

Aid Contestation and Rebel Rule

Supplemental Appendix

A Summary Statistics

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Obs	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
LC Support	11838	3.03	1.18	1.00	5.00
SIG Support	11661	2.65	1.12	1.00	5.00
Female	13605	0.43	0.49	0.00	1.00
Age	13605	35.64	14.63	16.00	98.00
Income (pre-war)	12405	1.40	0.61	1.00	3.00
Sunni Kurd	13605	0.01	0.08	0.00	1.00
Employed	13605	0.12	0.33	0.00	1.00
Education	13605	2.44	0.81	1.00	5.00
Aid	13605	5.02	8.94	0.00	53.83
Local Contestation	13657	0.30	0.46	0.00	1.00
National Contestation	13657	0.38	0.48	0.00	1.00
ISIS Control	13657	0.21	0.40	0.00	1.00
JAN/AAS Control	13657	0.17	0.38	0.00	1.00
Kurdish Control	13657	0.004	0.06	0.00	1.00
Fragmentation	12,906	0.777	0.802	0	3
LC Age (Months)	11,536	5.310	4.650	0	23

Horizontal line separates individual-level variables from community-level variables.

B Robustness Checks

Column 1 of Table 3 uses the full sample, where the instrument is the shortest distance to the Turkish border; column 2 restricts the analysis to the latter two collection periods, which occurred after Turkey closed the border to migration; column 3 uses an alternative measure of distance the Turkish border, which uses routes through Lebanon for areas near Lebanon; column 4 uses an alternative measure of the instrument which is the air distance from the community to the closest crossing station.

Table 2: 2SLS Regression Results

	LC Support	LC Support	LC Support	LC Support
Aid	0.039*** (0.015)	0.033*** (0.012)	0.033*** (0.011)	0.029*** (0.010)
Aid X Contestation	-0.017 (0.019)	-0.018** (0.009)	-0.009** (0.008)	-0.018** (0.008)
Contestation	-0.162 (0.169)	-0.133 (0.103)	-0.138 (0.104)	-0.105 (0.117)
ISIS	-0.262*** (0.064)	-0.141 (0.201)	-0.143 (0.200)	-0.131 (0.196)
JAN/AAS	0.010 (0.078)	-0.045 (0.124)	-0.045 (0.124)	-0.066 (0.119)
FSA	-0.090 (0.069)	-0.172 (0.157)	-0.169 (0.155)	-0.133 (0.136)
Fragmentation	0.093** (0.045)	0.140** (0.059)	0.139** (0.058)	0.117** (0.046)
Age	-0.001* (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Education	0.125*** (0.016)	-0.015 (0.024)	-0.015 (0.024)	-0.013 (0.023)
Male	0.021 (0.024)	-0.011 (0.036)	-0.011 (0.036)	-0.007 (0.035)
Sunni Arab	-0.204** (0.101)	-0.251 (0.231)	-0.255 (0.232)	-0.298 (0.220)
Kurd	-0.246** (0.119)	-0.749* (0.413)	-0.756* (0.413)	-0.774* (0.433)
LC Age	-0.005 (0.008)	0.002 (0.025)	0.002 (0.025)	0.004 (0.024)
Observations	9652	3300	3300	3350

Robust standard errors clustered by community in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table 3: OLS Regression Results

	LC Support	SIG Support
Aid	0.054 ** (0.023)	0.041* (0.023)
Aid X Contestation	-0.039* (0.021)	-0.030 (0.021)
Contestation	0.064 (0.078)	-0.073* (0.036)
ISIS	-0.267 ** (0.111)	0.164 (0.167)
JAN/AAS	-0.111 (0.095)	0.139 (0.125)
FSA	0.078 (0.086)	0.170 ** (0.072)
Fragmentation	0.066 (0.050)	0.052 (0.042)
Age	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Education	0.158 *** (0.013)	0.260 *** (0.013)
Male	0.007 (0.020)	-0.007 (0.020)
Sunni	-0.217 ** (0.091)	-0.112 (0.077)
Kurd	-0.109 (0.131)	0.262 (0.192)
Constant	1.988 *** (0.137)	1.443 *** (0.102)
Observations	12253	10984

Robust standard errors clustered by community in parentheses

Alternative measure of contestation described in the main text.

