

SYRIA

Situation Update Fourth Quarter

October - December 2015



WFP Syria offloads food supplies in Madaya / WFP

HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview indicates that people in need of humanitarian assistance increased to 13.5 million, including 8.7 million in need of food assistance
- 4,1 million people were reached with food assistance during the fourth quarter of 2015
- 25 percent of the assistance was delivered to Hard-to-Reach Areas
- WFP supported the implementation of two localised ceasefire agreements, by providing lifesaving food supplies to thousands of besieged civilians in Rural Damascus, Idleb and Homs governorates

In numbers

6.5 million people internally displaced
13.5 million people require humanitarian assistance
8.7 million people require food assistance

Funding Update:

USD 179 million needs to be secured by late January for commodities to be available for distribution in April

SITUATION UPDATE

Northern Governorates

Large waves of population movements were reported in Aleppo, Idleb and Hama governorates during the fourth quarter of 2015, as security conditions significantly deteriorated and ongoing fighting resulted in civilian casualties, loss of livelihoods and large-scale infrastructural damage. During the reporting period, partners on the ground estimate that over 170,000 people were displaced in the northern governorates of the country, including from northern Lattakia, northern Hama, rural Aleppo and Idleb governorates. Most of these people were displaced during October and November while fewer were displaced in December. The majority of the newly displaced families moved towards safer central and northern areas of Idleb, while fewer numbers sought refuge in safer areas of rural Hama and northern Aleppo. In response to the large-scale population movement, WFP and its partners operating from southern Turkey responded to the immediate needs of some 120,000 newly displaced people, using available food rations, ready-to-eat meals, as well as additional supplies reallocated by WFP to respond to the growing humanitarian needs. In addition, the distribution of food supplies were adjusted to adapt to the shifting situation on the ground, as food items were redirected to areas that received large IDP influxes.

Al Hasakeh Governorate

Significant population movements were also reported in Al Hasakeh during the month of November, as some 16,500 newly displaced civilians were recorded in the governorate. Most of these people were displaced as a result of escalating fighting between Kurdish forces and ISIL, while fewer sought refuge in the governorate after fleeing ISIL controlled areas in Ar Raqqa governorate as well as from besieged areas of Deir Ezzor city. The closure of Nusaybin border crossing in November severely impacted WFPs capacity to respond to the newly displaced civilians, as only limited resources and ready-to-eat rations were available. As a result, WFP conducted a rapid needs assessment and distributed ready-to-eat rations to 6,750 civilians who were carefully prioritized.

Dar'a Governorate

The situation in Dar'a governorate continued to be unstable during the reporting period. In December, for example, Syrian government forces launched an offensive to regain control of Sheikh Miskin, a village 23 km north of Dar'a city. As a result, some 10,250 civilians were displaced from the village and fled to surrounding areas south and west of the village and partners on the ground reported rising food needs among the newly displaced families. WFP was able to respond by using available stocks and distributed food for 10,000 newly displaced people.

Rural Damascus Governorate

As a result of access constraints and severe shortages of food, medicines and other basic commodities, the humanitarian conditions in the besieged town of Madaya in Rural Damascus governorate worsened. This led to dramatic food price increases in all basic commodities, reportedly resulting in cases of malnutrition and severe malnutrition according to several reports. In response, through two joint UN/ICRC/SARC humanitarian convoys, WFP delivered food assistance for the 42,000 besieged civilians in need (see WFP response for details).

WFP RESPONSE

Overall achievements

WFP delivered food assistance to an average of 3,7 million people in 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates during the reporting period, with a peak of 4,1 million people in October. In areas that were affected by bread shortages, assistance included wheat flour that was either provided directly to the beneficiaries in rural areas, or channeled to bakeries for bread production in urban areas where beneficiaries are less likely to have access to baking facilities.

During the reporting period, approximately 25 percent of the total assistance was delivered to people who are living in areas subject to various access restrictions through a combination of cross-line, cross-border and regular deliveries.

Joint Humanitarian Deliveries to Besieged Areas in Rural Damascus, Idleb and Homs governorates.

Under the "Four Towns Ceasefire Agreement" that was reached by different parties to the Syrian conflict on 22 September, WFP actively participated in the delivery of humanitarian supplies and the evacuation of injured civilians to and from the besieged opposition-held towns of Zabadani and Madaya in Rural Damascus and government-held Foah and Kefraya in Idleb governorates.

On 19 October, as part of a UN/ICRC/SARC joint humanitarian convoy, WFP delivered food assistance to nearly 30,000 civilians in four besieged towns in Syria. Through simultaneous and carefully coordinated cross-line and cross-border access, food, medical and other humanitarian supplies were delivered to 19,500 people in Zabadani and Madaya, and to 10,000 people in Foah and Kefraya. The subsequent deliveries of food assistance were conducted on 11 and 14 January

2016, when the joint humanitarian convoy delivered WFP food assistance simultaneously to 40,000 civilians in Madaya as well as to 20,000 civilians in Foah and Kefraya.

As part of the same agreement, on 29 December, 464 injured civilians and their families were evacuated from the four besieged towns. The WFP-lead Logistics Cluster facilitated the transportation of the evacuated civilians between Damascus and Beirut and each individual was provided with a WFP ready-to-eat ration as well as Nutributter and Datebars for children.

