



EXTERNAL EVALUATION

SMAC

March 2026

Country: Syria

Base/area: Northeast Syria, Raqqa and Hassake governorates

Desired start date: April 2026

Duration of the assignment: 5 weeks

CONTENTS

1. ACRONYMS	1
2. PRESENTATION OF SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL	1
2.1. IN GENERAL.....	1
2.2. IN THE COUNTRY.....	1
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT AND THE PROJECT	2
3.1. PRESENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION AREA.....	2
3.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT TO BE MONITORED AND INTERVENTION LOGIC	2
4. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION	4
4.1. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION	4
4.2. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION.....	4
5. EVALUATION QUESTIONS	4
6. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	5
7. DELIVERABLES	5
8. EVALUATION SCHEDULE	6
9. BUDGET	6
10. CONSULTANT PROFILE / TEAM COMPOSITION	7
11. APPLICATION	7
12. PROCEDURES AND LOGISTICS	8

1. ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
Do No Harm	Conflict-sensitive approach to programming
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FCRM	Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NES	Northeast Syria
PwD	Persons with Disabilities
SI	Solidarités International
SMAC	Strengthening Market Accessibility and Capacity
ToR	Terms of Reference
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

2. PRESENTATION OF SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL

A. IN GENERAL

Solidarités International (SI) is a French NGO, independent of any political, economic, ethnic or religious group. For more than 40 years, it has been providing humanitarian aid to populations affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters by meeting their vital needs (water, food, shelter) and strengthening their resilience. Particularly committed to the fight against water-borne diseases, the leading cause of death in the world, SI provides expertise in the areas of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, as well as in the essential area of food and livelihood security. SI's teams are present in more than 27 countries and supporting close to 5 million people.

B. IN THE COUNTRY

After thirteen years of conflict in Syria, the impact of present and past hostilities on civilians remains the principal driver of humanitarian needs. Northeast (NES) and Northwest Syria (NWS) contexts are both characterized by: (i) ongoing and protracted displacements with low return opportunities, into densely populated areas where humanitarian assistance is overstretched, (ii) no availability of alternative durable solutions, such as eventual re-installation or re-integration within host communities due to social and cultural barriers, as well as the will of authorities to protect local communities, (iii) the depletion of productive assets and savings, (iv) limited economic opportunities, exacerbated by the continued depreciation of the Syrian Pound and rising inflation, and (v) the widespread destruction and contamination of agriculture and water-related infrastructure by explosive remnants, as well as other infrastructures. These dynamics have been

further complicated by recent political developments, including the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 and the resulting instability, which continue to shape displacement patterns and the operational environment. Additionally, uncertainty surrounding international aid flows—particularly following the termination of U.S. foreign assistance—has disrupted community engagement and eroded trust in humanitarian actors in some areas.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT AND THE PROJECT

A. PRESENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION AREA

The economic and social situation in Northeast Syria continues to deteriorate under the combined effects of prolonged conflict, economic sanctions, and climate-related pressures, with particularly severe consequences for communities in Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh governorates. Both regions have experienced extensive infrastructure destruction, loss of livelihoods, and the near collapse of local markets. Assessments conducted by Solidarités International (SI) in 2024 highlight that markets in Al Jazrat (Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor) and Markada (Markada sub-district, Al-Hasakeh) serve as vital commercial hubs for their surrounding populations—estimated at 42,500 and 9,600 people respectively—but face significant structural and functional challenges. Years of conflict, limited investment, and the absence of effective governance mechanisms have left these markets with deteriorated infrastructure, inadequate access to water and sanitation, and poor environmental conditions. In both locations, vendors struggle with high operational costs, lack of reliable electricity, and minimal access to financial or technical support. The collapse of local cooperatives and associations, once central to community economic resilience, has further constrained access to inputs and market linkages.

The socio-economic fragility of these communities is compounded by the effects of climate change and displacement, particularly affecting agricultural productivity - the main source of livelihood in both governorates. Drought, rising temperatures, and fuel shortages have reduced farming output and income, forcing households to adopt negative coping strategies such as selling productive assets, migrating for work, or reducing food consumption. In Al Jazrat, SI's 2024 assessment found that 91% of vendors face operational losses due to poor road and pavement conditions, while safety and accessibility are major concerns for women and persons with disabilities due to insufficient lighting and inadequate market design. Similarly, in Markada, poor infrastructure and limited financial capacity hinder economic activity, while the absence of basic services such as clean water and waste management poses significant public health risks. Despite these constraints, both markets remain essential to local trade, providing food, fuel, and basic commodities to surrounding villages.

