more on question IX at p. 41].

While US-funded grants to GOAL prior to RESTORE I allowed HHs with several dependents (6+) to benefit from permanent distribution of food assistance, this eligibility criterion was not included under this Project. This change in the set of selection criteria was problematic, according to the interviewed GOAL and partners' staff, as the local community expected to continue receiving assistance. The staff mentioned that LC submitted several complaints to the Project team about this change and the discontent generated across the community [see more on the impact on the social cohesion in Impact, p.44]. While GOAL paid special care to communicating with the field, according to the staff the Project should have done more to clarify the criteria with the local community, particularly with former beneficiaries [Rec. 8].

As the Project allowed HHs with extreme vulnerabilities to be included in permanent distribution lists, it is worth observing that most interviewed local stakeholders (contracted shop vendors, shop vendors,

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<sup>16</sup> The categories reportedly excluded according to this 6% referred to groups matching with RESTORE targeting criteria, e.g., female headed HHs, IDPs and older people. However, as such cases do not refer to a specific implementing agency, aid modality or a program area, these figures suggests that the beneficiaries shared localized evidence, specific to individual cases of their knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> To note is that the positive perception about the inclusion of vulnerable categories reflects the views of the beneficiary population only, as the evaluation did not survey non-beneficiary groups.

and LC) found the approach fair, and not a cause of community tensions. They recommended to GOAL that HHs which are included in permanent distribution lists should not be removed, as they had special needs that were 'evident to the entire community', for example widows or persons with disabilities.

The interviewed local stakeholders, in particular contracted shop vendors, noted that community tensions would be likely to arise upon the exclusion of certain vulnerable HHs from the permanent distribution lists. Only few interviewed the stakeholder noted that sticking to permanent distribution lists might generate dissent among the local community (two of six interviewed contracted shop vendors, and two of six non-contracted shop vendors).

## EFFECTIVENESS

- The Project met most of the target and impact indicators, except for the MPCA/voucher modality, where not all impact indicators were achieved. This, however, might have been affected by a technical limitation of the evaluation process, namely the delayed data collection
- The Food Security subsector (merging MPCA, vouchers, food kits, and bakery support modalities), and the bakery support subsector effectively met all their target indicators, including several overachievements
- In WASH, the Project achieved all target indicators except two (% of HHs who store their drinking water safely)
- GOAL and partners managed to develop several solutions and adaptations to the fluid security situation and delivered its intended outputs, with limited delays to some activities
- The tight timeframe (3 months) was a key challenge for the Nutrition component
- GOAL developed detailed SOPs as mitigation measures against COVID-19
- The communication with beneficiaries regarding the Project delivery was generally effective, but more effort is needed to inform voucher beneficiaries on the modality
- The Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) the process of communicating between GOAL, partners, and beneficiaries was effective

### **IV. To what extent has the Project effectively met the target and output indicators over LOA in a timely manner? (Source: SDR)**

By the end of the BHA grant (August 31, 2021), the Project had met most of the target indicators in GOAL's ITT and the impact indicators assessed under this final evaluation [see Annex X]. The main gaps observed by the evaluation team referred to the impact indicators of the MPCA/voucher modality, which were not all achieved.

The evaluation teams considers that such results might have been affected by a technical limitation of the evaluation process, namely the delayed data collection activity, as outlined earlier in the 'Limitation' section of this final evaluation report [Rec. 14].

To note is also that the Project underwent two No-cost extensions (NCEs), extending the LOA from the end of June to the end of August 2021. Such NCEs enabled the Project to have additional time to conclude Project activities and to spend some of the savings generated throughout the first months of the Project implementation.



The following breakdown briefly illustrates the effectiveness of the performance of each sector and subsector included under the Project:

**Food Security** – The food security subsector (merging MPCA, vouchers, food kits, and bakery support modalities), and the bakery support subsector effectively met all their target indicators, including several overachievements. Only the Food Consumption Score (FCS) underachieved its target (see also below).

The evaluation observed a gap in one of the indicators of the Emergency Response subsector, *inter alia*:

- *% of targeted newly displaced people who have access to food assistance within 72 hours after verification.* The Emergency Response scored 59% against the 80% of the target set for this indicator.

**MPCA** - As shown in the ITT, the MPCA/Voucher modality did not meet two of its indicators (both were calculated under this final evaluation, not by GOAL), namely:

- *Percentage of HHs who report being able to meet the basic needs of their HHs (all/most/some/none) according to their priorities.* The Project scored 0% - 0% - 99% - 1%, against the target of 10% - 30% - 68% - 2%.
- *Percentage of HHs by FCS phase (Poor, Borderline, and Acceptable).* The Project scored 10% - 81% - 9%, against the target of 2% - 60% - 38%.

Except for the above, all other indicators were achieved. For a description of the performance of the impact indicators which failed to reach the target see [Impact section, p.45]

**WASH** – The Project achieved most of its target indicators, based on ITT figures, with two exceptions:

- *Percent of households targeted by the hygiene promotion program who store their drinking water safely in clean containers.* The Project scored 25% against a target indicator of 40%.
- *% of target community members with ability to care for their own well-being (as a result of GOAL's community engagement and SBC approaches addressing WASH behaviors).* The Project scored 33% against a target indicator of 75%.

This final evaluation identified another effectiveness gap shared by the team and by the WU staff, which is not reflected in any of the ITT indicators, hence does not entail any underachievement by the Project. Reportedly, the Project could not ensure the standard access to safe water per person (amounting to 40 liters/day/person), whereas it guaranteed access to 35 liters/day/person [Rec. 9].

**Shelter** – Both Shelter and Winter Response subsectors of the Project achieved all their target indicators, based on ITT figures.

**Nutrition** – Both Nutrition and MIYCF in emergency subsectors achieved all their target indicators, based on ITT figures, with one exception:

- *Individual diet diversity score (IDDS) of children 6-59 months.* The Project scored 3.1 against a target indicator of 3.9

## **V. Has the Project sufficiently adapted to a fluid and insecure context to address food security and other basic needs of the target population? How effective were the adaptations made to the Project to respond to COVID-19? (Source: KII team, SDR)**

Besides the volatile security situation because of the protracted crisis in Syria, the Project experienced a range of specific field-related challenges, as described by the interviewed GOAL and partners' staff. Nevertheless, the Project reportedly managed to develop several solutions and adaptations to the fluid security situation and delivered its intended outputs, with limited delays to some activities. The evaluation team identified several challenges experienced under the Project, according to the priorities highlighted by the interviewed staff, *inter alia*:

- Provision of cash assistance and e-vouchers

Reportedly, in 2020, the MPCA modality of the previous US-funded initiatives implemented by GOAL and partners suffered from a shortage in local availability of small bank notes. The cash service provider required additional time to supply small bank notes in northern Syria, causing a delay to the emergency program of around two to three weeks. To facilitate the distribution process and increase satisfaction among the beneficiaries - as the 100 USD notes were available in sufficient quality and quantity - GOAL adopted a dual approach distributing MPCA and vouchers by combining the rounds into double/bi-monthly distribution with 100 USD being distributed to each HH. Such value accounts for MPCA for NFIs (64%) as well as for Cash for Food (36%) assistance.

The e-voucher system caused some temporary inefficiencies for the partner IhsanRD, as noted by some of the interviewed staff. The system experienced some delay in uploading the information about the voucher beneficiaries. In addition, it unintentionally doubled the voucher amount to a range of beneficiaries (from 50 to 100 USD). IhsanRD staff spotted the issues and solved it immediately by coordinating with the service provider.

- Interference by the local governance

The Project activities started only upon authorization letters were issued by the local governance structure (SSG), which were obtained by the LC. Obtaining such a letter was a lengthy process, which caused some delays to the Project start, as observed by the interviewed GOAL and partners' staff.

IhsanRD staff reported that the SSG habitually attempted to interfere with the implementation of the humanitarian assistance in their area of responsibility, including but not limited to the RESTORE I Project and its implementers. For example, once the SSG requested IhsanRD for a share of the aid distributed in the field. IhsanRD successfully coordinated with GOAL and UN-OCHA to resolve this issue.

The partner Big Heart reported an incident where the local authorities arbitrarily arrested and interrogated some of its core staff, including finance, logistics, and procurement team members. The partner conveyed the issue to UN-OCHA and temporarily closed its offices in Atarib and Ariha and suspended its activities. Consequently, the distribution of food kits stopped at seven rounds for HHs living Ariha and Atarib. The aid was redirected to HHs in Jendeirs and Afrin, which received up to eleven rounds, as well as to IDP HHs in Rajo (via the emergency response component).

- Limited timeframe for the Nutrition and Shelter components

The Nutrition component of the Project had only three months to conduct all its activities and develop consistent tools and materials. Further, GOAL did not yet have an active Nutrition team when the Project started, which had to be recruited in a limited time. As observed by the staff, such a tight timeframe was a limitation.

The Shelter component of the Project was the first Shelter intervention by GOAL in Syria. The interviewed staff noted that the Project team had to dedicate extensive time to prepare the tools and to introduce the Project to the communities. Furthermore, the identification and selection of collective centers was time consuming, according to the staff, as they did not find enough facilities in their areas of operations. Therefore, instead of collective centers, the Project team discussed with BHA the possibility to target shared accommodation units (up to 4 HHs residing in one dwelling) or single shelter units, while keeping the same amount of targeted HHs. These issues contributed to delay in the commencement of shelter rehabilitation activities under this Project.

- Challenges associated with COVID-19

During the inception of the Project, and as anticipated in the Project proposal, GOAL developed detailed SOPs as mitigation measures against COVID-19 to be followed during the distribution processes and delivery of Project assistance to enhance the safety of GOAL employees and beneficiaries.

The SOPs referred to the following concepts:

- Display of visibility materials, posters and brochures with COVID-19 messaging
- Ensuring the availability of water, soap, or sterilizers at distribution sites, which will be available for staff and beneficiaries
- Providing the distribution teams with masks and gloves, in addition to sterilization materials
- Giving priority for vulnerable groups – such as older people – to minimize the time spent at distribution points
- Reducing the number of baskets/kits to be distributed at each point, to avoid congestion
- Increasing the number of daily workers organizing the beneficiaries to speed up the process and ensure crowd control and compliance with social distancing
- Providing COVID-19 prevention messaging, including directing beneficiaries who are suffering from influenza symptoms (coughs, sneezes, etc.) to attend the nearest primary health care center.
- Establishing organized systems (such as one-way) at distribution sites
- Staff and beneficiaries required to maintain a minimum distance of one meter between each other while handling the baskets or queuing
- For regular MPCA and paper voucher distributions, GOAL has started providing combined rounds instead of one monthly round
- With the transition plan from paper voucher to e-voucher, GOAL could top-up the e-cards remotely, helping to reduce attendance at distribution
- One-off distribution of soap to HHs in Idleb by GOAL (7 pieces of soap totaling 250 grams/HH)

The evaluation team found evidence of the above-mentioned procedures pertaining to the different Project sectors and modalities, namely: COVID-19 mitigation guidance (WASH); COVID-19 Distribution SOPs (in-kind assistance, vouchers, RTE, MPCA, hygiene kits); COVID-19 distribution SOPs (in-camp assistance); COVID-19 SOPs (for market stakeholders). The interviewed staff acknowledged the regular application of the COVID-19 preventive measures since the Project start.

