



MICROLINKS WEBINAR: FOSTERING LIVELIHOODS IN TIMES OF CRISIS: LESSONS FROM SYRIA

PRESENTATION AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

NOVEMBER 28, 2017

PRESENTERS

Vaidehi Krishnan, Mercy Corps

Kelly Van Husen, Global Communities

MODERATOR

Laura Meissner, USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

April Thompson, USAID Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development Program

Laura Meissner:

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to our participants around the globe. And I apologize that I'm a bit soft-spoken today. I've got a cold. Just some administrative notes before we get started.

This will be our last Microlinks webinar for the year. We'll be taking off December for the holidays, but we're looking forward to having even more fruitful exchange coming in 2018. I'd also like to remind you that there were some polls at the beginning and also, please give us your feedback on this seminar at the end polls, which will occur after today's conversation.

And then, finally, please look out for a follow-up e-mail that will have a link to the recording of this webinar, the transcript, and more helpful documents. My name is Laura Meissner. I'm an economic recovery and markets advisor, and I work with USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, or OFDA.

Today, we'll be talking about efforts to support markets and livelihoods amid the world's largest humanitarian crisis in Syria. Cumulatively, the US government has spent more than \$7.5 billion in humanitarian assistance for the Syrian complex emergency response since fiscal year 2012.

This includes more than \$1.5 billion in the past fiscal year 2017, for assistance both inside Syria, as well as relief efforts to support Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. This assistance includes some incredibly difficult to reach areas, in places where markets are distorted or not functioning properly.

For example, in October, the Syrian democratic forces announced the recapture of Raqqa in Northern Syria from Isis, which it controlled the city since January of 2014. Finding some in assessment in early October indicated that the city had no functioning bakeries, a single functioning market, no healthcare services, no electricity, and insufficient safe water to drink.

Or in Southern Syria, more than 393,000 people reside, and the Syrian government that sieged the eastern Guter region of East Damascus, where there's extremely limited commercial and humanitarian access contributing to reduced availability of essential goods, increasing staple commodity prices, deteriorating humanitarian indicators.

In September, a 42 truck convoy delivered assistance to 25,000 people in 3 besieged towns. This was the first humanitarian assistance to reach populations there in more than three months. All across Syria,

humanitarian organizations are continuing to support people's needs across a variety of sectors.

This includes helping people resume their livelihoods or start new livelihood activities, even if amidst the imperative to continue and expand life-saving assistance. Today, we have with us representatives from two such agencies. Kelly Van Husen, a humanitarian assistance specialist at Global Communities, and Vai Krishnan, who's a cash and markets expert, and regional economic opportunities advisor at Mercy Corps.

We're very grateful to them for sharing their organization's experiences, and we're excited to learn from their efforts. At this time, I'd like to turn it over to Kelly. Thank you.

Adam S: Hey, I think that it was just turned over to Kelly. Kelly, unfortunately, we can't hear you speaking, and to our participants, thanks for bearing with us. This is the power and the sometimes the penalty of international webinars. Kelly, right now, we are not able to hear you. If we don't get you coming in here in the next minute or so, hello? Is that you, Kelly?

Vaidehi Krishnan: What was the question? Hello?

Adam S: I think they just tried to turn it over to Kelly. Is that right Ahmed?

Kelly Van Husen: Hello, can you hear me?

Adam S: Is this Kelly?

Kelly Van Husen: Yes, can you hear me?

Adam S: Yes, we can hear you now, Kelly. Over to you, Kelly.

Kelly Van Husen: All right, great, thanks. Sorry about that. I'll just get started by talking a little bit about Global Communities and the work that we're doing in Syria, and then get into more of the details about why we do what we do, and why we think it's – what we think the values of the approach are in terms of supporting livelihoods in a crisis such as Syria.

Just very briefly, we have been working in Syria for about three years, and we support small scale farmers, and we do – our work is focused on two elements. One is supporting immediate food security, and the second is supporting longer term market recovery.