Column 1 uses LC Support as the DV, while column 2 uses SIG support.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table 4: OLS Regression Results

	Model 1 (LC People Support)	Model 2 (LC Post Assad Role)	Model 3 (LC Communicates)	Model 4 (LC Supports Needs)	Model 5 (LC Best Option)	Model 6 (LC Not Corrupt)	Model 7 (LC Listens)	Model 8 (LC Prioritizes)
Aid	0.008*** (0.003)	0.025* (0.013)	0.018*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.003)	0.025* (0.014)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.015*** (0.003)	0.003 (0.018)
Aid X Contestation	-0.010*** (0.003)	0.004 (0.022)	-0.011*** (0.004)	-0.014*** (0.003)	0.005 (0.023)	-0.012** (0.005)	-0.012*** (0.003)	-0.033 (0.026)
Contestation	-0.065 (0.091)	-0.138 (0.135)	-0.039 (0.097)	-0.055 (0.085)	-0.111 (0.139)	0.138 (0.114)	0.010 (0.091)	-0.048 (0.151)
ISIS	-0.070 (0.177)	0.018 (0.224)	-0.092 (0.207)	-0.035 (0.188)	-0.054 (0.187)	-0.432*** (0.138)	0.050 (0.148)	-0.204 (0.173)
JAN/AAS	0.011 (0.096)	-0.124 (0.118)	-0.018 (0.127)	0.041 (0.083)	0.013 (0.151)	-0.086 (0.071)	0.063 (0.104)	-0.114 (0.081)
FSA	-0.034 (0.127)	-0.165 (0.155)	0.055 (0.133)	0.126 (0.105)	0.003 (0.181)	0.026 (0.097)	0.084 (0.124)	0.000 (.)
Fragmentation	0.107* (0.062)	0.095 (0.064)	0.100 (0.069)	0.059 (0.059)	0.086 (0.053)	-0.002 (0.056)	0.129* (0.063)	0.095 (0.074)
Age	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Education	0.187*** (0.018)	0.230*** (0.016)	0.169*** (0.019)	0.187*** (0.018)	0.188*** (0.016)	0.129*** (0.019)	0.178*** (0.016)	0.236*** (0.024)
Male	0.011 (0.026)	-0.002 (0.027)	0.018 (0.026)	0.020 (0.029)	0.034 (0.032)	0.014 (0.023)	0.020 (0.022)	0.029 (0.030)
Sunni	-0.263* (0.138)	-0.283** (0.103)	-0.086 (0.095)	-0.172 (0.137)	-0.322*** (0.078)	-0.338** (0.123)	-0.265* (0.139)	-0.208 (0.160)
Kurd	-0.029 (0.160)	-0.030 (0.131)	-0.017 (0.166)	-0.101 (0.153)	-0.083 (0.156)	-0.096 (0.265)	-0.023 (0.173)	0.118 (0.106)
Constant	1.768*** (0.214)	2.553*** (0.130)	2.224*** (0.144)	1.802*** (0.189)	2.616*** (0.109)	3.211*** (0.186)	2.355*** (0.164)	2.447*** (0.253)
Observations	10813	9628	10853	10840	9688	11128	10869	7498

Robust standard errors clustered by community in parentheses

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table 5: OLS Regression Results

	LC Support	LC Support	LC Support
Aid	0.005* (0.003)	0.012*** (0.002)	0.009** (0.004)
Aid X Contestation	-0.011*** (0.002)	-0.007* (0.004)	-0.009* (0.004)
Contestation	0.032 (0.070)	-0.096 (0.101)	-0.073 (0.124)
ISIS	-0.179 (0.113)	0.000 (.)	0.027 (0.232)
JAN/AAS	-0.293** (0.123)	0.031 (0.053)	-0.016 (0.101)
FSA	0.038 (0.082)	0.007 (0.098)	0.036 (0.079)
Fragmentation	-0.092 (0.065)	0.125** (0.054)	0.083 (0.052)
Age	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Education	0.154*** (0.013)	0.162*** (0.014)	0.135*** (0.018)
Male	0.012 (0.019)	0.009 (0.026)	0.017 (0.024)
Sunni	-0.324*** (0.072)	-0.264*** (0.078)	-0.295*** (0.069)
Kurd	-0.116 (0.132)	-0.261 (0.200)	-0.150 (0.142)
Election	-0.513*** (0.107)		
Appointed	0.079 (0.167)		
ClanTies	-0.549*** (0.109)		
Indirect Election	-0.731*** (0.222)		
Sharia Court	-0.263*** (0.071)		
Coalition Bombing		0.122 (0.125)	
Regime Bombing		0.000 (.)	
Feel Safe		0.019 (0.014)	
LC Age			0.004 (0.013)
Constant	2.658*** (0.125)	2.210*** (0.121)	2.347*** (0.123)
Observations	11666	8865	10199