By targeting Al Jazrat and Markada markets, the intervention seeks to restore critical economic functions, enhance infrastructure, and strengthen the capacity of market actors through inclusive and sustainable approaches. The rehabilitation of water networks, installation of solar lighting, and establishment of market committees will not only improve physical conditions and safety but also promote governance, equity, and long-term community resilience in the face of persistent economic challenges.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT TO BE MONITORED AND INTERVENTION LOGIC

Project title: Strengthening Market Accessibility and Capacity (SMAC)

Start and duration of the project:

Location of implementation: Deir-ez-Zor governorate (Kishreh subdistrict, Al Jazrat market), and Al-Hasakeh governorate (Markada subdistrict, Markada Market).

Sector of implementation: Shelter / WaSH / Livelihoods

Intervention logic and activities:

Overall objective: Enhance market functionality and administration to strengthen community access and business resilience in North-East Syria

Theory of change: if market infrastructure in key locations such as Al Jazrat and Markada is rehabilitated and upgraded, and if the capacity of market stakeholders is enhanced through targeted training programs on business management, financial literacy, and sustainable practices, then market functionality will improve, leading to strengthened community access to essential goods and services. Additionally, by establishing market committees to oversee the administration and maintenance of market infrastructure, the project will ensure long-term sustainability and resilience of businesses, thereby contributing to the sustainable socio-economic development of the region.

Project Outcome: Enhanced market functionality in Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh governorates through increased accessibility and capacity of market actors.

- Activity 1: Market infrastructure rehabilitation
- Activity 2: Improvement of lighting conditions
- Activity 3: Improvement of water service and waste management through promotion of hygiene awareness
- Activity 4: Establishment of market committees (Markada market and Al Jazrat market)
- Activity 5: Vendors training on business skills and financial management (Markada market and Al Jazrat market)

Project beneficiaries:

Beneficiaries	Men	Women	Children	Families		Total
				Host	IDP	
Direct	486	15	0	411	90	501
Indirect	2783	3315	6002	7623	4477	12100

Project stakeholders: The key stakeholders of this project include market vendors, shop owners, mobile sellers, and workers in Markada and Al Jazrat, as well as the wider community of customers who rely on these markets. Local authorities, community leaders, and the newly established market committees play a central role in guiding and sustaining market governance. Solidarités International’s program, MEAL, and technical teams, alongside contracted service providers, will support implementation. Coordination will also involve relevant humanitarian actors such as the ERL and FSL working groups. Women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups are considered critical stakeholders whose needs and perspectives will guide the design and monitoring of all activities.

Summary of major changes in the implementation of the project being evaluated:

Since the start of implementation, the SMAC component has undergone several adjustments in sequencing and timelines, primarily driven by contextual volatility, governance dynamics, and the technical and consultative requirements of market rehabilitation interventions.

- Throughout 2025, the security and political context in Northeast Syria (NES) remained volatile, with fluctuating tensions between SDF and GoS, sporadic incidents, road closures and broader regional instability. While access to SMAC intervention areas was largely maintained, these dynamics required continuous monitoring and risk management, with potential implications for mobility, supply chains and implementation planning.
- The phased and consultative nature of the SMAC approach resulted in intentional adjustments to implementation timelines. Significant time was dedicated to market assessments, KIIs and FGDs with shop owners and tenants, establishment and capacity strengthening of Market Management Committees (MMCs), and iterative stakeholder consultations. These steps were necessary to ensure relevance, community acceptance and risk mitigation, but led to a longer preparatory phase prior to physical rehabilitation works.
- Implementation was further shaped by tenure- and protection-related concerns raised by market actors, particularly fears of eviction, rent increases, loss of assets and income disruption during rehabilitation and solarization works. Addressing these concerns required extended negotiations and

the development and validation of detailed MoUs with shop owners and tenants, defining roles, responsibilities, rent stability clauses, asset ownership and mitigation measures for temporary business closure. This process contributed to delays but strengthened accountability and sustainability of the intervention.

- Tendering processes also influenced implementation timelines. A significant number of submissions did not initially meet full administrative or technical requirements, requiring additional verification. Market volatility and varying levels of familiarity with formal procurement procedures further contributed to the complexity and duration of the evaluation process.
- Finally, implementation sequencing was adjusted to strengthen local governance and market management capacity, including the training and certification of MMC members, recruitment of community agents, and alignment between WASH, Shelter and FSL teams. These adjustments were made to ensure effective coordination, community ownership and longer-term sustainability of market rehabilitation outcomes.

4. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

A. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the external evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence of the SMAC project and to determine the extent to which the project has improved market functionality, accessibility, and capacity of market actors. The evaluation will generate practical, evidence-based findings and recommendations to support accountability to donors and stakeholders, inform future market-based and livelihoods programming, and strengthen Solidarités International's learning and decision-making.

B. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The external evaluation will assess the SMAC project as a whole, covering all key activities implemented in Al Jazrat market (Deir-ez-Zor) and Markada market (Al-Hasakeh), including market rehabilitation and upgrading works, accessibility and safety improvements, WASH services, capacity building of market actors, and the establishment and functioning of market committees. The evaluation will examine the project's relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence, taking into account contextual factors, inclusion and accessibility considerations, and any unintended effects. The scope covers the full implementation period up to the time of data collection.

5. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation questions comprise core inquiries addressing the most essential topics in alignment with the DAC criteria.

- Q1. To what extent has market rehabilitation improved market functionality, accessibility, and safety for vendors and customers, including women and persons with disabilities?
- Q2. To what extent have infrastructure improvements (rehabilitation, lighting, WASH, accessibility) improved daily business operations and service delivery within the markets?
- Q3. What effects—intended and unintended—has the project had on vendors' livelihoods and business sustainability, including income stability, operating costs, and business performance?
- Q4. How has the project affected local market dynamics and social relations, including inclusion/exclusion risks, affordability, and interactions between vendors, customers, and authorities?

- Q5. How effective have market committees and capacity-building activities been in strengthening market governance, coordination, and routine operation and maintenance (O&M)?
- Q6. How feasible and credible are the handover and exit arrangements, including clarity of roles, availability of resources, and linkages with local authorities and service providers?
- Q7. To what extent have anticipated risks identified at project outset—particularly regarding rent increases or tenure insecurity materialized, and what impact have these had on vendors’ economic stability and perceptions of market governance?

NB: Additional research questions may be identified, and existing research questions may be redefined during the Evaluation inception and implementation, as needed.

6. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The external evaluation will apply a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence of the SMAC project.

The detailed methodology, including data collection tools and sampling, will be proposed by the selected consultant during the inception phase and validated by Solidarités International (SI) prior to data collection.

The evaluation is expected to include the following methods:

- **Desk review** of key project documents, including the project proposal, logframe, monitoring data, market rehabilitation designs, market committee documentation, training materials, and relevant contextual analysis;
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with SI staff, partners, local authorities, market committee members, and other relevant stakeholders;
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** and/or group interviews with market actors (vendors, workers) and, where feasible, customers and community representatives, with attention to gender and inclusion;
- **Direct observation and site visits** to rehabilitated markets and infrastructure, where access permits;
- **Quantitative data collection**, where relevant, through surveys with market actors or service users to support analysis of market functionality and accessibility.

The evaluation methodology should allow for triangulation of data across sources and methods and remain adaptable to access and security constraints. Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and a Do No Harm approach, must be respected throughout the evaluation.

7. DELIVERABLES

The consultant or consulting firm is expected to deliver a limited set of outputs to support the evaluation process, from inception to final reporting and dissemination of findings.

Expected deliverables:

- **Inception note** outlining the evaluation approach, work plan, data collection methods, sampling, and key risks, shared with Solidarités International before data collection;
- **Preliminary findings presentation** summarising initial findings and observations after data collection;
- **Draft evaluation report** presenting findings, conclusions, and practical recommendations, shared for review and comments;
- **Final evaluation report** incorporating feedback and submitted in editable and PDF formats, with relevant annexes;

- **Executive summary** highlighting key findings and recommendations for donor and external audiences;
- **Final presentation** summarising key findings, lessons learned, and recommendations.

8. EVALUATION SCHEDULE

Task and/or deliverable	Timeline (approximate, to be confirmed)
Final Selection of the Consultant/ Consulting agency	April 2026
Start of the consultancy	April 2026
Kick of meeting with SI team	April 2026
Inception report (including detailed data collection methodology and plan, data collection tools)	April 2026
Tool development and Validation	April 2026
Start of data collection	May 2026
Data cleaning and preliminary analysis	May 2026
Preliminary findings presentation	May 2026
Draft report writing	May 2026
SI feedback on draft report	May 2026
Final Report Submission +PPP with the most essential findings	May 2026

9. BUDGET

The overall budget available for this external evaluation is up to **25,000 EUR**. This includes all consultancy fees, international and local travel, accommodation, insurance, per diem, interpretation, data collection support, transcription/translation costs, and any other expenses incurred during the assignment.

Consultants are expected to submit a financial proposal alongside their technical proposal, detailing:

- Daily consultancy rates;
- Number of working days;
- Any anticipated reimbursable costs (e.g., travel, accommodation, interpretation);
- Applicable taxes or fees.

Solidarités International will cover specific logistics (e.g., field access facilitation, security briefings, and introduction to partner teams) and will provide relevant project documentation, beneficiary data, and contacts for stakeholder interviews. The consultant will be contracted directly by Solidarités International.