So, on the food security side, we support small scale farmers through humanitarian assistance, include providing seeds, tools, and fertilizer to small scale farmers, and those are generally subsistence level farmers, so

those that are farming to feed their families, and then give their remaining crops for sale.

And then our second element of the work that we do is focused on the larger value chain, and the larger agriculture market recovery within Syria, and that is focused on the wheat value chain, primarily, and we'll get into some of the reasons around that.

But some of those activities focused on wheat cultivation, and that's again, supporting the farmers to be able to grow wheat. Fire control teams, and that's because of some of the risks and some of the impact that the war has had on the cultivation. And that involves a training of fire control teams that are essentially ready on standby during the height of the harvest season to be able to put out fires for the wheat fields.

The fires are typically caused either by drought conditions, which are fairly typical, or attacks, artillery, bombs, etcetera, from the regime that end up causing fires that can damage an entire wheat crop. We also do irrigation rehabilitation in support of wheat cultivation, as well, so some of the photos you see there are just cleaning out the irrigation channels that were previously maintained by the Syrian government to ensure that people can irrigate their fields.

And then post-harvest production, that's something that's newer for Syria, something that's activities that we just started within about the last six months. But that is looking at the wheat processing, the milling of the wheat, and then processing the flour into bread. We're working both on the infrastructure, rehabilitation side to restore mills and bakeries, and then to be able to support all of those actors along that value chain in terms of farmers getting the wheat to the mills. And then the mills, to be able to transport the flour to the bakeries, and the bakeries to be able to process the flour into bread.

It's a little bit of the entire value chain, stretching from immediate humanitarian assistance, and ensuring that people have some additional food to eat, as well as supporting that larger livelihood and the agricultural value chain, again focused on wheat.

Why wheat? And let's get into some of that in terms of why we chose that particular sector within the agricultural economy of Syria. Largely because it's one of the largest components of the agricultural sector. Agriculture in general contributed as much as 27 percent of GDP pre-war.

Syria was one of the largest exporters of wheat throughout the region, and a number of varieties of wheat were exported and used for various things, from bread production and others. And if you talk to Syrian staff, they

speak to wheat as largely an identity crop within Syria, so it has practical value, again, because it contributed such a large portion of the GDP, particularly in the rural economy.

And it's also something, a symbol of pride for the region in terms of Syria being a producer of a large amount of wheat, and a producer of a number of different varieties of wheat, and a large exporter of the crop.

It's interesting, too, that particularly in the early stages of the conflict, there were a number of agencies and monitoring agencies, research firms, that were tracking wheat production, bread production, and bread prices as a metric of conflicts. And that was intended to track, because bread and wheat production is such a staple throughout Syria, that was really used as a metric to determine the impact of the crisis.

If bread prices were skyrocketing, if wheat production was declining, and the impact of the conflict, then on that particular sector as a metric for the entire country and the entire concept.

Pre-war, and another reason we have selected the wheat value chain to focus on in terms of Syria is that, pre-war, it was extremely controlled by the Syrian government. And to say that a lot of countries have various levels of government control during sectors of production, I think to say that the Syrian government had a lot of influence or impact on controls of the wheat value chain is not even giving it the full level of control, or the full picture of to what degree the government was able to control the wheat production.

The Syrian government, essentially, subsidized the cost of all , all seeds, all fertilizer, maintained all irrigation canals, had cost recovery schemes for water, for farmers. So, all of the crops of inputs were subsidized and controlled by the government of Syria.

The government also guaranteed the harvest price it paid farmers, and determined the amount and type and variety of wheat that each farmer would produce. So, you have essentially a system where every season, the government's agricultural extension agents would meet with each local farmer in their area, after calculating the total metric ton that the government, that the country would like to produce for that year, divide it up among regions and varieties for exports – not for export, for consumption.