## VI. How effective was the communication with beneficiaries regarding the Project delivery? (Source: HH survey, FGD, KII team)

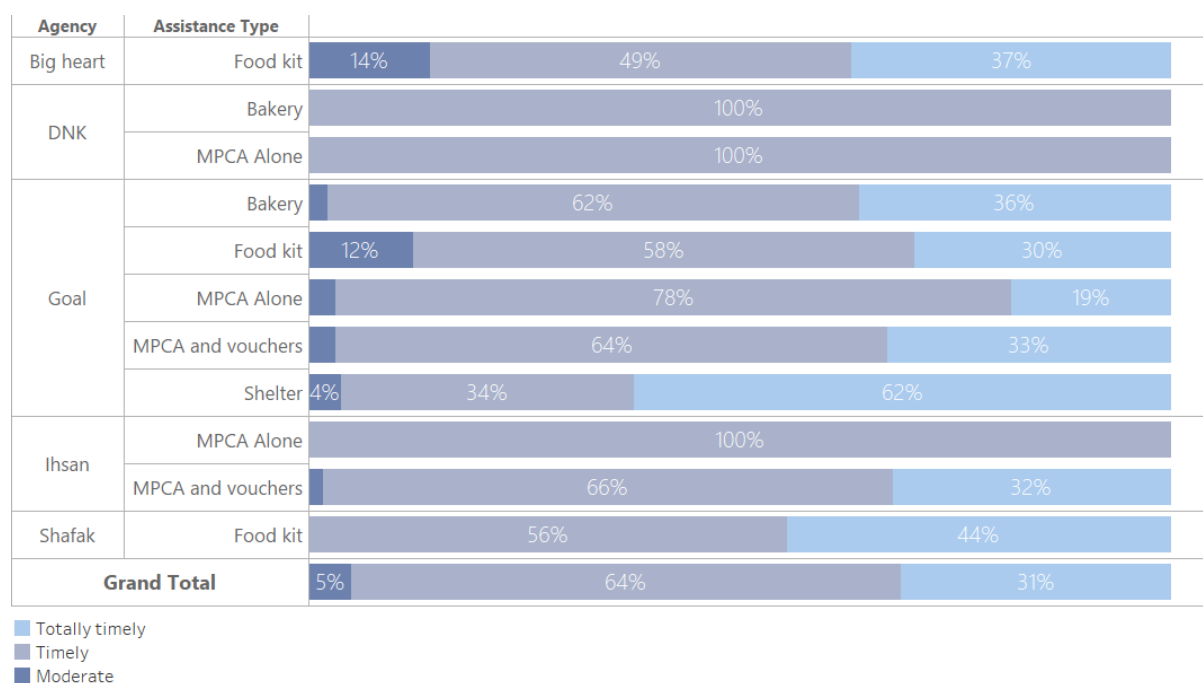
### QUALITY AND FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION

All interviewed beneficiary HHs reported that they have received timely information regarding the modality and timing of distribution and assistance delivery.

No negative feedback was provided by any of the HH respondents regarding the timeliness of information dispatched by GOAL and partners. [see Figure 7]

Beneficiaries of sanitation and hygiene promotion activities in Kaebeh displacement camp (FGD) reported that GOAL used to visit the camp every seven to ten days during the Project to conduct feedback sessions with the participants. FGD participants confirmed that they have been informed about the modality of assistance in a timely fashion, but not about the start of the activities. Beneficiaries in Kaebeh displacement camp learnt about the availability of assistance under the Project either through the camp managers (according to male camp residents), or through GOAL's team visiting the camp to verify the local needs before the Project started (according to female camp residents).

**Figure 7 - Beneficiaries informed about the modality and time of assistance in a timely fashion**



### BEHAVIOR OF THE STAFF

A positive aspect of the effectiveness of the Project was the behavior of the staff during distribution and implementation processes. All beneficiary HHs reported that the implementing staff of GOAL and partners treated people with respect during the implementation, except for a limited number of bakeries beneficiaries which did not have an opinion (2%).

The cases of bakeries beneficiaries that provided no answers included elderly people that did not purchase subsidized bread by themselves, thus, had no feedback to provide about the issue. [see Figure D, Annex VII]

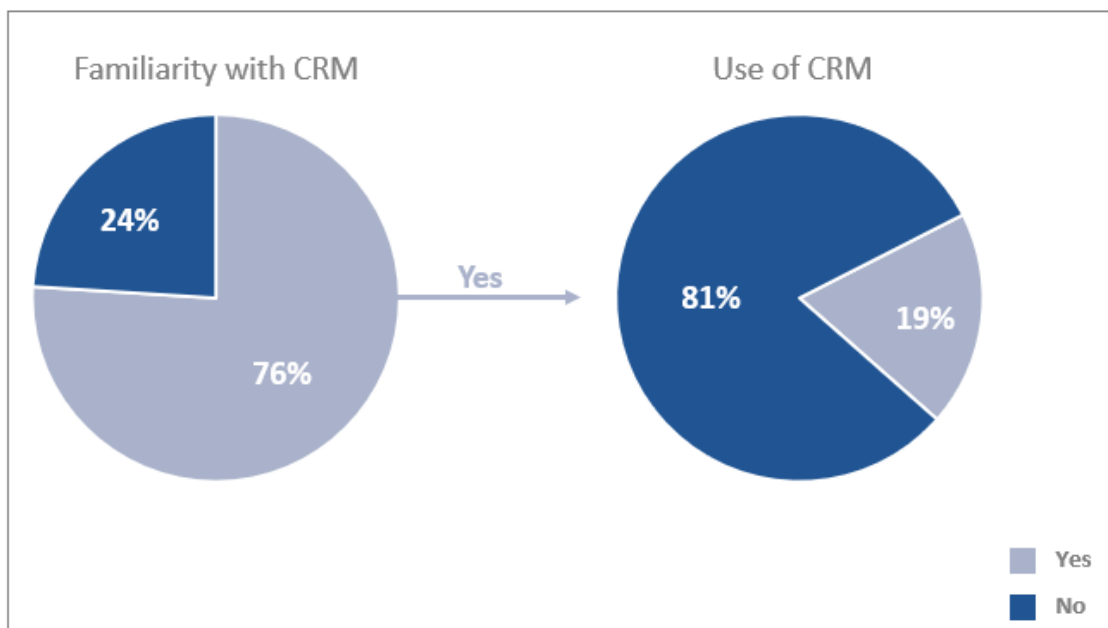
### COMMUNICATION OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK MECHANISM

Three out of four (76%) interviewed beneficiary HHs reported being familiar with the available methods to contact GOAL to request assistance, share complains, or provide feedback. Out of this number, however, only 19% reportedly used the CFM system. These beneficiaries relied mainly on WhatsApp and Telegram to communicate with GOAL and to share feedback, with some cases using other methods such as meeting the Project staff in person. Of these beneficiaries that reported using CFM, only 3% reported that the process of communicating with GOAL was 'difficult', while the rest considered the process to be either 'very easy' or 'relatively easy'.

Only 3% of beneficiaries that had used the CFM system reported receiving no response from GOAL, while the rest reported that the relief agency responded to their complains and feedback either totally or partially, showing generally a high level of satisfaction with the responses provided by the relief agency. In average, these complaints and feedback were responded to within 12 days.

The number of beneficiary HHs that reportedly did not receive a response from GOAL about their complaints (6 cases in total) included mainly beneficiaries that filed complaints about mistakes in the registration process, such as excluding some family members from the registration, or cases of persons requesting a justification from the organization for receiving only one round of support. Details are available if further action is planned by GOAL, noting that the overall scale of the issue is limited.

Figure 8- Familiarity and use of the CRM System



Interviewed beneficiary HHs of sanitation and hygiene promotion activities in the displacement camp in Kaebeh reported not knowing of any complaint mechanism specific under the Project [Rec. 10]. Yet, in case of need, they confirmed knowledge about the possibility to speak directly with GOAL's team during their visits. They reported feeling comfortable at submitting eventual verbal complaints to GOAL by communicating directly with their staff.

Besides CFM, it is worth noting that the Project team introduced additional mechanisms to leverage on the participation of the local community. To promote the participation of community representatives, GOAL partner Shafak introduced “community review committees” (CRC). CRCs, as described by the interviewed staff, grouped together community members, local authorities, and Shafak’s team members. The purpose of the CRCs was to support beneficiary identification, to facilitate activity monitoring, and to explain the Project and its criteria to the community. For example, after the CRC visited a distribution site recommended by the LC, they found it inadequate. Therefore, the Project team selected a different site that was safer and more appropriate to the needs and scope of the Project.

## COHERENCE

- The Project aligned with the key priorities set by BHA as well as by the UN for the humanitarian response in northern Syria, and its design maximized synergies with other activities implemented by GOAL
- The coordination among GOAL and IPs was instrumental; the participation in the cluster mechanisms promoted transparency and assisted in the coordination with other implementing actors
- The Project team avoided duplication of efforts by coordinating among the implementing partners, as well as with other organizations inside Syria
- The Project and its theory of change identified Food Security as a priority, complementing the response with assistance in other humanitarian sectors, looking to gradually transition beneficiaries towards a more sustainable type of assistance
- The Project team undertook regular and open communication with the local authorities, with differences between the governorates

### **VII. How compatible is the RESTORE I Project with other interventions in NWS? To what extent is the intervention adding value while avoiding duplication of effort? (Source: KII team, SDR)**

According to the interviewed stakeholders, the Project aligned with the key priorities set by BHA as well as by the UN for the humanitarian response in northern Syria, and its design maximized synergies with other activities implemented by GOAL. The coordination among GOAL and IPs was regarded as instrumental; the participation in the cluster mechanisms promoted transparency and assisted in the coordination with other implementing actors. The Project team avoided duplication of efforts by coordinating among the implementing partners, as well as with other organizations inside Syria.

#### ***ALIGNMENT WITH HUMANITARIAN POLICY INSTRUMENTS AND PRIORITIES***

The Project and its theory of change identified Food Security as a priority, complementing the response with assistance in other humanitarian sectors, looking to gradually transition beneficiaries towards a more sustainable type of assistance.

By doing so, the Project aligned with the priorities set by BHA for the humanitarian response in northern Syria, as confirmed by BHA staff during this evaluation. In particular, the Project has been seen in line with the following BHA programmatic areas [Rec. 5, Rec. 11]:

- The focus on Food Security, and to reducing the reliance of the community on WFP/UN assistance

- The upscaling of MPCA as a modality to address Food Security and non-food needs
- The promotion of a WASH response tackling water access for conflict-affected communities

In addition to the programmatic aspects above, BHA appreciated the risk management policy undertaken during the Project, including GOAL's attention to accountability and the use of complaints and feedbacks mechanisms for risk mitigation purposes.

During the design and implementation of the Project, GOAL regularly consulted with and followed the directions of the humanitarian clusters and working groups, to ensure a harmonized approach with the other implementing agencies. In particular, the interviewed staff reported regular consultations with the FSL Cluster, the Shelter and Non-Food Items (SNFI) Cluster, the Nutrition Cluster, the Cash-Based Response Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG), the Bakery Technical Working Group (B-TWG), the Assessment and Monitoring Working Group (AMWG), and the Protection and WASH Cluster. The staff reported sharing with the clusters and working groups regular information about the Project activities and local needs (e.g., through the 4W/5W forms), in addition to the participation to initiatives such as the OMI (Outcome monitoring initiative – part of the FSL cluster) and CASH PDM harmonization under the CBR-TWG. The participation at the cluster system was seen as critical to coordinate with other implementing agencies in Syria and to spot any overlap of activities to adjust activities accordingly.

According to the interviewed staff, and as planned in its initial design, the Project also aligned with the CCCM cluster and AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey) in mapping vulnerabilities of camp residents and addressing the lack of livelihood opportunities.

As an example, interviewed GOAL staff described that, thanks to the coordination at the FSL cluster level, the Project team avoided supporting the same bakeries that were assisted by the INGO People in Need (PIN). Another evidence for the good coordination under the Project was the discovery that another NGO started delivering WASH rehabilitation inside the displacement camp where GOAL was supposed to operate under the Project. Reportedly, the camp management considered GOAL's activity not time efficient to launch the activity and designated another NGO to do the work. To solve the issue, GOAL undertook several meetings with the NGO, the camp management, and AFAD, to readjust the time schedule and resume the WASH activity in the camp without duplications. To note is also that the needs assessment informing the Project design included extensive mentioning of UN-OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).