Robust standard errors clustered by community in parentheses
 * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

C DV Constituent Parts

Our dependent variables are based on responses to the following survey prompts. For the SIG, the following question was asked:

I am going to ask you about your views on the Interim Government. The Interim Government is one of the political opposition representatives, based in Istanbul. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the Interim Government? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)

- *Has the support of people in your area*
- *Should play a role in governing Syria if Assad leaves power*
- *Communicates its activities with people in your area*
- *Supports the needs of people in your area*
- *Is the best option despite its shortcomings*
- *Is corrupt*

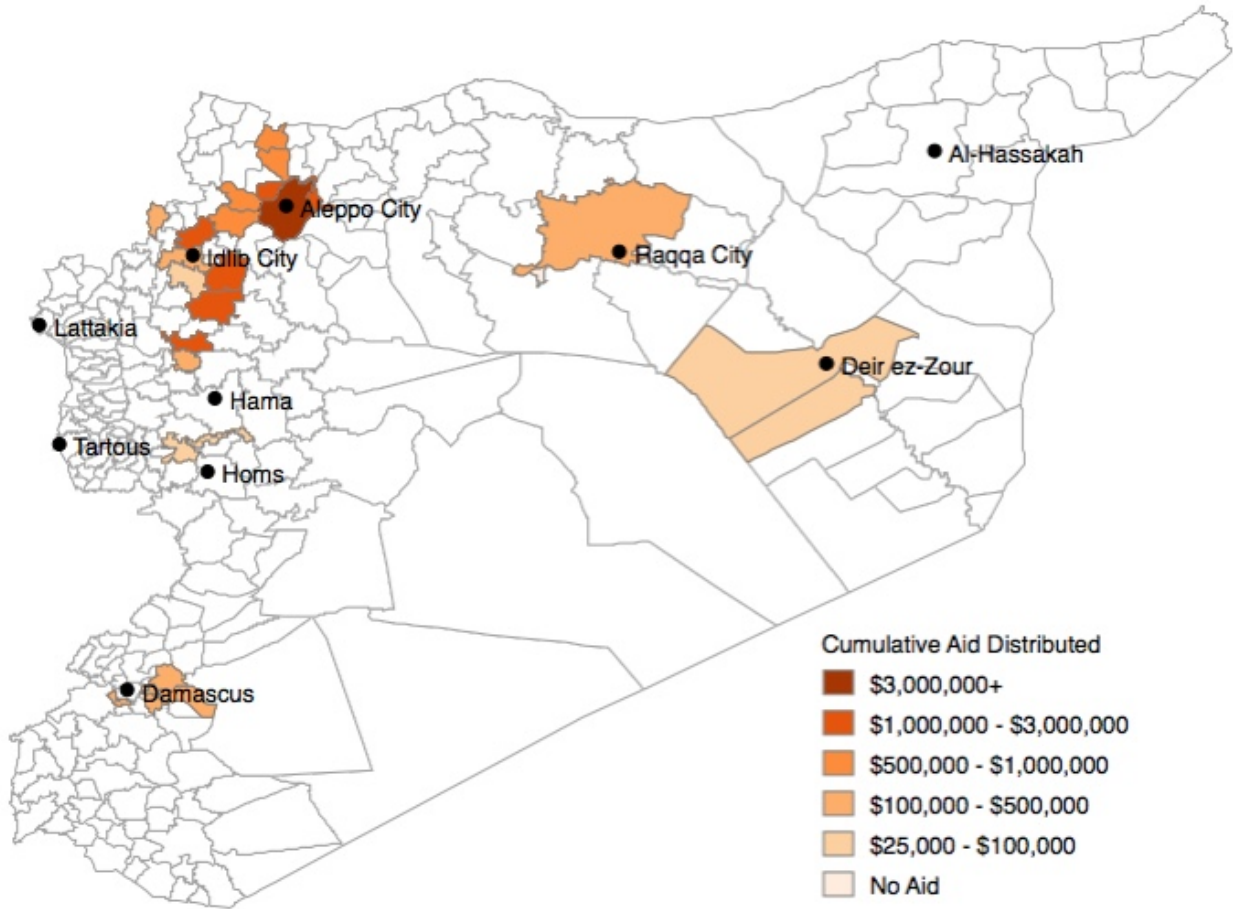
For LCs, the following question was asked:

I am now going to ask you about your Local Council or whatever local municipal body currently administers your area. By Local Council, I am referring to the most recognized and largest local council covering your town/city/area. If your town/city/area is currently administered by some municipal body other than a local council, please respond about that body. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your Local Council or other local municipal body? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)

- *Has the support of people in your area*
- *Should play a role in governing Syria if Assad leaves power*
- *Listens to people who visit its offices or contact it*
- *Communicates its activities with people in your area*
- *Supports the needs of people in your area*
- *Is the best option despite its shortcomings*
- *Is corrupt*
- *Prioritizes the needs of my community*

D Map of Aid by Community

Figure 1: USAID OTI Assistance by Community, 2013-2016



E Aid by Community

Table 6: USAID OTI Assistance by Community, 2013-2016

Province	Sub-District	Community	Cumulative Aid
Aleppo	Aleppo City	Jebel Saman	\$5,382,857.00
Aleppo	A'zaz	A'zaz	\$561,315.94
Aleppo	Atarib	Atarib	\$789,876.38
Aleppo	Daret Azza	Daret Azza	\$709,229.31
Aleppo	Haritan	Anadan	\$793,568.75
Aleppo	Haritan	Haritan	\$652,330.25
Aleppo	Tall Refaat	Tall Refaat	\$713,426.38
Deir-ez-Zor	Deir-ez-Zor	Deir-ez-Zor City	\$66,306.00
Deir-ez-Zor	Muhasan	Muhasan	\$41,773.58
Homs	Ar-Rastan/Taldu	Al-Houla	\$44,877.00
Hama	Kafr Zeita	Kafr Zeita	\$716,015.56
Hama	Kafr Zeita	Latmana	\$205,639.45
Idlib	Ariha	Ariha	\$88,909.98
Idlib	Idlib	Idlib City	\$215,427.63
Idlib	Maaret Tamsrin	Kafr Nabl	\$1,092,731.00
Idlib	Khan Shaykun	Khan Shaykun	\$1,234,552.50
Idlib	Ma'arrat An Nu'man	Ma'arrat An Nu'man	\$1,007,315.44
Idlib	Salqin	Salqin	\$245,207.83
Idlib	Saraqab	Saraqab	\$1,608,787.63
Ar-Raqqa	Ar-Raqqa	Raqqa City	\$249,268.45
Ar-Raqqa	Taqba	Taqba	None
Rural Damascus	Arbin	Arbin	\$93,888.80
Rural Damascus	Markaz Darayya	Darayya	\$138,424.00
Rural Damascus	Duma	Duma	\$410,378.94
Rural Damascus	Maliha	Deir Elasafir	\$106,883.08
Rural Damascus	Nashabiyeh	Al-Marj	\$305,322.38
Rural Damascus	Kafr Batna	Saqba	\$105,603.46
Total			\$17,579,916.72

F Contestation Coding

Table 7: Contestation, by Data Collection Period

Community	Coding	Period
Aleppo City	Contested	1-5
Atarib	Contested	1-5
A'zaz	Contested	1, 5
A'zaz	Uncontested	2-4
Anadan	Contested	1, 4, 5
Anadan	Uncontested	2-3
Daret Azza	Contested	1-5
Haritan	Contested	1, 3-5
Haritan	Uncontested	2
Tall Refaat	Contested	1-2, 5
Tall Refaat	Uncontested	3-4
Deir-ez-Zor City	Contested	1-2
Deir-ez-Zor City	Uncontested	3-5
Muhasan	Contested	1-5
Al-Houla	Contested	1-5
Kafr Zeita	Contested	1-5
Latmana	Contested	1-5
Ariha	Contested	1-5
Idlib City	Contested	1-5
Kafr Nabl	Contested	1-2, 4
Kafr Nabl	Uncontested	3, 5
Khan Shaykun	Contested	1-5
Ma'arrat An Nu'man	Contested	1-3, 5
Ma'arrat An Nu'man	Uncontested	4
Salqin	Contested	1, 5
Salqin	Uncontested	2-4
Saraqab	Contested	1
Saraqab	Uncontested	2-5
Raqqa City	Contested	1
Raqqa City	Uncontested	2-5
Taqba	Uncontested	1-5
Arbin	Contested	1-5
Darayya	Contested	1-5
Duma	Contested	1-5
Deir Elasafir	Contested	1-5
Al-Marj	Contested	1-5
Saqba	Contested	1-5

Note: Contestation was coded based on reports of sustained, active fighting/violent clashes between different groups for control of territory or resources in each community for each data collection period. One-off skirmishes and segmented/fragmented control that was not contested or violently challenged were not counted as contestation.