And then each agricultural extension agent would meet with an individual farmer and instruct him, essentially, as to how much of what variety he would plant, provide the seeds and the inputs at a subsidized rate, agree on

the – or tell him the price that the government would pay for the harvest, and at what quantity, and then that's what the farmer would plant.

The government also owned the largest flour mills and bakeries throughout the country. While there were some privately functioning mills and bakeries, the government owned the majority of those. The government also fixed the market prices' spread. So, really, all aspects of the wheat value chain was extraordinarily controlled by the government, and the farmers had little to no say in terms of what they would plant, when they would plant it, or the price, or profit that they would make.

You guys hear me again? I think I was just muted and then unmuted. I'll continue.

In terms of working with the wheat value chain and then with the farmers post-conflict, that system essentially collapsed, because the government no longer was able to control, particularly in non-government held areas, the government was no longer able to control that agricultural sector to the same extent.

And in terms of the conflict, just the impact of war on the wheat value chain, and on farming, and the agricultural sector in general, I won't go through each of these bullets, but just to give you a sense of the impacts, seven wheat varieties lost, again, Syria was a large producer and exporter of wheat, of a number of varieties, and 17 of those were lost, just because of the war, because so much of the crop and the seeds were destroyed.

Estimated losses to the agricultural sector now exceed \$16 billion, estimated. And again, the value destroyed crops, estimated at over \$900 million, livestock sector. And then in terms of a human impact on that, 90 percent of Syrian families are now spending over half of their income on food, and that's again, largely due to the destruction of the agricultural sector, and farmers' inability to be able to grow crops and to produce the harvest that they need, because they have been used to a system where all of the inputs have been heavily subsidized for so long that farmers are unable to afford the real market cost of inputs.

That's why Global Communities is looking at providing some of those initial subsidized inputs as a way to allow farmers to restart their livelihoods, and to ensure that they are able to grow wheat and to restart that livelihood.

And the way forward, again, given the heavy degree of government control, the heavy degree of government control prior to the war, you essentially have a very nascent, private sector, agricultural economy that's struggling to grow in spite of the conflict, and to learn how to become

profitable, and how to become privatized in a way without that degree of government control and subsidy and price control throughout that value chain.

Our strategy has been to pick, identify specific points along that value chain that we're able to support throughout the process. Again, simple things such as providing inputs that are allowing farmers to restart and to replant their crop, to repairing the actual infrastructure for the mills and bakeries, and then trying to support some of the other maybe lesser looked-at aspects of the wheat value chain, but things that are still critical, such as the fire controls, just as a way to ensure that the harvest is actually fruitful and that farmers aren't losing crops unnecessarily.

But a lot of that ends up being NGOs stepping in, NGOs and other private actors, stepping in to take on a lot of the government role that was played pre-conflict. And I think one of the challenges that we still face is looking at who will ultimately – how will that local ownership take place, and who will ultimately take responsibility for a lot of those components that were previously managed by government, whether it's local council, whether it's private owners that end up managing the bakeries, whether that's various community committees that are established, and that's something that's still developing, and still varies across the country, depending on the specific location within Syria.

But in talking to a lot of our Syrian staff, as well, there's not an expectation that even post-conflict, that the Syrian agricultural sector, and particularly in terms of wheat production, will return to heavy government control, regardless of the outcome of the conflict, even if the Syrian government ends up controlling the country again.

There's not a strong sense that the government would return to controlling the agricultural sector to the same degree, because ultimately, it became unsustainable and unprofitable, and there was reason for its collapse, aside from the conflict itself.

What we're really focusing on now is, again, supporting various points along that value chain and trying to encourage that nascent, private sector to grow and to strengthen, to be able to continue on post-conflict. And just one of the figures that we've looked at, after the three years of providing the initial inputs.

In inputs of approximately \$300.00, and that's the seeds, tools, fertilizer, etcetera, yield an average of \$1,200.00 to \$2,500.00 in income for the farmers. And that's for one planting season, which then enabled them to purchase inputs and plant again for the following year, and to purchase food and other items that they need for their families.

