



EVALUATION IN ACTION: Impact of Supplemental Food Voucher Program in Syria

Background

In northeast Syria, over a decade of conflict has left many families vulnerable to food insecurity. Blumont works to alleviate suffering and meet the shelter and food needs of people in this region. Through the [Shelter and Food Emergency Response II](#) (SAFER II) Activity, funded by USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the team distributed supplemental food vouchers (SFVs) to non-camp, food-insecure households in Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh, and Deir ez-Zur. Families could use these monthly vouchers, which varied by household size, to redeem food at participating local vendors. To better understand the impact of this intervention, Blumont partnered with Causal Design to conduct an impact evaluation. The research questions were:

1. What is the **impact of the supplemental food voucher program** on household members' **dietary diversity and nutrition**?
2. How do supplemental food vouchers allow household members to **expand the diversity** of their diets?

Evaluation Findings

Through the impact evaluation, the team found that the **SFV improved household food security on several dimensions**. The SFVs increased the Food Consumption Score nearly 10 points, indicating **improvements in both quantity and diversity of food consumed**. Qualitative interviews further underscored this improvement, with respondents universally praising the SFV program as invaluable. Many households, whose diets had previously consisted predominantly of bread and rice, greatly valued the availability of fruit, dairy, chicken, and a wider variety of vegetables.

Respondents also relied on **fewer and less extreme coping strategies** to manage their food security, as indicated through the decreasing scores on the Reducing Coping Strategies Index (rCSI), which measure the frequency and severity of household strategies to cope with food insecurity.

Evaluation Design & Methodology

The research team utilized a **regression discontinuity design (RDD)** to estimate the impact of the SFV program on household food security. To do this, the team leveraged the SFV targeting process and compared households just above and below the eligibility cut-off. They compared the outcomes of 935 households that did not receive SFVs (right below the threshold) to 1550 households that did receive SFVs (right above the threshold). This design relies on the assumption that households that have scores near the selection score cut-off (i.e., right above and below the cut-off) are similar on average. The research team paired the RDD with **semi-structured interviews** to answer the second research question and understand what factors contributed to change and what specific challenges households faced with the voucher program.

Quick Facts

TITLE

Impact of Supplemental Food Voucher Program in Syria

TYPE OF EVALUATION

Impact Evaluation

EVALUATION METHODS

Regression Discontinuity Design

EVALUATION ARMS

1. Households receiving SFVs just above criteria threshold
2. Control group just below criteria threshold

COUNTRY

Syria

DONORS

USAID/BHA

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

9,000 households across Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh, and Deir ez-Zur

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Blumont

EVALUATION/RESEARCH PARTNERS

Causal Design

ENDLINE DATA COLLECTION

May 2023

Evaluation Challenges

Basing the delivery of the SFV on a household's vulnerability status **creates an incentive for households to manipulate their responses to receive vouchers in the future**. This would introduce bias into the study. For example, if control households are making themselves appear more vulnerable, this could **overestimate the impact of vouchers**.

To address this challenge, the research team from Causal Design attempted to dissociate themselves from the implementing team at Blumont during data collection. However, many households in the control groups were still aware of the affiliation due to their proximity to treatment households. To address this issue, enumerators were instructed to pay close attention to hints of manipulation and flag any observations where they suspected such behavior. Ultimately, accounts of this were very low; enumerators only flagged two households which were subsequently dropped from the analysis).



Photo Credit: Syria Relief/ Save the Children

Context and What's Next

Implementation for SAFER II began in August 2022, with the research team conducting evaluations and collecting endline data by May 2023. Blumont is using the **findings from this impact evaluation to directly inform the implementation of SAFER III**, which began in August 2023. The findings confirmed how impactful the SFV program was on household food security for people at the margin of the eligibility cut-off. Furthermore, the evaluation activities identified that some households who were eligible for assistance did not receive vouchers. Given the impact on food security for these households at the margin, this highlighted the importance of a **robust targeting process** to ensure that eligible households receive vouchers. These findings allowed the Blumont team to successfully request the Northeast Syria Forum's working group data, which is the most comprehensive household level food consumption data available for the area, to improve their targeting process. Having access to this data allowed the monitoring, evaluation, and learning team to improve the initial assessment and verify participant selections with greater accuracy than before in SAFER III.

Further Questions?

Interesting in learning more about this evaluation? Contact Christy Lazicky, Director of Impact Evaluations at christy.lazicky@causaldesign.com; Rigzom Wangchuk, Economist at rigzom.wangchuk@causaldesign.com; or Gary Glass, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation at gglass@blumont.org with any questions.

Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle

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This brief is part of HAEC's Evaluation in Action series highlighting ongoing impact evaluations from around the world. Do you have an ongoing impact evaluation in a humanitarian context that you want to share?



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