#### ***COORDINATION AMONG IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS***

Interviewed staff from the Project partners Shafak, Big Heart, and IhsanRD confirmed the positive degree of coordination and consultation with GOAL's team in Turkey and in Syria. The staff was satisfied with the quality and supportive nature of this communication. The main modalities of communication between the partners and GOAL included a) an inception meeting with the senior management to discuss the workplan and local permissions to operate; b) regular weekly updates shared by the IPs with GOAL; and c) bi-weekly meetings to update on activity progress, MEAL evidence, and challenges, and to harmonize M&E tools and methodologies with the IPs. The coordination between the partners and GOAL helped identifying and solving the duplication of some activities, as reported by the interviewed staff. Namely, Shafak was distributing food baskets in Afrin through WFP funding, in villages that overlapped with Big Heart's areas of intervention. Both organizations hence checked their BNFs lists to verify no HH would have been assisted twice.

## **COORDINATION WITH LOCAL BUSINESS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

Interviewed local stakeholders (contracted and non-contracted shop vendors, partner bakery staff, water unit staff, one MIYCF specialist) confirmed the close and efficient communication with GOAL under the Project. GOAL maintained regular coordination with the local business and stakeholders via dedicated WhatsApp groups (mentioned by contracted shops, camp managers, and water unit staff) as well as through field visits by GOAL's M&E and programme teams (mentioned by contracted shops, partner bakeries staff, camp managers, and water unit staff).

*“GOAL was very responsive when it comes to addressing technical issues or complaints. For example, six months ago, there was a malfunction in the pumping station and the water network in Aghtarin (Kaebeh camp). The generator engine mixed water with oil. We called GOAL, and they promptly brought a mechanic to repair the generator”.*

*- Water unit staff, Aghtarin*

Contracted shop vendors reported that GOAL undertook continuous monitoring of the prices of local commodities and of beneficiaries, to verify that shops would not sell the commodities to the voucher beneficiaries at a higher price.

In a few cases, non-contracted shops vendors reported not knowing the reason why the Project rejected their application to become partner of the voucher component (2 of 6, in Harem and Darjosh sub-district). [Rec. 8]

One partner bakery staff (Afrin) noted that, exclusively in cases of rapid fluctuation of the price of flour in the market, GOAL did not communicate with the bakery fast enough to adjust the sale price of the bread bag.<sup>18</sup> Still, the staff noted that the quality of coordination with GOAL was strong.

The water unit staff mentioned minor inefficiencies affecting the quality of their coordination with GOAL. Reportedly, water stations in Salqin and Harem did not have internet connection, which impacted the coordination of field visits between GOAL and the engineers, and made it difficult to connect the staff based in the water units with other engineers and staff from other water units [Rec. 12].

## **VIII. How effective was the coordination with local authorities in the Area of Operation (AoO)? (Source: KII team, KII LSHs)**

Overall, interviewed stakeholders agreed that the Project team undertook regular and open communication with the local authorities, with differences between the governorates. According to the staff, the liaison with the authorities in Idleb governorate partially suffered from interferences and delays, while in Aleppo, the Project benefitted from a smooth relationship with the authorities. The LC interviewed under this evaluation confirmed that the quality of their communication and coordination with GOAL was smooth and efficient, without mentioning any gaps on that level.

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<sup>18</sup> GOAL's staff noted that the organization addressed similar requests within 2 days time.



In Idleb governorate, interviewed GOAL and partner staff repeatedly reported that the authorities communicated with delay, and that they were often late at sharing beneficiary lists. In addition, the staff mentioned that the local authorities had set new binding compliance rules and authorization requirements for NGOs (e.g., the pre-authorization letter by the LC, see also above), which caused delays to the activities and increased the risk of interference in the implementation of the Project. Despite such challenges, interviewed staff noted that the Project team managed to maintain open and regular coordination with the LCs, mainly due to established contacts and their experience in the field, as well as the effective work of GOAL's humanitarian access team.

In northern Aleppo, as noted by interviewed GOAL staff, the Project team had a good and timely communication with the local authorities. The Project team had signed a MOU with the LCs as well as with AFAD, which was authorized by the Turkish government.

As reported by interviewed GOAL and partner staff - and confirmed by the LCs - the Project team held regular consultations with the authorities during the inception phase of the Project to explain the Project's rationale, scope of work, and eligibility criteria. The coordination continued through the compilation of beneficiaries lists and their verification, and during the delivery of assistance and logistic support. The interviewed staff added that, in both Aleppo and Idleb governorates, the LCs regularly advocated with GOAL and partners to increase its scale of assistance and reach out to more beneficiaries.

Interviewed beneficiary HHs were largely aware of the consultations between the assistance providers and the local authorities. Only one out of ten beneficiary HHs believed that LCs, Relief Committees, or community leaders were not consulted by GOAL and partners in advance of the response regarding people's needs or the required type of assistance. These smaller number of cases included beneficiaries from all types of assistance, all implementing partners, and all geographic areas. Another 43% of beneficiaries considered that these entities and individuals were consulted with, while another 47% reported not knowing whether these entities and individuals were consulted by GOAL or the IPs.<sup>19</sup>

## EFFICIENCY

- The targeting of one geographic area with different modalities was instrumental to ensuring an efficient time management, spending of financial resources, and helped in the delivery of a holistic, quality response
- The Project modalities promoted extensive synergies, complementing different types of assistance for the same beneficiary HHs, and transitioning beneficiaries from emergency assistance to medium-term support
- The Project was complemented by other GOAL's grants, in the areas of emergency assistance, WASH, and Nutrition support
- The Project modalities were suitable to the local market conditions, especially food kits, vouchers/MPCA, bakery support, and Shelter support
- The voucher/MPCA modality was particularly cost-efficient, considering the costs related to its mobilization, its alignment to the local market conditions, and the ability to cover multisectoral needs

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<sup>19</sup> Figures responding to Q1 of the ECHO Protection Mainstreaming index, see Annex VIII

- The quality of the human resources deployed by GOAL and partners under the Project were strong in most departments, while some shortages in human resources were observed in the accountability department, procurement, and finance management at field level. The recruitment of Shelter and Nutrition staff experienced delays
- The Project had sufficient financial scale to deliver its intended outputs, and GOAL and partners did not experience any undue difficulties in the allocation of budget lines

## **IX. Does the overlap and geographic distribution of Project activities help efficiency? (Source: KII team)**

Interviewed GOAL and partner staff reported that the geographic clustering of the various Project activities facilitated an efficient response to the local needs, which was also informed by multi-sectoral needs assessments, as well by accessibility and safety checks. Specific Project modalities such as the emergency response also considered the time required to deliver the assistance<sup>20</sup> among the criteria to select its geographic locations. Based on the findings from these explorations, the delivery of different modalities of assistance in the same geographic location offered several opportunities for added value, as noted by the interviewed staff:

- Targeting the same beneficiaries with multi-sectoral assistance, the Project shared the same set of eligibility criteria across the food kits/vouchers, MPCA, and Nutrition support activities. This approach reduced the time required for beneficiary identification, selection, and verification. The WASH assistance and bakery support followed a blanket approach, also targeting the same areas supported by Food Security and Nutrition assistance [Rec. 7]
- Since 2013, GOAL has been responding to the food insecurity and to the WASH needs within the same geographic areas targeted by the Project. Building on this experience and coverage, the Project benefit from positive recognition of international assistance by the local community, offered deep insights in the local needs, facilitated communication with the authorities, and enhanced access to the communities. According to interviewed staff, the combination of these aspects contributed to an efficient management of the operations and reduced delays under the Project
- GOAL enjoyed a positive reputation in communities which had received blanket-based support like the subsidized bread and WASH assistance over the previous years. The resulting strong reputation facilitated the Project and the launch of additional modalities of assistance (i.e., Shelter, Nutrition) in the same communities [Rec. 11]

It should be added that BHA staff endorsed the geographic targeting of the Project and the delivery of a multisectoral response to communities in the same location and with acute needs in multiple sectors. In fact, the approach reportedly demonstrated higher knowledge of the needs in specific locations, stronger acceptance by the population, and facilitated an efficient performance during the implementation of the different sectoral interventions.

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<sup>20</sup> The emergency response should dispatch RTEs or MPCA to IDPs within 96 hours timeframe after the identification of the HHs.

## **X. To what extent were Project thematic areas cohesive or complementary? (Source: KII team, SDR)**

The Project modalities promoted extensive synergies, complementing different types of assistance for the same beneficiary HHs, and transitioning beneficiaries from emergency assistance to medium-term support.

The Project sectors promoted the following synergies with other modalities, as outlined in the Project documentation and confirmed by the interviewed Project team staff:

- BNFs receiving **emergency support** transitioned into the food security program, receiving nine rounds of regular food assistance (food kits or vouchers/MPCA assistance - subject to vulnerability assessment)
- The Project supported **bakeries** in communities which received regular food assistance (food kits or vouchers/MPCA), which contributed to a decrease in local food needs.
- Verified beneficiaries of regular food assistance (food kits or vouchers/MPCA) were entitled to receive **Shelter support**. The Project staff reported that, by doing so, HHs were less at risk of needing to sell their food, or to spend their own (often minimal) savings to repair their shelter
- During the distribution of regular food assistance, BNFs were directed to access the **Nutrition** awareness sessions. During the sessions, the team distributed MUAC tapes and trained the participants on their use
- **WASH** infrastructure was rehabilitated and upgraded in communities supported by the food security program. Contingent to this, the Project also rehabilitated WASH infrastructure in communities where it was rehabilitating shelters
- As a COVID-19 mitigation measure, **soap** was distributed to beneficiaries of regular food assistance (food kits or vouchers/MPCA) and to partner bakery workers.

## **XI. What level of cohesiveness and complementarity has RESTORE with other projects by the implementing agency? (Source: KII team)**

While the Project activities were closely integrated to create efficiencies and maximize impact for beneficiary HHs, the Project was complemented with other GOAL's grants, in the areas of emergency assistance, WASH, and Nutrition support.

As confirmed by the staff, the Project generated specific synergies with GOAL's NSRF program (rapid response to displacement, funded by ECHO), with EVOLVE (water supply infrastructure program funded by FCDO), and with the IFRP (International Food Relief Partnership program, sponsored by BHA) distributing nutritional supplements to BNFs in camps.

## **XII. Was the value-added by the program in line with Value for Money principles? (Source: KII team)**

According to the interviewed GOAL and partners' staff, the Project modalities were suitable to the local market conditions, especially food kits, vouchers/MPCA, bakery support, and Shelter support. These modalities relied on price monitoring and market assessments to identify the variations in the price of local commodities to be procured under the Project, and in the SMEB value. By doing so, the Project allowed to deliver assistance in line with the local economy and maximized the cost-efficiency of the chosen modalities. To review these issues, GOAL conducted several internal assessments, procured

external research, and reviewed reports issued by REACH and other cluster members.

Overall, interviewed GOAL staff considered the voucher/MPCA modality particularly cost-efficient, considering the costs related to its mobilization, its alignment to the local market conditions, and the ability to cover multisectoral needs. The modality gave the flexibility to the beneficiaries for spending the assistance according to their own priorities and respecting their preference about local shops, business, and service providers.

### **XIII. Have adequate human and financial resources been applied to delivering Project outcomes? (Source: KII team)**

According to staff observations, the quality of the human resources deployed by GOAL and partners under the Project were strong in most departments, while some shortages in human resources were observed in the accountability department, procurement, and finance management at field level. The recruitment of Shelter and Nutrition staff experienced delays, which was compensated for by GOAL staff to some extent by the cooperation and support between the different departments of the organization. Financial resources and budget lines were considered adequate and well-allocated by interviewed staff.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY**

Reportedly, the procurement department experienced some shortages of staff, because two leading staff members resigned for personal reasons. The finance team in the field in charge of distributions (cash, emergency, and vouchers) was deemed understaffed to process the workload. Similarly, the accountability department was considered understaffed to deal with the increasing volume of communication required for a smooth implementation of the Project.

Delays in the recruitment affected both the Nutrition and the Shelter components, as noted by interviewed staff. The Project team only completed the recruitment of Nutrition and Shelter staff when the activities were already underway, and the support from other departments was important in this critical phase. In the case of Shelter, as noted by interviewed staff, 13 engineers supported the initiation of the Project from other departments, until the Project team was able to recruit four dedicated site engineers as well as a Project manager responsible for this component of the Project.