We do see it as a way that we're enabling farmers to restart their livelihoods, and that it is a one-time input that really is sustainable, and really fosters a sustainable, livelihood recovery, again, as a larger part of – or the small part of restoring the larger value chain for the wheat sector, and trying to support that private sector and the privatization of the agricultural economy within Syria.

With that, and I will turn it over, I think, back to Laura.

Vaidehi Krishnan: Great, actually, Kelly, I'm going to take over. I'm gonna Laura, because she's got a cold. Hi, everyone. My name is Vai, and I'm going to follow on from what Kelly talked about. There are some complaints, but before we get into that, I'm gonna do a quick test to see these polls in front of you. These are, unfortunately, mandatory. You have to take them.

I would like you to take a couple of seconds to really quickly respond to these three poll questions. This one, is it feasible for our livelihood programs inside Syria? In seven years into the conflict, what do you think it will rely on for better welfare? And the third one, if I told you that people are finding innovative ways to adapt their livelihoods, where do you think is the most likely choice?

I like that someone actually voted yes, but he'd have to be mad to try. Someone has actually said, "This is a trick question. I prefer not to answer." Nice, it's an audience with a good sense of humor. I like it.

I'm gonna give it a couple of seconds to see if there's anyone else who's not taken the quiz, and I will tell you the answers to this, so we will come back to this at the very end, so remember what your responses were. If everybody's finished, I think it's okay for us to move into the presentation.

Fantastic. Let's get started there. Really, this sums up what I want to talk about, this plan vs. reality. We all are familiar with that situation. What we tell the donor we're gonna do in our proposals, that's our plan, and our plan at the end of the full program is being bruised, and battered, and licking our wounds, and reaching that goal, our reality.

So what I wanna tell you the story about today is one of Mercy Corp's programs inside a besieged location inside Syria, and what our plan was and what our reality eventually turned out to be.

Here's what we planned. It is a rural, besieged community inside Syria, so when I say besieged, basically for those of you who are not very familiar with the term, it's all – the primary active roots into the community are

controlled by checkpoints, and those could be government of Syria checkpoints, those could be opposition-held checkpoints.

But basically, it means that goods coming into this location are controlled, and it's not always that the equipped are fully functioning. It's not a free market.

We looked at a rural, besieged area inside Syria, and we found that there were a large number of vulnerable households that needed support with meeting their own food security. We also looked at the previous skills of these livelihoods, these locations. And we found that most cultures had been previously relied on livestock-related livelihoods.

We knew that there were past skills and experience in this location. And finally, we looked at the markets to say, "If we do a livestock program, is there going to be – are people going to be able to sell their produce in the market?" And we found that they had evolved a gap between the livestock produce and supply, and the demand in the market, and I think this was about 80 percent.

So, we said based on this, what would we propose to the donor. We said, "We're going to provide livestock assets, like cows, and chicken, and sheep, and rabbits to vulnerable households, and it will have multiple impacts. One is, the produce will help these households improve their own nutritional status, improve their food security.

"The additional produce can be sold in the market, because there is a market for it. And finally, by increasing the amount of supply, which was currently in short supply at this point, we would be effectively able to bring down the high price of supply food products in this market."

We did have one conundrum, though, very early on. Those that we were looking at as vulnerable, and I think as humanitarian actors, this is common. We say we want to be able to look at the poorest families. They are vulnerable, but they're not eligible, and when I say that, what I mean is to be able to maintain livestock, there are some minimum criteria we wanted to look at, i.e. did these people have some kind of safe shelter where they could house these animals, like a barn?

Did they have access to water? Did these specific households have fast – beg your pardon – past skills and experience to be able to maintain this livestock so that they could continue to sell these products in the market? Did they have the market linkages?