G Interviews and Field Research

In addition to the survey and interview data collected from the 27 opposition-held communities, this paper draws on original in-depth, semi-structured interviews that the authors conducted in Turkey and in Syria in 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2019. Our sample included American and European officials, Syrian activists, Syrian local council and provincial council members, members of the Syrian Interim Government, journalists, members of Syrian and Western firms and NGOs, and international organization officials. Several of the study participants were interviewed on multiple occasions.

Fieldwork in Syria in 2019 was facilitated by the NGO Mercy Corps. We used snowball sampling to identify key informants (including aid workers, Syrian activists, local council officials, and members of local communities) in Northeast and Northwest Syria. Interviews were conducted in person or through Whatsapp in English and Arabic, with the assistance of several Syrian translators. Interviews were arranged through Mercy Corps and other humanitarian organizations active in Syria. No interviews were arranged through USAID/OTI. Given the risks involved, we conducted all interviews on the condition of anonymity. Ensuring confidentiality was essential as some respondents are wanted by the Syrian government or other armed groups.

H Sampling and Ethical Considerations

To understand the sampling process, we carefully reviewed documents that detailed USAID/OTI's methodology and also consulted with OTI officials as well as representatives of the research firm contracted to conduct the study. We were told that enumerators acted as representa-

tives of the research firm and presented the study as an initiative of this firm. Thus, the role of OTI and the USG were not disclosed to study participants. Enumerators came from the communities in which they interviewed. The research team was not involved in the instrument design or the field work, as the study took place well in advance of our access to the data and preceded our relationship to the implementers.

A given researcher typically approached every *n*th person in central areas, and applied snowball sampling in particularly insecure areas. OTI's internal documents state that enumerators were instructed to "avoid snowballing as much as possible." Snowball sampling was only applied where random sampling was infeasible due to both security issues and attrition resulting from death and displacement. Enumerators were given the following instructions: "In areas that are deemed unsafe for public survey work, researchers will use a snowball method that still inserts elements of randomness when possible. Researchers will each create lists of 10-20 people that they think would be willing to quietly participate in the survey. The researchers will trade lists and be told to approach people on the lists at randomized intervals (e.g. every third person). Those that agree to participate in the survey will be asked if they would be willing to recommend other potential respondents. People will be approached from those lists at randomized intervals as well."

Snowball sampling was considered the most ethical way to conduct the interviews in highly insecure environments, and indeed is often recommended in conflict areas (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). While OTI acknowledges that snowball sampling is not optimal from a methodological standpoint, we note several mitigating factors. The first is that elements of randomness were still used, as just described, and the second is that areas where snowball sampling was used were often community specific, so our community fixed effects should help to deal with potential concerns of bias. For example, while random sampling was used in most places, in Tal Abyad and Madaan, which were controlled by ISIS, work was "done in a combination of researchers' own houses and a small number of secretly operating activist houses." However, we acknowledge that potential bias may arise if contested areas were particularly unsafe, and therefore snowball sampling was more likely in those areas. Yet we view this as relatively unlikely since the correlation

between our contestation variable and a measure of whether respondents “feel safe” is only .067.

Enumerators used the following prompt when administering the survey: “Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey, which will take about 30 minutes to complete. My name is [X] and this survey is part of a research effort to help determine what people in Syria believe and want with regard to local government. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the survey at any time, without penalty. Your responses are anonymous and no information that you provide will enable your identification. We appreciate your time.”

The research team recognizes the complexity of relying heavily on data that was collected by a third party in the midst of active conflict. While our institutional IRBs have registered this study as exempt because the data is de-identified, it does not diminish ongoing ethical considerations regarding the use of this data set.¹ For example, an important dimension that we considered was whether retribution to communities could occur as a result of publishing the perspectives of individual residents. In order to attempt to answer this question, we compared the quotes and perceptions presented in this study with information arising from our case study communities through social media sources during the study period. Through systematic comparisons from 2014 onwards, we determined that the perspectives present in our data set were not significantly different than what was present in open access and social media. Thus, we concluded that the publishing of perspectives as part of this study would likely not increase risk faced by communities.