The emergency response component also reportedly received support from the staff of different GOAL departments, providing additional work force and helping to deal with the most pressing phases of the Project [Rec. 1].

The interviewed staff explained that the Project team recruited several technical advisors, whose role was not always clear to the Project managers and coordinators. To maximize the relevance and effectiveness of these advisors, interviewed staff recommended discussing the ToRs of these advisors with the managers and coordinators of the different sectors. [Rec. 1]

According to interviewed GOAL staff, the Project did not suffer from frequent turnover of key positions, apart from the role of program director/head of program, which changed four times over two years (twice during the Project), causing some discontinuity in the overall program coordination.

## FINANCIAL AVAILABILITY

The Project had sufficient financial scale to deliver its intended outputs, and GOAL and partners did not experience any undue difficulties in the allocation of budget lines, according to interviewed staff. The amount of funding available for the intervention were seen as sufficient, and all interviewed staff credited the degree of flexibility BHA accommodated during the budget reviews submitted by GOAL under the Project. The challenges to deliver the expected outputs, and eventual under-achievements of some activities, were not seen as a consequence of limited access to financial resources, according to the staff, except for the WASH activities. According to interviewed GOAL staff, a larger budget for this component would have facilitated the Project to achieve compliance with SPHERE standards, ensuring access to 40 liters/day of safe water to each HH member in the community [Rec. 9].

## IMPACT

- The Project succeeded in reaching its targets when it comes to the Household Hunger Scale (HHS) scores. Only 2% of beneficiary HHs reported cases of moderate hunger, compared to no cases of severe hunger, while 98% of beneficiaries reported none to light hunger
- The Food Consumption Score (FCS) targets were not met on the cumulative scale, mainly due to underachievement among MPCA standalone and MPCA/vouchers beneficiaries. This finding from the HH survey, however, does not corroborate the observation of the Project staff, which noted a higher FCS performance of MPCA modalities, when compared to in-kind assistance
- The intended score of the Average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) was 8.5 per beneficiary HH, and GOAL succeeded in reaching its target (9) for the cumulative count of all beneficiaries under the Project
- A total of 91% of interviewed beneficiary HHs reported that they did have enough food to cover their HHs' needs over the past seven days. This can be seen as an indication for the positive impact of the Project on food availability
- The indicator related to the availability of subsidized bread could not be calculated in this evaluation as the timeframe of field data collection did not synchronize with the Project timeline for the bakeries support component
- Assistance under this Project was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner, with no difference observed around any specific modality or sector of assistance
- Beneficiaries reported always feeling safe during the distribution process
- Access to available NFIs was rated as moderate generally, with 75% of beneficiaries reporting that they were able to partially afford purchasing the NFIs they required
- WASH expenditures remained unchanged for 80% of beneficiaries, decreased for only 1% of beneficiaries, and increased for 19% of beneficiaries
- The cash distribution modality was flexible to the beneficiaries' needs. While the e-voucher system reportedly suffered from temporary suspension and technical challenges, cash ensured a continuous assistance flow
- Project modalities that applied eligibility criteria, such as food kits distribution or vouchers/MPCA, caused some tensions at community level for non-beneficiaries
- An unintended negative effect caused by the Project was the beneficiary's dependance on GOAL's assistance
- The Project generated a positive economic impetus for contracted shops and partner bakeries, whereas it contributed to increase competition between contracted and non-contracted shops

## **XV. To what extent has the Project achieved the sector’s intended outcomes and impact? (Source: HH surveys)**

### **OVERVIEW**

This section examines the performance of the impact indicators of the Project, which were selected by GOAL during the inception phase of this final evaluation. In addition, the evaluation team measured some of the impact indicators across the different sector of assistance (not just those feeding in the identification of end line values), providing additional information about the effects generated by the Project for the benefit of the target populations.

### **BREAKDOWN OF INDICATORS**

Prevalence of targeted households with moderate or severe Household Hunger Scale (HHS) score (target: 95.4% no hunger; 4.6% moderate hunger; 0% severe hunger)

Achievement: 98% no hunger; 2% moderate hunger; 0% severe hunger

The Project succeeded in reaching its targets when it comes to the HHS scores as reported by interviewed beneficiary HHs. Only 2% of beneficiary HHs reported cases of moderate hunger, compared to no cases of severe hunger, while 98% of beneficiaries reported none to light hunger.

**Figure 9 - Household Hunger Scale (HHS) score, by aid modality**

<b>Assistance Type</b>	<b>None to light hunger</b>	<b>Moderate hunger</b>	<b>Severe hunger</b>
<b>bakery</b>	97%	3%	0%
<b>Food kit</b>	100%	0%	0%
<b>MPCA Alone</b>	95%	5%	0%
<b>MPCA and vouchers</b>	100%	0%	0%
<b>Overall</b>	98%	2%	0%

Food Consumption Score (FCS) Percentage of food ration beneficiary households with ‘acceptable’ food consumption scores (target: 2% Poor; 60% borderline; 38% Acceptable)

Achievement: 7% Poor; 56% borderline; 36% Acceptable

The interviewed beneficiary HHs reported moderate FCS levels, with only 7% recording poor FCS, compared to 36% reporting acceptable FCS. Yet, the Project team did not reach its targets of FCS on the cumulative scale, mainly due to underachievement of FCS targets among MPCA standalone and MPCA/vouchers beneficiaries. This finding from the HH survey, however, does not corroborate the observation of the Project staff, which noted a higher FCS performance of MPCA modalities, when compared to in-kind assistance. [see Learning section, p.50] [Rec. 5]

A possible explanation for this difference in perception could be the ways MPCAs were spent by beneficiary HHs, especially in cases where MPCA recipients overspent on NFIs, compared to food items. Additionally, the gap between data collection and last round of assistance provision to these beneficiaries could have had an impact on the score recorded. Yet, the gap between the program targets and the achieved values of FCS is not substantial. In terms of vouchers type, no major differences were noted between paper-based and e-vouchers beneficiaries.

**Table 1 - Food Consumption Score of beneficiary HHs, by aid modality**

Assistance Type	Poor	Borderline	Acceptable
bakery	2%	46%	52%
Food kit	0%	24%	76%
MPCA Alone	18%	75%	7%
MPCA and vouchers	10%	81%	9%
Overall	7%	56%	36%

Indicator: Average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) of targeted households as a result of received assistance (target: 9)

Achievement: 8.5

The application of consumption-based coping strategies reported by beneficiary HHs can be considered high in general, with only 18% of beneficiary HHs reporting low to no coping, compared to 42% reporting high coping strategy applications.

The lowest levels of application of consumption-based coping strategies are observed among recipients of only bakery support and MPCA standalone beneficiaries, while the highest levels of application is observed among MPCA/vouchers beneficiaries (rCSI score 12.4). The application of negative coping strategies was higher among female-headed HHs, as shown in the section below [section]. Looking at the MPCA/voucher sample, beneficiaries of paper-based vouchers scored a higher rCSI score, when compared to e-vouchers beneficiaries. [see Table 1, Annex VII]

Overall, the average rCSI score was 8.5 per beneficiary HH, and GOAL succeeded in reaching its target for the cumulative count of all beneficiaries under the Project.

**Table 2 - Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) of targeted households, by aid modality**

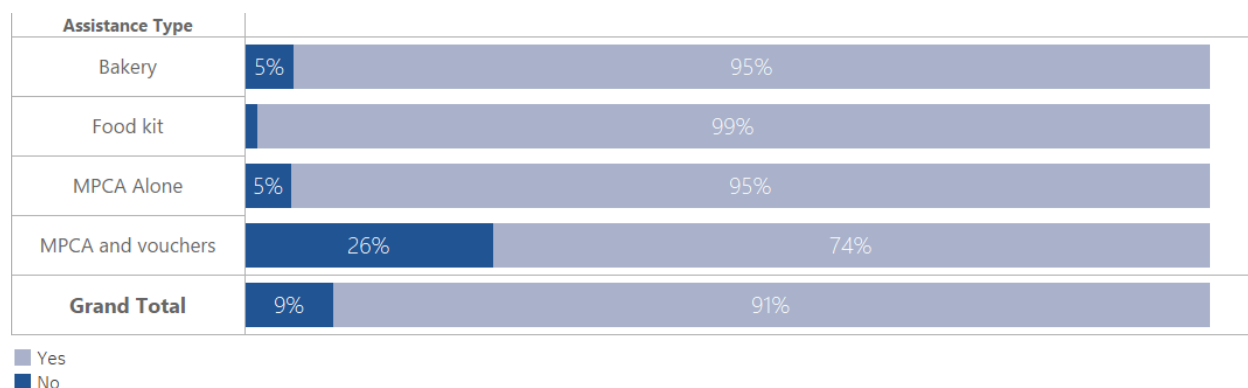
Assistance Type	Low to no coping	Medium coping	High coping	Average rCSI Score
Bakery	41%	27%	32%	5.9
Food kit	4%	55%	41%	8.1
MPCA Alone	24%	44%	32%	7.5
MPCA/vouchers	0%	34%	66%	12.4
Overall	18%	40%	42%	8.5

Indicator: Percentage of households reporting sufficient food stocks to meet household needs in the previous seven days (target: 60%)

Achievement: 91%

A total of 91% of interviewed beneficiary HHs reported that they did have enough food to cover their HHs' needs over the past seven days. This can be seen as an indication for the positive impact of the Project on food availability. The data shows that MPCA/voucher beneficiaries reported the lowest availability of food stocks in the previous seven days, with 26% of the sample considering the available stock as insufficient. No differences emerged between recipients of e-vouchers and paper vouchers [see figure 1, Annex VII]

**Figure 10 – Sufficiency of food stocks to meet household needs in the previous seven days**



**Percentage of vouchers redeemed (target: 95%)**

Achievement: 100%

Across the voucher beneficiaries (310 sampled HHs), a total of 24,093 vouchers were received, ranging between 1 and 378 vouchers per HH. This range is caused by the fact that several voucher beneficiaries reported receiving one e-voucher that includes tens or even hundreds of vouchers of smaller value (2 USD for example).

Out of this number of vouchers received, only 2 vouchers were not redeemed for two cases of beneficiary HHs that reported receiving e-vouchers that turned to be empty during the time of redemption. Details of these two cases are available for further follow-up from GOAL as required.

It is important to flag that the evaluation team found five cases of beneficiary HHs recorded on the voucher beneficiaries' lists by GOAL that reported not having received any vouchers. Detailed of these cases are available for further follow-up from GOAL.

**Indicator: Percentage of households in supported bakery catchment areas reporting that subsidized bread was available in the market in the previous month (target: 80%)**

Achievement: n/a

None of the beneficiaries received any subsidized bread one month before the evaluation (see also section 'Limitations' above). However, all interviewed bakery support beneficiary HHs reported receiving subsidized bread between January and July 2021. This matches the Project documentation provided by GOAL. Overall, the indicator related to the availability of subsidized bread could not be calculated in this evaluation as the timeframe of field data collection did not synchronize with the Project timeline for the bakeries support component.