And this was the first conundrum. People that were vulnerable were not really eligible, and those that were eligible with all these typical

infrastructures and these skills did not really fall into the vulnerable criteria.

I will get into how we addressed that in a second. Does everybody know what a curveball is? For those of you that play cricket, like in my country, we also call it a googly. Basically, it means a ball – you expect the ball to come in a certain direction, but the ball spins and comes in a completely different direction, and takes the .

We had a curveball. We sent the proposal off to the donor, and they said, "This is all well and good, but tell us why cows, why chickens? Tell us why are you doing these specific livestock. Why would you choose cows over chickens? What is the cost and benefit of each particular type of animal that you want to provide?"

To be very honest, I think I rolled my eyes a little bit when I read that request. I was only happy that it was not a chicken or egg question. It was just a cow or chicken question. Very well, we're not one to back down from a fight. We said, "You want a cost-benefit analysis. We're gonna give you one." And when I say we, I mean my colleague, Joe, who is sitting in and listening to this webinar.

Joe basically sat down to do the cost-benefit analysis, and to be able to do that, we needed to put down not just the price of the animal, but also the price of maintaining that animal's health, until such time the produce became viable to be able to sell in the market, the benefit part of it.

Essentially, we looked at very basic things. We said, "What does a cow need food. It needs water. It needs veterinary products to be able to maintain its health," and as we looked at just these two inputs for the cow, we realized that our cost benefit was never going to make it.

Why? Because the cost of water was extremely high. We started to dig into that a little bit more. Why is the cost of water really high? We found it's because water is being imported. Why was it being imported from outside? Because it is not being locally produced. Why wasn't water being locally produced? Because wheat farmers basically didn't have the capacity to grow their produce.

As we started to look at just some of these inputs and the cost of these inputs, we realized that there were larger market failures that if we didn't address, we were never really going to make this program feasible or sustainable. The saving grace was that there was still a market demand for produce. But here's the catch.

People – the traders were buying this milk, but taking it outside and selling it outside. Anything that has to be brought in, like if they were bringing in milk or cheese, it was being imported, and again, the price was very high.

I don't blame them, people were really poor. They couldn't afford to buy the milk and the products anyway, so traders were basically taking it out right. This was an additional challenge that we were looking at. In effect, really, what we were thinking about is that market system.

Now, this is a very basic market system, and I had lots of market system people out there. I know this is a very basic market system, but as humanitarians, this was our first stumbling block. We knew that if we had to make it feasible to provide this livestock, and the benefit side of this livestock, we would have to concurrently address challenges around inputs like seed.

We would have to address this issue of veterinary medication, supplies, availability, cost, and we would also have to address this challenge that I talked about earlier, which was this vulnerability eligibility conundrum.

And we would have to be addressing all of this in – how am I saying this? We would have to be addressing all of this in parallel to be able to make this program work. Any James Bond fans out there? This one's for you guys. Shaken but not stirred. What we realized is that we couldn't actually do all of this at the same time.

We took a step back, and we said, "We still need to address this, but at this point, the only thing we can do for the first six months, 'cause we only had six months, we needed to come up with a more feasible intervention." We said, "At this point, the phase one will still be a direct intervention. It will focus on the food security of these vulnerable households, and we will address the issue around input supplies at a later point. But for now, we're gonna focus on food security."

We were bringing in water – we were directly providing this water, but the veterinary supplies, we had a slightly more convoluted solution. What we said is, "We're going to hire these veterinary pharmacists to be trainers in our program, and they will monitor the health of these animals, they can train beneficiaries on how to identify preventable diseases, so they can take action at the right time."

And this would have the additional benefit of recapitalizing these veterinary suppliers, because as smaller businesses, they had basically had to shut down their businesses. To be able to recapitalize them, to be able to give them some money, to be able to restart their business while also working on this program, would help them not just to get access to cash,

but also give them some lead time to restart those linkages that they had lost during the crisis.