Further, without delving into the rich, long-standing debates on the employment of secrecy in social scientific research, we acknowledge the trade-offs therein. However, we note that the revelation of any such association would have increased the likelihood of social desirability bias affecting responses and, more importantly, might have endangered both enumerators and respondents.² Further, we underscore the less often cited concern that communities at war are susceptible to a kind of “research fatigue”: as they manage their own affairs amidst violence, economic crisis, and displacement, they frequently find themselves inundated by researchers requesting their time,

¹On the complex ethics of archival research, see Einwohner (2011).

²For a summary of these debates, see Smith (2018).

labor, and knowledge (Brounéus, 2011). The re-utilization of data, in this sense, avoids yet another set of extractive interactions while offering an opportunity for students of conflict and intervention to learn new lessons from materials that already exist. Finally, some of the challenges posed by conflict archives can be surmounted by triangulating findings with other sources and methods (Ballcells and Sullivan, 2018). In our case, a mixed-methods approach means that we could read this found data with the benefit of insights from our own qualitative data.

Selection Details

In this section, we describe further how LCs were selected to receive aid, particularly due to the non-random nature of military contestation. As described in the main text, through interviews with OTI practitioners alongside our study of OTI documentation as well as secondary sources, we identified a general strategy to target aid to areas no longer under regime control with the aim of propping up nascent rebel governing institutions. In keeping with the logic of “winning hearts and minds,” aid was deployed with the goal of improving public opinion toward these institutions and away from the regime and, later, Islamic extremist groups. Beyond that broad goal, however, there was little in the way of a consistent targeting approach, except to avoid supporting so-called extremist groups. Rather, the approach was decentralized, disjointed, and bottom-up. Community selection was in large part driven by the idiosyncratic preferences and connections of individual program development officers. Though aid was not given randomly, its distribution lacked a coherent, top-down approach to select particular communities or councils systematically as a function of their respective capacities or particular political contexts.³ While these findings do not eliminate potential selection effects given the observational nature of the data, they help to mitigate the concern.

More specifically, an inter-agency working group that led U.S. policy on Syria, comprised of representatives from the State Department, USAID, the Department of Defense, and several other agencies highlighted priority areas that were considered militarily or politically strategic,

³OTI implementer under SRP. Interview by authors. December 1, 2020.

where “strategic” was not defined explicitly and encompassed a range of goals. The country director for OTI then asked OTI staff to define priority areas, which tended to overlap with the areas flagged by the working group. The resulting list primarily encompassed areas that were no longer under regime control. OTI then adapted its aid depending on the areas that its program development officers – Syrians living in Turkey – recommended. These officers often could “just say a council operated in a strategic location; what was ‘strategic’ could apply to any place.”⁴ “Strategic” could be interpreted to mean a community’s specific needs, the level of threat from extremist groups, or a given community’s relative support for the revolution.⁵

Regarding contestation in particular, OTI allocated aid to both contested and uncontested regions. OTI’s “Strategic Framework” from January 2016 describes its overarching goal as achieving “a post-Assad Syria that is shaped by...moderate civilian entities.” OTI’s stated approach to achieve that objective was “to increase popular support for moderate actors in Syria.” OTI asserted that this goal could be achieved through aid that would “increase support for moderate, civilian entities in strategic areas that are contested” as well as aid that would “preserve public support in areas that are not currently contested.” Aid was thus directed to both types of communities as part of the larger campaign to “win hearts and minds” on behalf of the moderate Syrian opposition.⁶

Finally, we examined internal program documents from our specific cases to learn more about the selection process governing aid to these areas. According to OTI’s activity sheet, which details the objectives and details of the aid projects provided to each community, in Aleppo, individual projects such as providing “equipment to build capacity” were matched with the goal to “expand the presence of moderate, civilian entities,” because the area was contested. Meanwhile, in Saraqeb, the goal of the aid projects was typically described as “to increase engagement between citizens and emerging local governance structures” and “to build [LCs’] legitimacy and credibility among Syrians.”

⁴OTI implementer under SRP. Interview by authors. December 1, 2020.

⁵OTI implementer under SRP. Interview by authors. December 1, 2020.

⁶OTI Strategic Framework. January 2016.

References

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