**Percentage of households who report being able to meet the basic needs of their household (all/most/some/none) according to their priorities (MPCA/Voucher indicator's target: 10% all; 30% most; 68% some; 2% none)**

Achievement: 0% all; 0% most; 99% some; 1% none

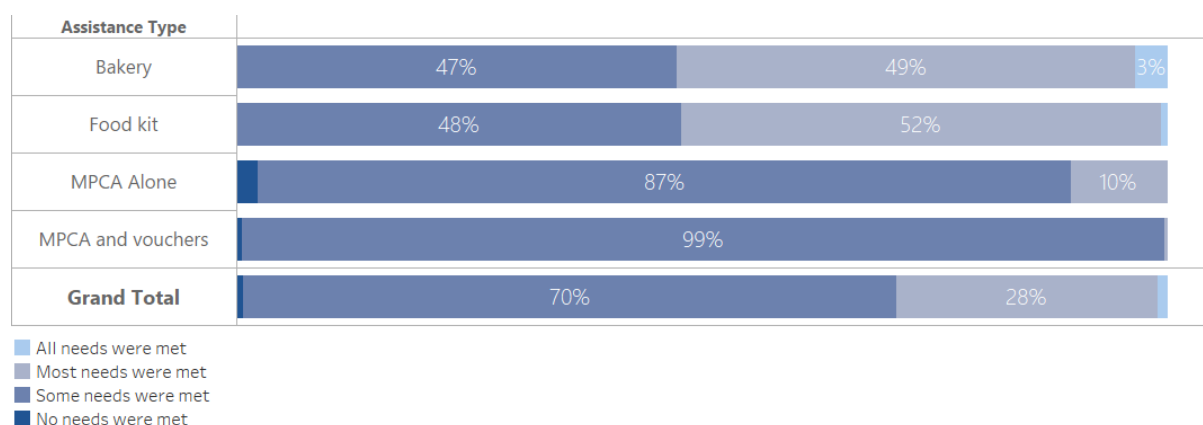


Looking at the entire sample of interviewed beneficiary HHs, only one-third (30%) reportedly had the capacity to cover all or most their HHs' priority needs over the past month. 'Priority needs' in this context refer to all sectors, not only Food Security. Less than 1% of beneficiary HHs reported not being able to meet any of their needs in the past month, while 70% reported that some of the needs were met.

This finding is aligned with the findings provided in the relevance section of this evaluation report [see Figure C, Annex VII], where the majority of beneficiary HHs reported pressing, un-met needs in the sectors of Health, NFIs and WASH.

The findings from this evaluation indicate that the MPCA/vouchers modality did not meet its set target indicator: A strong 99% of the sample reported that they were only able to address some of their basic needs in the past month [Rec. 5].

**Figure 11 – Capability of beneficiary HH to meet its priority basic needs in the past month, by aid modality**



Percentage of beneficiaries reporting that humanitarian assistance is delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner (MPCA/Voucher indicator target: 80%)

Achievement: 92%

Overall, this evaluation found that assistance under this Project was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner (according to 92% of interviewed HHs – see table 3), with no difference observed around any specific modality or sector of assistance. Minor variation emerged while looking at sex and age group disaggregation, with male-headed HHs and BNFs aged between 18-49 years old reporting 96% score, as opposed to the other categories scoring 92% (see table 4).

**Table 3 - % of BNFs reporting that assistance was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner**

Grand total	Q1	Q2	Q5	Q6	Q15	Q18 & .1	TOT MARK	SCORE
% YES	43%	97%	99%	100%	94%	98%		
RANGE	21% - 50%	80% - 100%	80% - 100%	80% - 100%	80% - 100%	80% - 100%		
MARKS	2	4	4	4	4	4	22	92%

**Table 4 – Age, Sex, diversity disaggregation of % of BNF reporting that assistance was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner**

Disaggregation	TOT MARK	SCORE
Age group – HoH 18-49 yrs old	23	96%
Age group – HoH 50+ years old	22	92%
Sex – Male HoH	23	96%
Sex – Female HoH	22	92%
Diversity – HoH with disability	22	92%

The evaluation team calculated this indicator by merging the findings of six survey questions, according to the formula of the ECHO Protection Mainstreaming indicator, modified by GOAL.<sup>21</sup> No difference were observed on aid modality level [see Annex VIII].

As shown in Table 3, the lowest mark referred to Q1, i.e.: *Do you think that LC/RC/other community members were consulted about the response? (beneficiary needs, type of assistance etc.)*. Justification for this evidence is described at p. 41: only 43% of beneficiaries considered that Local Councils, Relief Committees, or community leaders were consulted in advance by the response regarding beneficiaries needs or type of assistance. Therefore, Q1 scored '2' as a protection mark across the entire sample. On the other hand, 10% of beneficiaries believed that these actors were not consulted, and another 47% reported not knowing about their involvement by GOAL or IPs.

#### **DISTRIBUTION PROCESS**

Except for small number of interviewed HHs (less than 1% of the sample), beneficiaries reported always feeling safe during the distribution process. The limited cases were reported by beneficiaries of food kit distributions implemented by Shafak (one case in Sheikh El Hadid, Afrin), and by GOAL (one case reported in Kaebeh camp). The evaluation did not investigate the reasons behind feeling unsafe during the distribution process, however, the scale of the issue can be considered limited.

In general, beneficiaries reported high satisfaction with the accessibility of the distribution locations, as well as the overall accountability of the distribution process. [see Figure 12]

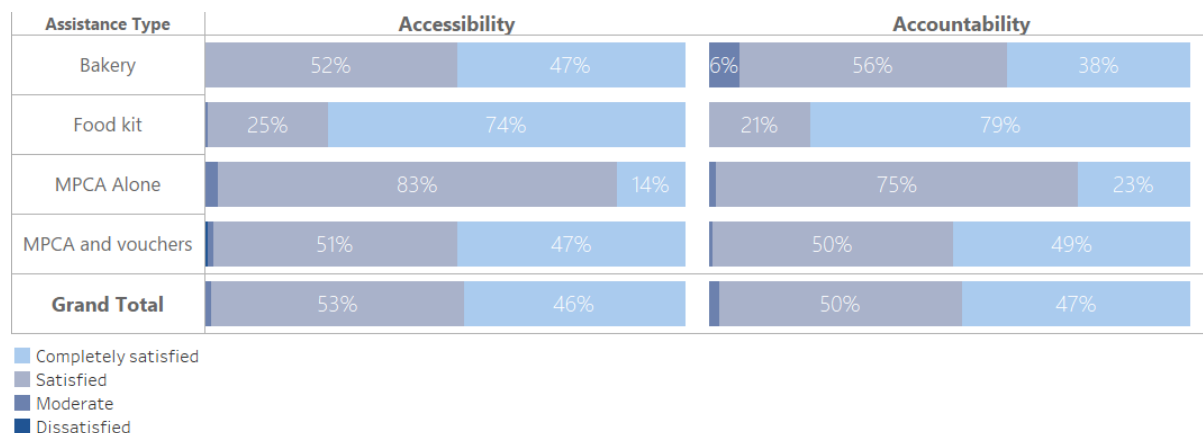
Only two cases of interviewed beneficiary HHs reported that the access to the distribution location was problematic (elderly people with mobility difficulties). None of the interviewed beneficiary HHs provided any negative feedback about the accountability of the distribution process.

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<sup>21</sup> The six questions governing the protection mainstreaming indicator, as referred in this evaluation and in the related paragraphs, are:

1. Q1 - Do you think that LC/RC/other community members were consulted about the response?
2. Q2 - Was the assistance you received appropriate for you to meet your basic needs?
3. Q5 - Did you or other HH member who attended the distribution feel safe at all times (i.e. before, during and after distribution when travelling back home)?
4. Q6 - Did you feel you were treated with respect by NGO staff during the distribution?
5. Q15 - Do you think there are people deserving who were excluded from the assistance?
6. Q18. Have you ever raised any concerns on the assistance you received to the NGO using one of the above mechanisms?  
Q.18.1 If yes, are you satisfied with the response you have received?

**Figure 12- Accessibility of Distribution Location and Accountability of Distribution Process**



Percentage of HHs reporting adequate access to HH Non-Food Items (NFIs) (MPCA/Voucher target: 80%)

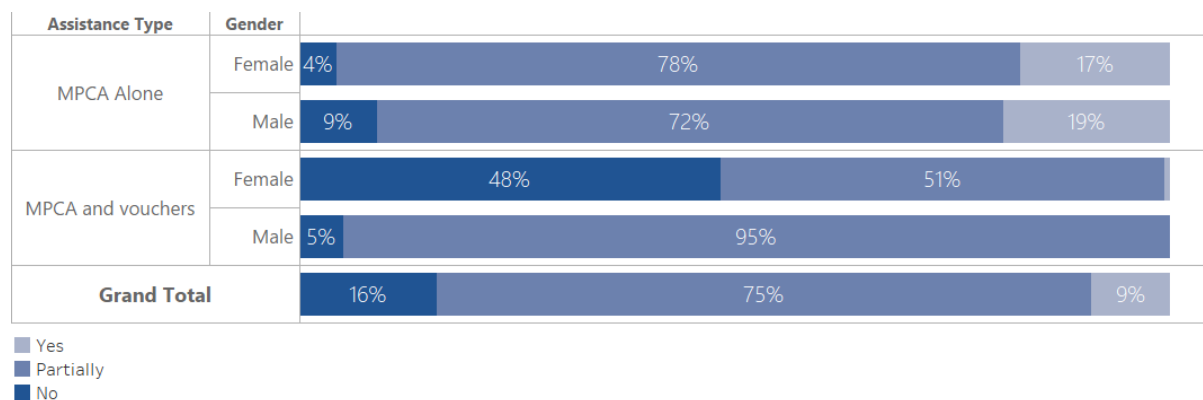
Achievement: 9%

Overall, MPCA beneficiary HHs reported a high availability of needed NFIs in the local markets, with less than 1% of the sample reporting that necessary NFIs they needed were not available at the local markets.

The access to these available NFIs was rated as moderate generally, with 75% of beneficiaries reporting that they were able to partially afford purchasing the NFIs they required, while another 16% reported that the necessary NFIs they needed were unaffordable, especially among female-headed HHs that received MPCA/vouchers.

Looking at the sample of MPCA/voucher recipients, no one reported adequate access to NFIs, suggesting that the Project did not meet the target indicator. Of the MPCA/voucher beneficiaries, 26% reported having had no adequate access to NFI, while 74% observed their access was just partial. To note is that e-vouchers and paper vouchers beneficiaries shared similar experiences. [see figure H, Annex VII]

**Figure 13 - HHs holding adequate access to NFIs, by aid modality**

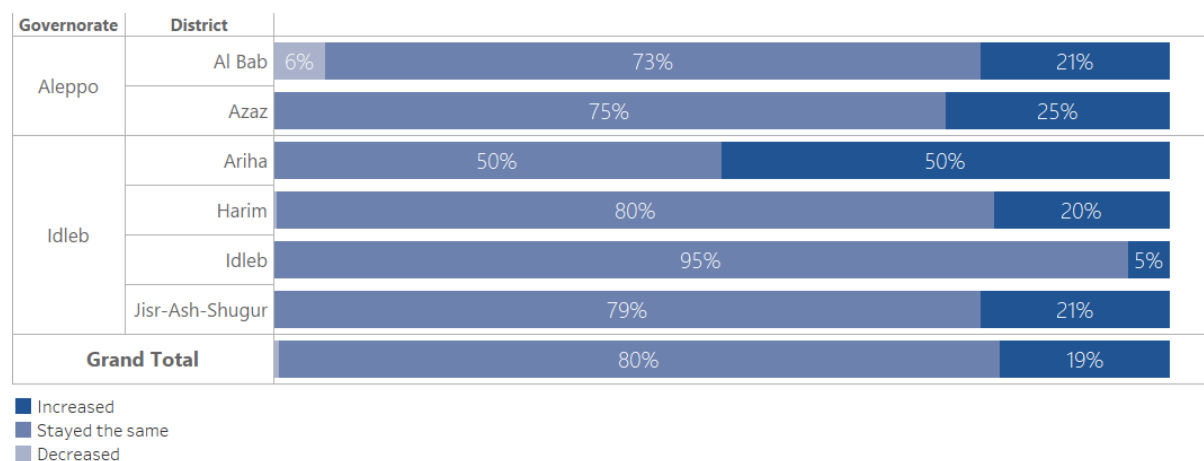


Percentage of HHs who have reduced essential WASH related basic expenditures (MPCA/Voucher  
Target: 75%)

Achievement: 1%

MPCA standalone and MPCA/vouchers beneficiary HHs largely reported that assistance provided did not change their basic WASH expenditures. Expenditures remained unchanged for 80% of beneficiaries, decreased for only 1% of beneficiaries, and increased for 19% of beneficiaries, especially in Ariha district.