And on the vulnerability-eligibility one, we came up with what I think is an interesting model. It's a sort of hybrid model. We said, "Let's give this cow, let's make this hybrid model of the owner-raiser." The vulnerable households do still own this animal, but while we are building their skills to be able to interact with the market, and meet the other physical requirements, like having a barn, etcetera, the raisers would be the ones that would be taking care of these animals.

The raisers would be paid as a cash for work, for just the first six months of the program when we were implementing it. And they would also be able to get a share of the produce. The bulk of the produce would go to the vulnerable households, a part of which they could sell, a part of which they could use for their own consumption.

But the raisers would get not just this monthly cash for six months, but also part of the produce. This was how we – and to be very honest, the first one, the intervention, we did really well on food consumption. If I remember correctly, I think we started at an acceptable of close to 0, 1 percent, and we went up to 86 percent by the end of that six months.

And I think that was great. But there are two challenges here that I want to talk about right away. One is the hybrid model. At the end of the six months, I don't know hybrid model was a really good, innovative idea. At the end of the six months, the vulnerable households gained full control of the animal, and as we monitored this later, only half of those owner-raiser relationships still continued, meaning 50 percent of those relationships broke down, and only 50 percent of those relationships survived.

I would love to tell you why some of those survived, and some of those didn't, but I don't have that information right now. I do wanna say that this is one shortcoming, is that we created a good model, what we think is a good model, and we know half of it has worked. Why some of it has worked, why some of it hasn't, we don't know just yet, but we're looking into it.

The other is the question around veterinary pharmacists. During this program, what I didn't talk about is we also introduced livestock like rabbits. Rabbits had never been done in this location before, but we said, "Let's give it a try. Let's see how rabbits fare in this location." We introduced something new.

But halfway through that program, there was a large outbreak of disease, and we lost a lot of the rabbits that we had provided. Now, what we

realized that veterinary pharmacists, there were so few of them that their capacity was very stretched, and we had basically introduced large numbers of three or four different types of livestock into this community, but we didn't really consider from the supply-demand lens, are the veterinary pharmacists, do they have the capacity to be able to actually serve this large number of animals?

I think that was a huge missed opportunity for us, something that we do need to consider. Previously, I talked about the phases. The next six months of the program did focus its attention on the market actors, and we primarily chose the supply chain actors. We did have a bit of a debate about "Should we do supply chain or should we look at the value chain? Should we look at the milk into cheese into other products?"

But we realized that on this, we actually addressed the supply chain of this market, there was going to be no product to add value to. In the next phase, we created linkages through vouchers between veterinary pharmacists and the vulnerable households that had received livestock.

And we were also looking at rejuvenating the local water production, so we provided cash to farmers to be able to restart their wheat production. And as Kelly explained in her presentation, it's not that we just give them cash, and miraculously tomorrow, they start producing wheat, they start producing water.

But this was our way of starting to involve more market systems . Looking at addressing water and veterinary products, which were the two primary challenges we'd had on our program.

I do wanna say, going with James Bond, neither shaken nor stirred, the numbers you see in front of you are the net profits that we calculated for each cow and for each crop of chicken. And here again, the cost benefit analysis that we were dreading so much was super relevant for us, because it actually helped us track how we were doing against what we had projected.

And you see the red line is what we projected for each cow, that by month five or month six, it wouldn't still be breaking even. But by month five, the cows had actually, the net profit. When I say net profit, we're talking about including the cost of the animal, and the inputs, and the sale of the produce was about \$500.00 per cow.

And the chicken, we did actually much better. We actually started out thinking chicken, the first flock would probably start about \$80.00 in terms of profit, but chicken, we actually did a lot better, and we started about \$620.00. I think I'm reading that number correctly. I hope so.

And like I said, in the final phase, the next six months, we are going to be looking at the value chain side of things. Phase one intervention, food security, phase two, looking at supply chain, phase three, looking at value-added products.