10. CONSULTANT PROFILE / TEAM COMPOSITION

In general, the evaluation consultant or consulting firm is expected to demonstrate the following qualifications:

- Proven experience in external evaluations and/or learning assessments of humanitarian, early recovery, or resilience-oriented interventions, preferably in Northeast Syria or comparable complex and protracted crisis contexts;
- Demonstrated experience evaluating market-based, livelihoods, and infrastructure rehabilitation interventions, including market rehabilitation and upgrading, accessibility improvements, energy and solar solutions, WASH services in public or commercial spaces, and support to market actors and governance structures;
- Familiarity with assessing integrated and complementary interventions, including the interaction between infrastructure rehabilitation, service provision, livelihoods support, market functionality, and governance mechanisms such as market committees;
- Ability to assess relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, including functionality of rehabilitated infrastructure, appropriateness of technical solutions, inclusiveness and accessibility (including for persons with disabilities), and adaptability of interventions in volatile and resource-constrained environments;
- Strong expertise in qualitative and mixed-methods data collection and analysis, including triangulation of data from multiple sources (programme data, market actor perspectives, beneficiary and customer feedback, partner inputs, and field observations), with sound understanding of data protection, ethical standards, and Do No Harm principles;
- Experience conducting evaluations under remote or partially remote management arrangements, including coordination with field teams, local partners, community structures, and authorities across different geographic locations and operational constraints;
- Demonstrated capacity to integrate gender-responsive approaches throughout the evaluation process, including the deployment of qualified female field staff or enumerators to ensure safe, culturally appropriate, and meaningful engagement of women and girls during data collection and field-based activities;
- Excellent command of English, with strong analytical writing and synthesis skills suitable for donor-facing evaluation reports;
- Working knowledge of Arabic is a strong asset;
- Demonstrated capacity to coordinate or supervise evaluation activities across multiple locations and markets in Northeast Syria, either through direct access or through structured remote support, partner facilitation, and locally based data collection mechanisms.

11. APPLICATION

Interested applicants are required to submit their proposal, using the following guidelines:

- **Cover letter** – one-page maximum (this document should be signed and/or stamped)
- **Technical proposal** - 10 pages maximum (this document should be signed and/or stamped) including the following but not limited to:
 - Understanding of the Evaluation scope of work
 - Proposed methodology, sampling, and data collection methods
 - Proposed approach for data collection, cleaning and analysis
 - Composition of team and assigned roles in the survey
 - Confirmation of availability to work in NES

NB: Considering that the methodology and data collection approach will be co-designed by SI and the selected consultant during the first weeks of the consultancy, at this stage, applicants are not required to

submit a fully finalized methodological approach or assessment timeline at this stage. However, applicants are expected to suggest appropriate methodological and data collection approaches, based on key considerations outlined in Section 6 of this TOR.

- **Financial proposal**, including breakdown of costs in USD (this document should be signed and/or stamped).
- **Consultant(s) resumes:**
 - Training and qualifications
 - Professional experience (if relevant to consultancy, specific skills and/or specific context conditions)
 - Experience in evaluation/research in similar context and sector
 - Experience in facilitating learning and participatory processes (in the case of a learning-oriented evaluation with co-construction of lessons learned and recommendations)
 - Knowledge of the country/area of intervention
 - Languages
 - Availability to work across NES
- **Sample** copy of at least two similar assignments in past work.
- **3 references** for similar / relevant consultancies

All documents should be sent in **PDF** version.

Criteria of evaluation of the offers will be:

- Price: 40%
- Quality of technical proposal: 30%
- Team capacity and references: 30%

Applications that do not include at least three references from previous relevant consultancy or research assignments will not be considered.

Solidarités International considers individual candidates and teams equally.

The applicants must send off requested documents by email to tender@solidarites-syria.org With subject "GIZ SMAC Evaluation", before the deadline of: **29th of March 2026**. Offers received after the deadline will not be considered.

Questions may be submitted to SI until **25th of March 2026**. All applicants will receive answers to their questions and questions of other applicants on rolling basis.

12. PROCEDURES AND LOGISTICS

All associated costs for planning, conducting (field work) and reporting of the proposed survey will be borne by the consultant. SI may only support with the following aspects of the consultancy:

- Provide access to available necessary secondary information, project literature and information used during the project life.
- Technical review and validation of the key TPM deliverables as outlined in the sections above.
- Where possible and necessary coordinate with beneficiaries, stakeholders and partners to support field work plan for interviews and data collection.
- Payment of consultancy fee as per mode of payment outline in the signed agreement entailing the final approved technical and financial proposals.

No data may be used by the Consultant regarding this study without the written authorization of Solidarités International for a period of 5 years. As the Consultant is acting as a contractor, it will ensure that it presents itself as such for all interviews held as part of the consultancy.

The Consultant agrees to comply immediately with any specific security instructions from SI based on its security analysis and knowledge of the area and its actors. In the event of an incident encountered during the course of the consultancy, the Consultant undertakes to contact SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL as soon as possible.

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