**Figure 14 – MPCA/Voucher and MPCA standalone beneficiary HHs observing a change in WASH related expenditures**



According to a recent assessment done by MECS in Ariha, there has been a noticeable increase in the cost of water across the entire district, due to limited water availability and increases in fuel prices in the summer season, which resulted in increasing cost of water trucking and water pumping, and as a result, increased spending on basic WASH needs especially during July and August 2021<sup>22</sup>. This finding could explain the limited impact of the Project on reducing basic WASH expenditures especially in this geographic area.

Looking at the total sample of MPCA/Voucher beneficiary HHs, 75% of respondents reported that their expenditures did not change, while 24% noted an increase, and only 1% a decrease. These findings indicate that the Project did not meet its target indicator [Rec. 5]. Beneficiaries of e-vouchers experienced increased expenditures more often (32%) compared to paper vouchers beneficiaries (9%). [see Figure G, Annex VII]

## **XVI. What risks associated with cash distributions exist for beneficiaries and how GOAL can mitigate them? (Source: KII LSHs)**

Interviewed LCs and shop vendors did not foresee any risks associated with distributing cash to beneficiaries. They considered the modality as flexible to the beneficiaries' needs, and more efficient than the e-vouchers. In their view, and while the e-voucher system reportedly suffered from temporary suspension and technical challenges, cash ensured a continuous assistance flow.

<sup>22</sup> MECS Internal report - not published

The LC in Darkosh observed that the local community lacked awareness about COVID-19 preventive measures, which the Project should not overlook while distributing cash (as potential medium of viral transmission). He referred to the need for beneficiaries to adopt social distancing during distribution as well as while using cash [Rec. 3].

## **XVII. Are there any ill effects or unplanned impacts as a result of this Project?" (Source: KII LSHs, FGD WASH)**

### ***SOCIAL COHESION***

Project modalities that applied eligibility criteria, such as food kits distribution or vouchers/MPCA, reportedly caused some tensions at community level for non-beneficiaries, according to local stakeholders (contracted shop vendors, shop vendors, and LCs). The reported tensions impacted social cohesion between the following groups:

- Host community members and non-beneficiaries against IDPs in Armanaz and Harem – the trigger was perceived favoritism in the delivery of assistance benefitting the displaced population (source: contracted shops, non-contracted shops, LCs)
- Non-beneficiary community members against the LC in Armanaz. People had limited awareness of the eligibility criteria, and frequently blamed the LC for its lack of integrity (source: contracted shop vendors)
- Non-beneficiary members and beneficiary population in Darkosh, which was reportedly solved upon the clarification of the eligibility criteria to the community (source: contracted shops, non-contracted shops, LCs)

Interestingly, the interviewed beneficiary households did not confirm these statements provided by local stakeholders. Tensions within community due to competition over assistance were reported only rarely (4 cases in total out of the entire sample of 1,302 interviewed HHs). [see Figure F, Annex VII]. These tensions included a case of verbal quarrel in a distribution point, verbal complains communicated to beneficiaries from non-beneficiaries, and complaints by community members that did not receive assistance. None of these limited cases reported include any violence, and none of the beneficiaries communicated any long-term fears because of these tensions.

WASH support, sanitation and hygiene promotion in camps, bakery support, Nutrition, and Shelter assistance did not cause any friction at community level, as reported by local stakeholders as well as by FGD participants of sanitation and hygiene support in Kaebeh displacement camp. FGD participants noted that the community-based activities helped the camp population socializing with their neighborhood, thus enhancing social cohesion at local level.

Less than 1% of the interviewed beneficiary HHs reported tensions within their own HHs because of competition over assistance. These cases (2 in total) included female-headed HHs that were living with other male family members (father, brother). In one of these two cases, the female head of HH reached out to GOAL to complain about her father who was registered to receive assistance on her behalf, and GOAL investigated the issue and started providing the assistance directly to this woman.

### ***DEPENDANCE OVER ASSISTANCE***

An unintended negative effect caused by the Project was the beneficiary's dependance on GOAL's assistance, according to contracted shops, non-contracted shops, and camp managers. As some key

informants stated, the beneficiary head of household would often rely on assistance and would not be motivated to search for work opportunities, as noted by local stakeholders in Harem and Armanaz.

Looking at the positive unintended impacts, it is worth mentioning that the LCs described a range of positive effects generated by the Project for the local community. Reportedly, the Project contributed to reducing cases of child labor. By securing the basic needs for the poorest families, the Project also reduced the occurrence of theft or looting, hence improving the sense of safety in the community.

### **XVIII. To what extent does the RESTORE I Program affect the market and market systems - positively and/or negatively? (Source: KII LSHs)**

Based on the observations of local stakeholders, the Project generated a positive economic impetus for contracted shops and partner bakeries, whereas it contributed to increase competition between contracted and non-contracted shops.

The vouchers/MPCA component positively affected the business of contracted shops, especially those selling NFI/hygiene materials or non-perishable food items, as noted by contracted shops, non-contracted shops, and LC representatives. Non-contracted shops stated that their sales had slightly increased thanks to the cash assistance, even though their business dropped during the days of vouchers redemption.

Local stakeholders agreed that the Project generated some business competition among contracted and non-contracted shops, which eventually resulted in a reduction of the sale price of certain commodities (see also below).

Most partner bakery staff affirmed that the assistance under the Project supported their business as well as those of individuals working at the bakery (e.g., bread vendors, bread delivery vehicles), whereas the Project had some negative impact on the sales of non-contracted bakeries. Interestingly, one partner bakery staff from Afrin noted that the assistance helped the community and their food security, but not the contracted bakery, as the bakery's profits would have been higher by selling only bread at non-subsidized prices. Still, he confirmed his commitment to keep on supporting the community by selling subsidized bread.

Several interviewed local stakeholders reported the Project did not increase the availability of commodities a local level, except for water (through WASH support), and bread (through bakery support). Regarding variations on the price of commodities at the local market, local stakeholders raised conflicting viewpoints. While contracted shop vendors described a general increase in the price of commodities (as a consequence of the overall economic situation and not because of the Project), non-contracted shops and LCs reported a reduction. Contracted shop explained the prices of commodities – particularly basic food items like sugar and ghee – had increased by about 15-20%, because of an increase in the local demand. According to non-contracted shops and the LCs, the competition among contracted and non-contracted shops resulted in a small reduction in the prices of some items.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- Some elements of the Project contributed to the sustainability of the living situation of beneficiary HHs, especially the WASH and Shelter components
- The provision of regular food assistance (in-kind, MPCA/vouchers, bakery support) did generate only limited significant and direct sustainable effect for the community
- The most frequently adopted negative coping strategy was to rely on less preferred and less expensive foods, especially female-headed HHs that received MPCA/vouchers
- The Project did not have an exit strategy in place. GOAL continued some of the operations under a new grant (WASH), other activities changed the beneficiary lists based on revised vulnerability criteria
- The main sustainability consideration while transitioning Project activities to RESTORE II was the introduction of Livelihood support activities to help the community developing their own resilience and reducing their reliance on food support

### **XIX. What aspects of GOAL's RESTORE Project are 'sustainable' for target communities? (Source: HH survey, KII LSHs, FGD WASH)**

According to interviewed local stakeholders, aspects of the Project that contributed to the sustainability of the living situation of beneficiary HHs included:

- the WASH assistance, which increased a stable access to water for the community guaranteeing functional infrastructure. It also included the training of several engineers in the community
- the hygiene and the nutritional support, conveying awareness information to the beneficiaries, affecting the individual participants and by extension, also their families

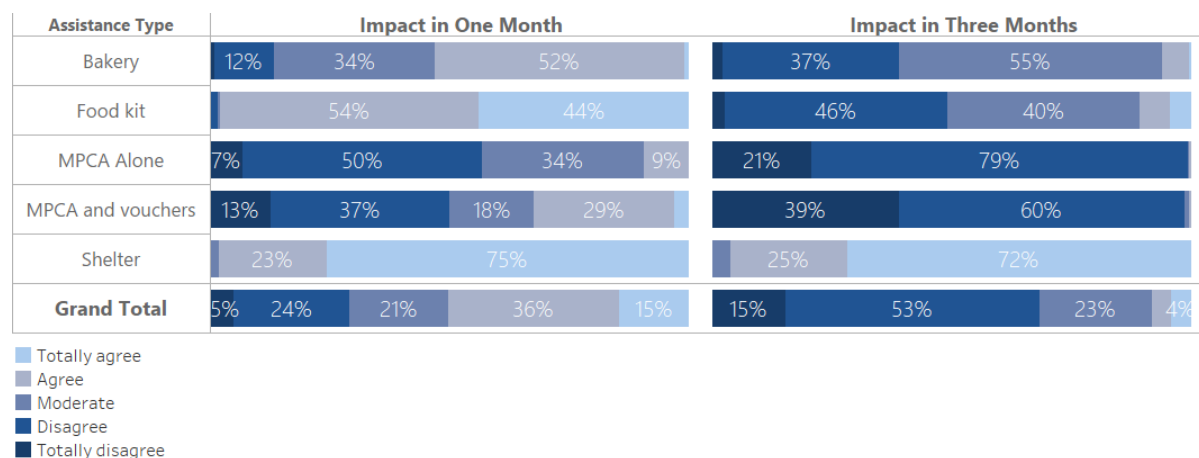
Local stakeholders observed that the provision of regular food assistance (in-kind, MPCA/vouchers, bakery support) did not generate any direct sustainable effect for the community. The only sustainable effects occurred whenever the HHs would invest its savings (made possible because of reduced expenditures for food) in durable initiatives, such as rehabilitating the shelter – as noted by a non-contracted shop in Darkosh [Rec. 6].

The statements by interviewed beneficiaries confirmed the reports of local stakeholders. Beneficiary HHs witnessed a limited sustainable impact generated by the assistance under the Project, mainly by the Shelter component. On the other hand, beneficiaries of hygiene and sanitation support in Kaebah displacement camp identified several positive effects of the Project on their overall living conditions.

A good half of interviewed HHs (51%) that benefitted from different modalities reported that the impact generated by the Project on their living conditions would still be noticeable in one month, especially among Shelter and food kit beneficiaries. MPCA standalone beneficiaries reported the lowest impact in the short-term, followed by MPCA/vouchers beneficiaries.

Several interviewed beneficiary HHs expressed their opinion that the mid-term impact of the Project is limited. Only one out of ten (9%) respondents stated that the impact of the Project on their living conditions will be noticeable in three months from now, with the exception of Shelter beneficiaries that reported a longer impact of the Project on their living conditions, due to the long-lasting nature of the Shelter interventions.

**Figure 15- Short and mid-term impact generated by the Project, by assistance modality**



Focus group participants that benefitted from sanitation and hygiene support in Kaebeh displacement camp described a range of medium-term (3 months) impacts generated under the Project, including the improved availability of water, the establishment of a sewage network system leading to a reduction of swamps (a breeding environment for insects), and the provision of waste bins that helped maintaining the sanitation of the camp site.

**XX. To what extent are households' currently using negative coping strategies?  
Disaggregate by modality type (Source: HH Surveys, SDR)**

The application of consumption-based coping strategies reported by interviewed beneficiary HHs, as identified in the rCSI indicator [see Table 2], varied depending on the modality of assistance (with MPCA/Voucher beneficiaries reporting the most frequent application of negative coping strategies).

The table below illustrates the average days each negative coping strategies was applied by the interviewed HHs. The most frequently adopted coping strategy, across the entire sample, was 'to rely on less preferred and less expensive foods.

The evaluation team did not observe specific variations in the application of coping strategies based on the displacement status, age group, or HH composition. However, it was noted that female-headed HHs often reported a higher application of coping strategies, compared to the overall sample, particularly among MPCA/Voucher recipients.