Now, I know what you're thinking. You're looking at this and saying, "This isn't really market systems," and I know a lot of the audience out there is – there's a mix between humanitarians and market systems, and where does this all fit in?

While we do want to think about the market system and the actors that support the key interventions, even if it's humanitarian interventions that we're doing, is it actually feasible for us to take a approach to incentivize suppliers to outreach, introduce communities, and create those linkages? At this point, not yet. I'm not saying it's not possible, but not right now, because it is still a seller's market.

There are very few large buyers that are so able to operate, large sellers that are able to operate, and they're able to monopolize availability and price of goods in the market. That's just a scale of commodity. Surprisingly, business to business lending is still taking place in parts of Syria.

And I will tell you how I know that, but the point is that the lending that's happening is very constrained, because of the economic hardships. People don't know they're going to – the people they lend to are going to repay them back or not. Producers don't really have negotiating power, but sure, I'm going to diverge and tell you a little story of the chicken, which was, with the milk, with the cows, we were actually taking a part of that produce from the vulnerable household, and selling it in the market for them.

Our idea was while they get the skills to sell in the market themselves, we will do the selling for them. With the people that we provided the chickens to, we didn't actually do any of that. But without our prodding, and without our telling them to do anything, they found – all the chicken raisers – found these loose alliances among themselves to be able to bargain and negotiate for a better price for their produce with the vendors.

I think that's a really important takeaway for us, is that we don't always have to try and control every single element of the program if we provide some skills and capacity, people might surprise us by doing what we completely do not expect them to do.

And the last question around is impact. I think this is important, because with such huge humanitarian needs inside Syria, we need to find better ways of – we do need to target the most vulnerable, but they currently still do not have the capacity and the skills to interact with the market, so how can we create more impact for these specific households.

Again, going back to that hybrid model, where two households within the same community were able to benefit from one animal, for me is double the benefit at the same price. I would love to dig further into that model to see how that worked for people that are still continuing to maintain that relationship.

Uptake, life savings, better life savings. I think this was an easy one for me to talk about. When we talk about humanitarian aid, we think about food. We think about everything that's life saving, and I think that's important. There are some areas where you do need that.

But for me, addressing household food security is not just about something, we also need to be saying, "How can we continue to address this food security for longer?" Better life saving would be involving market actors and supporting them.

Phased approach, I think, again, this was a learning from this program. You can't do it all in six months, so think about what can you feasibly achieve in six months. But address those root causes, like with supply chain issues. Just do it in the next phase.

Market price is a logical place to start, and I know we have a billion tools out there for market assessment, but logically and personally, I find looking at market prices, and looking at the fluctuations in market prices, or even looking at why is the cost of this particular influx so high?

A good place to start your inquiry into what is happening with this market, is there a larger market failure that we need to be thinking about. It's a starting point. My one don't try to control for everything. We already talked about this, about the question around outsourcing the milk as opposed to producers creating their own sort of alliances for the chicken.

And my personal favorite, don't roll your eyes at donor requests. The cost-benefit analysis actually turned out to be one of the most useful exercises that we did.

I'm gonna stop for a second – Adam, if you just – fantastic. I can see that I'm looking at the second response around markets. "What do you think people rely on better, welfare, markets, labor, , social capital, substitute .9," and let's look at the last response. Last question.

This is a very smart audience. "Between location A, with least conflict impact, location B, besieged, hard to reach locations, we have chosen location B." Now, I am not going to tell you the answers to this, if you're right or not right away, but when I am going to tell you is that Mercy Corps has completed a study inside Syria that is particularly specifically looking at how are households inside Syria able to maintain or adapt their livelihoods among such a large humanitarian crisis? How are households still able to do that? Are there households that are still doing that?

And that study will be published in January, so I'm gonna ask you to watch that space to not just find out the answers to these, but a lot more nuance around that. I'm gonna stop talking now. Thank you very much for listening to me. I hope you found that useful.

[End of Audio]