**Table 5 - Average days of application of food consumption coping strategies by beneficiaries over the previous week**

	MPCA/ Voucher	MPCA Standalone	Food Kits	bakery support	Grand Total
Rely on less preferred and less expensive foods	6 (All) 7 (F HoH)	3 (All) 3 (F HoH)	5.5 (All) 6.5 (F HoH)	3 (All) 3 (F HoH)	4 (All) 5 (F HoH)
Borrow food, or rely on help from a friend or relative	1 (All) 2 (F HoH)	1.5 (All) 1 (F HoH)	1 (All) 2 (F HoH)	0.5 (All) 0.5 (F HoH)	1 (All) 1.5 (F HoH)
Limit portion size at mealtimes	1 (All) 1.5 (F HoH)	0.5 (All) 0 (F HoH)	0 (All) 0 (F HoH)	0.5 (All) 0 (F HoH)	0.5 (All) 0.5 (F HoH)



Restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat	0.5 (All) 0.5 (F HoH)	0.5 (All) 0 (F HoH)	0 (All) 0 (F HoH)	0 (All) 0 (F HoH)	0 (All) 0.5 (F HoH)
Reduce number of meals eaten in a day	2.5 (All) 1 (F HoH)	1 (All) 1 (F HoH)	0.5 (All) 0.5 (F HoH)	1.5 (All) 2 (F HoH)	1 (All) 1 (F HoH)

**XXI. Does GOAL have an adequate exit strategy in place for its programming in Idleb and Northern Aleppo to ensure sustainability? (Source: KII team, SDR)**

The RESTORE I Project ended in August 2021, when the new phase of the grant, RESTORE II, started. The Project did not have an exit strategy in place. While GOAL continued some of the operations under the new grant (WASH), other activities changed the beneficiary lists based on revised vulnerability criteria.

On a programmatic level, the main sustainability consideration while transitioning Project activities to RESTORE II was the introduction of Livelihood support activities to help the community developing their own resilience and reducing their reliance on food support.

The interviewed staff confirmed the need for this new approach and admitted the limitations of not having an exit strategy under RESTORE I, especially as this relates to the dependency on regular food assistance. It was noted that when the Project ends, beneficiaries of food kits and vouchers/MPCA stop receiving the assistance and reportedly returned to their ‘food insecure’ situation. Given the scale of the needs in the targeted communities, as well as the scale of the target population, interviewed staff confirmed the need to transition the beneficiary population towards more sustainable support, while continuing to deliver regular food assistance to new beneficiary HHs (upon adjusting the selection criteria). Another point raised by the interviewed staff was the need to upscale the e-voucher modality, replacing paper vouchers as a more efficient distribution modality.

The interviewed GOAL staff made one observation about the organizational management while dealing with the shift in the aid modalities towards more sustainable livelihood interventions under RESTORE II. Since each aid modality requires a dedicated team, the staff recommended GOAL to pay larger attention to the transition and reallocation of existing human resources into the new Livelihoods team, to allow the organization to capitalize on their skills and previous experience.

During the staff interviews, it was noted that the bakery support activities did support the sustainability of local businesses and local markets. Therefore, a reduction of this component would not just reduce the food security support to subsidized bread beneficiaries but would undermine the sustainability of local bakery businesses and would decrease the quality standards of bakery inputs (i.e., flour and yeast) available at the local market [Rec. 11].

The WASH component was also recommended to continue supporting the water units and maintaining water systems, since the local authorities are lacking the resources to take over the ownership of the water network.

The Nutrition component of the Project established a functioning referral system to help people to meet their nutrition-related needs. Further, interviewed staff mentioned that under RESTORE II GOAL needs to strengthen its communication with the targeted community through mobile visits at HH level, conducting one-on-one consultation sessions.

The Shelter team completed their activities under the Project by having beneficiaries that are living in rented accommodation signing an agreement with their landlord, where they committed to remain in the rehabilitated shelter for at least 12 months. They also agreed with beneficiaries that, in case of leaving the shelter, rehabilitated items belonged to the landlord. During RESTORE II, as noted by the interviewed staff, GOAL needs to provide larger flexibility for beneficiary HHs to choose the type of rehabilitation works: either through contractual services, or by receiving the building materials and doing the works themselves. Also, the new RESTORE II project was recommended to include an infrastructure rehabilitation component (i.e., camp site rehabilitation and roads).

## LEARNING

- The Project team conducted multiple learning initiatives and dedicated increasing attention and resources to this process across the different departments and partner organizations
- GOAL has hired several sectoral consultants to advise and research on specific modalities and cross-cutting issues such as social inclusion, gender equality, and nutritional practices
- GOAL conducted several programmatic reviews during Project implementation. Most of these considerations contributed to the revised design of the subsequent RESTORE II grant
- GOAL program management and the MEL department was engaged in extensive consultations and regularly communicated their findings on the progress of field activities internally and externally, including the cluster system
- The final evaluation of the previous grant was undertaken after the closure of the previous grant, and the evaluation report was finalized at a time when RESTORE I had already started

### **XXII. To what extent has learning and research been captured by the Project? (Source: KII team)**

The learning process included three phases, as observed by the interviewed staff:

- **real time learning**, informed by the review of daily monitoring reports, cluster coordination with other NGOs, review of community feedback, and direct feedback from the team
- **milestone learning**, informed by donor reports, of GOAL's TPM reports, IPs monitoring activities, and learning workshops
- **end of project learning**, informed by learning workshops, evaluations, external workshops, and impact studies

The interviewed staff confirmed that GOAL has been organizing internal learning review workshops since 2019. These workshops, as confirmed by the staff managing the different modalities under RESTORE I, helped the team to identify and discuss critical MEL findings and documenting lessons learnt. The workshops discussed the evidence generated through complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM), direct monitoring, field monitoring and observation, and the feedback from program team.

The learning workshops were led by the MEL department (splitted by GOAL into a 'learning department' and a 'M&E department' since July 2021). The team held the workshops bi-annually, for each modality, with the plan to increase their frequency to a quarterly basis [Rec. 13]. Part of the workshops was conducted in Arabic language to facilitate the participation of the field staff, whereas workshops that included the senior management and HQs staff were held in English language. Holding

workshops in both languages was necessary, according to the staff, to maximize information sharing between all Project departments [Rec. 13]. Upon the conclusion of each workshop, the learning department generated an online worksheet - the “learning tracker” – for each sector, to facilitate the follow-up of agreed action points.

Interviewed GOAL staff appreciated the value of the learning workshops. However, no specific Shelter workshop was conducted (as Shelter activities started late during the grant period). Interviewed staff also reported that GOAL organized a workshop dedicated to e-vouchers, which was open to other INGOs as well (PIN and CARE).

Interviewed staff also reported that GOAL has hired several sectoral consultants to advise and research on specific modalities and cross-cutting issues such as social inclusion, gender equality, and nutritional practices.

The main sources of learning for GOAL’s implementing partners were the distribution monitoring and PDM activities, and bi-weekly meetings with GOAL, alongside the evidence coming from Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM). Partner staff appreciated the value of the training conducted by GOAL to all partner organizations to discuss eligibility criteria and the scope of work under the Project.

### **XXIII. Has (learning and research) been used to adapt programming on an ongoing basis and used to influence subsequent program grant submissions? What evidence is there? (Source: KII team)**

Based on findings from monitoring, research, and learning, the Project enabled several programmatic reviews during Project implementation. Most of these considerations contributed to the revised design of RESTORE II.

The interviewed staff reported several examples of reviews informed by evidence generated through MEL. Key features highlighted by the staff included:

- **Regular food assistance and MPCA:** The Project helped to upscale the use of MPCA and of e-vouchers, after learning that MPCA beneficiaries scored a higher food security status, compared to those receiving food kits or regular paper vouchers. In addition, it was observed that e-voucher beneficiaries were more resilient to shocks, such as during the COVID-19 crisis, and made it easier for GOAL to ensure continuity of assistance. Regarding in-kind assistance, the Project team removed rice from the composition of food kits, after receiving multiple rounds of complaints from the beneficiaries.
- **Vouchers and MPCA component:** After reviewing the distribution monitoring results, the Project team reviewed its distribution SOPs by reducing the total capacity of distributions per day, equipping the distribution sites with essential items such as drinking water and hand sanitizer liquids. In addition, after regular review of the SMEB, the Project team adjusted the voucher and MPCA transfer values to ensure consistency.
- **Bakery support:** The Project team changed the baking time from 3am to 6am, after reviewing the customers complaints about the quality of bread, which was not considered to be fresh by the sale time.

- **Emergency component:** The Project team increased the winterization cash support from 120 to 150 USD, after receiving complaints by the beneficiaries that the assistance was insufficient to meet their needs. The MPCA for emergency was reduced from 120 to 100 USD per HH, after the Project noted that disbursing 120 USD delayed the delivery, and triggered tensions with BNFs of other NGOs which used to receive 100 USD.
- **Nutrition component:** The delivery of Nutrition awareness sessions, which overlapped the distribution of regular food assistance, shifted to a different schedule. Since the Project observed that BNFs were tired and less focused after having attended the food distribution, they changed the modality by conducting one-on-one consultation with the beneficiaries in their shelter, and group-based awareness sessions in areas other than the distribution sites.
- **Shelter component:** The Project team increased the number of HH visits to reduce the information gaps of the beneficiaries, after receiving complaints from beneficiaries regarding the lack of clarity of the selection criteria.

#### **XXIV. Has the learning and research been widely shared internally and externally?**

**(Source: KII team)**

The Project team was closely involved in the discussion of MEL and research findings, internally at GOAL-level, at IP-level, and between GOAL and the IPs. In particular, interviewed staff observed that the program management and the MEL department was engaged in extensive consultations and regularly communicated their findings on the progress of field activities.

The monitoring and evaluation work under the Project included the production of daily reports by the ME field manager for local government (one for Idleb and one for Aleppo governorate), and quarterly reports by sector, as confirmed by interviewed staff. All reports were reviewed and approved by the program managers/coordinators and by the MEL team. This joint review reportedly ensured compliance of the MEL work with the programmatic needs.

The discussion and review of issues learned happened on regular basis, with the active participation of managers and MEL teams, as described in the section above (see p. 58).

The interviewed staff also reported that the Project team conducted several external assessments (for the bakery component, for the graduation approach, for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), and for CFM) with the participation and engagement of the Project management units in these research activities.

Interviewed IP staff reported that their MEAL departments held frequent and regular coordination meetings with their Project teams, at least on a weekly basis. The staff noted that this communication generated important evidence to inform the adjustment of field activities. The IPs communicated evidence of their MEAL work to GOAL monthly, together with a checklist requested by GOAL.

The MEAL/MEL units of GOAL and IPs discussed and supported each other in clarifying issues related to the monitoring of field activities, as confirmed by the interviewed staff.

For example, Big Heart's MEAL department had consulted with GOAL's verification department to clarify the operationalization of the selection criteria.

In terms of sharing MEL and research information with parties external to the Project team, interviewed staff mentioned the following channels and audiences:

- Monthly and final donor reports to BHA included, often as annexes, evidence about MEL and GOAL's research work under the Project. BHA shared positive feedback about the quality and timeliness of monthly reports they have received under the Project.
- Presentations and interventions during sectoral clusters' or working groups' meetings, addressing cluster members and cluster coordinators (UN agencies). During these meetings, the Project coordinators shared information about their real time learnings and sectoral assessments.

**XXV. To what extent has GOAL adapted its Project based on the recommendations from the previous grant's Final Evaluation? (Source: KII team, SDR)**

The final evaluation of the previous grant included findings and recommendations that were relevant to the design of the Project, according to interviewed staff. However, the final evaluation was undertaken after the closure of the previous grant, and the evaluation report was finalized at a time when RESTORE I had already started. For this reason, GOAL did not rely on the recommendations listed in the final evaluation while elaborating the proposal of RESTORE I [Rec. 14].

The interviewed staff mentioned that the final evaluation of the previous BHA-funded project included relevant recommendations to RESTORE I, some of which are now included in the design of RESTORE II:

- the importance of cash over in-kind assistance
- the limitation of certain food security outcome indicators to facilitate evaluating the impact of the project
- the recognition that regular food assistance contributes to a dependance on aid by the beneficiary community
- the requirement to transition beneficiaries from a dependency on food assistance towards sustainable livelihood support activities
- the importance to complement the regular food assistance with Nutrition support

# CONCLUSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

**Rec. 1 [Program] The procurement of external advisory services should always consider the programmatic and operational needs of PM/coordination staff by involving project managers and coordinators in the development of terms of references for these services**

GOAL's staff reported to the evaluation team that the organization recruited sectoral consultants, whose work was not always clear and relevant to the need of the Project managers/coordinators. The evaluation is not aware of the nature and the scope of these consultancy contracts. However, as a general consideration, MECS highlights the importance of involving the Project managers/coordinators in the definition of the ToRs of those consultants whose scope of work is to provide sectoral or managerial backstopping to the implementation of field activities.

**Rec. 2 [Program] The availability of teams from different departments to support each other is an important risk management measure, but the Project team should aim at recruiting staff as early as possible ahead of Project start (for example, by advertising positions with the note that recruitment is subject to the availability of funding)**

At times of critical work pressure or when Shelter and Nutrition staff were not yet hired, staff from other departments filled in the HR gaps. This mechanism of cooperation is an effective and efficient risk management measure. Situations of intense work pressure are not always predictable, and a cooperative, and ready-to-deploy team is vital. However, GOAL should enhance the efficiency of the recruitment process, by considering launching advertisements early, with the note that filling the position is subject to the availability of funding

By the time sectoral activities start, GOAL should make sure to have a full-time, dedicated team recruited and operational. Pilot initiatives, such as the Shelter and the Nutrition components, require a responsible, full-time team from their inception phases onwards.

**Rec. 3 [Program] Ensure that actors engaged in the distribution and in the use of cash are always aware of COVID-19 preventive measures. This includes ensuring that safe distancing is applied, and that sufficient information on the importance of preventive measures is provided to the beneficiaries**

The main risk associated with the distribution of cash is the exposure of COVID-19. Local stakeholders reported the following issues: a) low distancing at the distribution sites; b) the use of cash as vehicle of viral transmission; c) low awareness of the beneficiary population of COVID-19 preventive measures. Therefore, it is recommended to improve preventive measures during the distribution of assistance (space distancing, aeration of indoor spaces, wearing masks, use of hand sanitizers, etc.). In addition, it is suggested to enhance the local awareness about the risks of exposure to COVID-19 associated with the use and the exchange of cash.

**Rec. 4 [Voucher assistance] E-vouchers are preferred to paper vouchers, but initially, their system caused temporary interruptions, and its functioning needs improvement. This includes missing features of the E-voucher technology, for example the information how much credit is left for the beneficiary**

The provision of e-vouchers was satisfactory to most beneficiaries, and GOAL should consider upscaling the modality over paper vouchers. However, several beneficiaries complained about frequent breakdowns and inefficiencies in the delivery of e-vouchers. Project staff also confirmed that the activity experienced issue caused by the e-vouchers service provider and its system. Considering this evidence, the program should enhance the e-voucher service provision by focusing on:

- Ensuring regular functioning of e-vouchers readers at the contracted shops
- Add a functionality to allow beneficiaries to know how much credit they have left
- Provide operational guidelines on the use of e-vouchers in non-written form, e.g., by using visual illustrations and video animations
- Overall amelioration of the e-voucher system to ensure smooth, daily functioning across the entire network (to be discussed and developed together with the e-voucher service provider)

Another significant gap reported was that beneficiaries were often not aware of the actual prices set by the vendors. Since adding a functionality to let the users know the individual price set for each purchased commodity would not be feasible, the development of an alternative measure is recommended. For example, right before concluding the purchase at the shop, a feature could inform the e-voucher customers about the total amount in cart (value calculated by the shop vendor in his system), and their eventual credit left. The customer could authorize the e-voucher purchase upon the review of the total value of the cart.

**Rec. 5 [MPCA/voucher assistance] The MPCA/voucher modality is highly relevant to the needs of the community, but the use of impact indicators should be revised**

The evidence gathered by the evaluation team suggests that MPCA/Voucher assistance was relevant. It addressed the regional priority of the donor and was an effective and efficient way to respond to the local needs. However, the impact indicators showed that beneficiaries of MPCA/Voucher assistance reported a lower score, if compared to those receiving other modalities of assistance. A partial explanation of this is that the e-vouchers system caused several interruptions in the delivery of the assistance. However, the evaluation of the impact of the modality suffered from the fact that most MPCA/voucher beneficiaries received their last assistance between May and June 2021, while data collection happened mid-September. This gap was longer than the recommended 30-50 days and distorted the findings. This should be avoided in future evaluations. However, it needs to be emphasized that the moderately low impact reported by MPCA/vouchers does not adequately measure the relevance of this modality. GOAL should continue promoting the use of MPCA/voucher assistance also in future interventions.

**Rec. 6 [MPCA/voucher assistance] To promote the sustainability of livelihoods, the impact of multi-purpose cash assistance could be maximized by training the beneficiaries on spending of cash assistance for the improvement of their livelihoods, improved financial planning, and opportunities of investment**

In line with the observations shared by multiple stakeholders, it is important to upscale livelihood support to foster the resilience of the target population and the sustainability of the assistance. While the wide scope of possible livelihood support initiatives was not part of this evaluation, it is nevertheless recommended that GOAL should consider implementing some initiatives to complement the MPCA/CVA activities. MPCA/Voucher assistance did not generate a durable impact. However, in a few cases, MPCA/Voucher beneficiaries managed to spend the cash assistance, or their savings, to purchase items or services with a sustainable effect (e.g., to fix their shelter). This evidence suggests that MPCA/Voucher beneficiaries should reinforce their capacity to spend their money/savings, with an eye towards sustainability, and even towards opportunities for investment – depending on their financial availability and personal needs. Most of the target community regularly experience acute food insecurity, WASH, NFI, Health, and livelihoods needs. In this condition, beneficiaries of MPCA/Voucher assistance are expected to spend their resources to access basic services and commodities for their economic survival. However, GOAL and partner should consider providing MPCA/voucher beneficiaries with training opportunities focusing on financial literacy, including topics as:

- Advantages and disadvantages of different saving options
- Financial planning, budgeting, and income/expenditure analysis
- Making spending decision and daily cash tracking
- Financial services and requirements: agency banking, mobile money, etc.
- Income generating activities: selection, planning and management, investments, and loans (how to manage debts)

**Rec. 7 [MPCA/vouchers, food kits, Nutrition] Sharing the same categories of beneficiaries between different modality improves the efficiency of assistance**

The delivery of multisectoral assistance to the same group of beneficiaries enhance the efficiency of the interventions. The identification and verification of the target population took limited time and resources, if compared to the targeting of different beneficiaries for each modality, and synergies and between the different sectoral departments was maximized. The coordination enabled a faster delivery of the assistance to the beneficiary population, and the development of contingency measures (for instance, transitioning beneficiaries from vouchers to food kits in case of need). Therefore, it is recommended to continue adopting a similar targeting approach in future programs.

**Rec. 8 [MPCA/voucher, food kits, Shelter] Community members need to be better informed about eligibility and exclusion criteria**

In addition to consulting with the local community for the assessment of the local needs, GOAL and partners should enhance their efforts to communicate vulnerability, eligibility, and exclusion criteria to the beneficiary and non-beneficiary populations, as well as to the LC. Such communications should happen on an ongoing basis, not only at the beginning of a project. Regular communication should incorporate practical examples of included/excluded categories, to facilitate the understanding by the community. GOAL shall keep on focusing in describing the targeting criteria to the implementing partners as well, for the IPs not just to apply them properly, but also to pass over the right information



to the local community. In addition, GOAL should clarify the process of selection of contracted shops within future voucher programs. Shops submitting their application and being rejected should be notified with a brief explanation for their rejection.

**Rec. 9 [WASH in camp settings] Access to water in camps should be enhanced, and awareness sessions on hygiene and sanitation should continue**

The evaluation recommends the WASH department to consider upscaling the amount of water available per day to each individual living in a camp setting (40 liters/person/day). This could be achieved either by replacing the 500 liters tank with larger capacity tanks, or by increasing the pumping frequency from being pumped every 3 days for 45 minutes to being pumped daily for 30 minutes. The WASH program should also continue conducting awareness sessions covering health awareness and prevention from most common diseases and COVID-19. The best time for people to attend the WASH activities would be late afternoon upon conclusion of domestic tasks (female members), Friday afternoon, or evening during weekdays (male members).

**Rec. 10 [WASH in camp settings] Beneficiaries of WASH activities in Kaebeh camp need to be better familiarized with formal CFM**

While people felt that GOAL and partner staff was accessible to communicate with, WASH beneficiaries in Kaebeh displacement camp did not know about the availability of a CFM. GOAL should consider raising more awareness of a formal CFM among WASH beneficiaries in the camp. The main advantages of a CFM would be to allow people to communicate with GOAL and partners in anonymity (if needed), and to know about the steps taken by the organization to treat the feedback shared by the beneficiary.

**Rec. 11 [WASH, bakery support] The WASH and the bakery components strengthen GOAL's access and acceptance and reputation at community level and should continue as a strategic priority**

GOAL has been active in the WASH response as well as in the bakery support for several years. Both program components have been relying on a blanket targeting approach, supporting the entire community living in the target areas. Both intervention areas allowed GOAL to develop a positive reputation at community level, alongside a strong knowledge of the local needs and of the local stakeholders. This added value, besides the direct impact on food security, on local business development, and on the WASH needs of the community need to continue for their strategic value and when undertaking similar actions in the future.

**Rec. 12 [WASH] Internet connectivity with local water units need to be improved (Salqin and Harem)**

As noted by the water unit staff, water units (WUs) in Salqin and Harem lacked internet connectivity. GOAL should verify the nature of this gap, and eventually equip the WUs with access to internet or alternative means of electronic communication.

**Rec. 13 [MEL] The experience of the learning review workshop was valuable to the team and should be brought to larger scale**

The management team interviewed by the evaluator credited the value brought by the learning workshop organized by GOAL for their work. Therefore, GOAL is recommended to continue these activities, under the leadership of GOAL's learning department, in all of its phases, including a) regular collection of information/evidence from all the Project levels; b) holding of the workshop and generation of learning tracker worksheet; and c) follow-up on assigned points. The frequency of similar workshops should be increased (bi-monthly), keeping the workshops in both English and Arabic to leverage on the participation of the field staff as well as to the technical management staff.

**Rec. 14 [MEL] Final evaluation exercises expose their full potential when delivered before the Project ends, and before the upcoming grant starts. This should be taken into consideration for the next evaluation cycle**

The final evaluation of the previous grant – SUSTAIN II – was finalized once RESTORE I activities had already started, and for that reason its recommendations produced a limited learning. Albeit with some improvement, the same has happened now with this evaluation that was finalized while RESTORE II activities are being started. Therefore, it is recommended for future evaluation cycles to commence the data collection before the start of a potential follow-up project and ensuring that the reporting stages conclude in proximity with the end of the evaluated grant. This would allow for a higher quality of the primary data collection, and to ensure that report findings and recommendation can feed in the earliest phases of implementation. In addition to that, based on the experience with the final evaluation of RESTORE I, it is recommended not to underestimate the duration of a proper inception phase. The full development of a solid evaluation methodology (jointly between the consultant and GOAL), and the secondary data review for multisectoral initiatives like RESTORE require several weeks of efforts, from both sides (rough estimate: 8 weeks). Additionally, GOAL should ensure to properly coordinate the work expected by its team of reviewers, scheduling their involvement since the initial stages of the evaluation. Therefore, and for the planning and procurement of final evaluations in the future, GOAL should consider contracting third-party consultants 6-8 months before the project ends.

# **ANNEXES**

**ANNEX I: LIST OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

**ANNEX II: INCEPTION REPORT**

**ANNEX III: ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK**

**ANNEX IV: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED (STAFF)**

**ANNEX V: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED (LOCAL SH)**

**ANNEX VI: FGD PARTICIPANTS FROM WASH PROGRAM**

**ANNEX VII: COMPLEMENTARY FIGURES**

**ANNEX VIII: ECHO PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING INDEX**

**ANNEX IX: LIST OF SECONDARY DATA REVIEWED**



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