In early December 2015, the Government of Syria and representatives of opposition groups reached a local agreement aimed at de-escalating hostilities in Al-Wa'er neighborhood, Homs city. As the last opposition-stronghold in Homs city, Al-Wa'er is home to some 75,000 people and has been under partial siege since the end of 2013. Through three UN/SARC inter-agency humanitarian convoys that took place at the beginning of December 2015 and January 2016, WFP delivered food supplies for 75,000 people. Moreover, WFP distributed 100 ready-to-eat meals along with 47 kg of Plumpy'Doz for children under the age of three, when combatants and their families were evacuated and transferred to opposition-held areas in southern Idleb on 9 December under the umbrella of the same agreement.

Cross-border deliveries accounted for 20 percent of the total assistance during the reporting period, delivering food assistance from Jordan and Turkey to a maximum of 912,000 people in high conflict areas of Idleb, Aleppo, Dar'a, Quneitra and Hama governorates. This represents a six-fold increase compared to cross-border deliveries at the beginning of the year, when food assistance was delivered to 147,500 people. During the reporting period, cross-border deliveries from Turkey were scaled up in order to respond to the escalating needs of the newly displaced civilians in the northern governorates of the country. However, quality issues at the end of the reporting period caused a slowdown of deliveries from Turkey in December.

Challenges

The presence of radical armed groups continued to prevent all deliveries to Deir Ezzor and Ar Raqqa governorates during the reporting period. Moreover, persisting insecurity and access restrictions prevented the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in several high conflict areas in Rural Damascus, Homs, Hama, Idleb and Aleppo governorates.

Food deliveries from Turkey through the Nusaybin corridor were suspended for 3,5 months starting in September, due to security reasons and delays in obtaining necessary

government approvals. As a result, no dispatches took place in October and November and WFP was therefore unable to respond to the needs of the targeted 240,000 beneficiaries. The remaining mixed food commodities and ready-to-eat meals were carefully prioritized to assist the most vulnerable newly displaced families during this period. Once deliveries resumed through Nusaybin border crossing into Al Hasakeh on 12 December, WFP dispatches took place according to the plan and WFP accomplished 100 percent of its monthly plan in the governorate in December.

Furthermore, due to the late arrival of funding in November, food commodities could not be procured on time for the distribution cycle, and as a consequence distributions during the month fell below plans. The situation was further compounded when commercial import procedures were enforced on humanitarian goods, whereby import documents had to be legalized at Syrian Embassies in countries of origin from mid-November onwards. This resulted in the delay of the start of the December cycle. Following advocacy efforts, the Syrian Government granted a three-month grace period for humanitarian agencies to comply with the procedures, after which the trucks that were stuck at the Lebanese – Syrian border could proceed to the warehouses.

NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme

Between October and December, WFP increased its support to children under the age of five with supplementary feeding products to prevent malnutrition, assisting a maximum of 188,000 children in eight Syrian governorates. Of these, a maximum of 101,000 children were reached in high-conflict areas of Idleb, Aleppo and Hama governorates through cross-border deliveries from Turkey. Although WFP accomplished 78 percent of the plan, achievements fell below plan, as WFP was unable to import commodities through Nusaybin corridor in October and November.

Voucher-based nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women (PLW)

A maximum of 7,100 vulnerable pregnant and lactating women in Homs and Lattakia received food vouchers during the reporting period that enabled them to purchase locally available fresh products and improve their dietary diversity. This represents 95 percent of the monthly plan. Efforts to expand the scale and coverage of the programme to include Aleppo, Tartous and Qamishly governorates continued, where voucher distributions are expected to initiate during the first quarter of 2016.

FORTIFIED SCHOOL SNACKS PROGRAMME

During the reporting period, the Fortified School Snacks programme continued to increase. By the end of the year, a maximum of 375,000 primary school children in Rural Damascus, Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Tartous and Al Hasakeh governorates received nutritious date bars at participating schools. Although WFP faced a temporary slowdown of operations at the beginning of the reporting period, operations resumed regularly in December and reached the highest number of beneficiaries since the launch of the programme.

In addition, following the launch of local procurement of fortified date bars for the Fortified School Snacks programme in September, WFP started distributing the first batch of locally produced commodities in Rural Damascus in December. The bars are procured from a local manufacturer contracted in late August, which sources the raw materials from Syrian wholesalers and employs 15 individuals, including 5 women, involved in all stages of production. This initiative is a milestone in WFP's effort to strengthen and build resilience in Syria. In view of a further scale-up of local procurement in 2016, WFP is currently supporting three additional local manufacturers to strengthen their capacity and raise their quality standards.

LIVELIHOOD AND RESILIENCE

In 2015, WFP developed a Livelihoods and Resilience Strategy for Syria to promote interventions aimed at protecting and restoring livelihoods and food security for conflict affected Syrians within a long-term resilience-building goal. The livelihood recovery strategy builds on three key pillars, including protecting and promoting household livelihood security through food production, assets rehabilitation and income generation; strengthening local markets and services through economic recovery projects; and supporting institutions and building an evidence base for food and nutrition security at all levels.

During the reporting period, WFP signed two agreements with partners to implement the first two projects in Al-Hasakeh and Tartous governorates in early 2016. The first project will promote livelihood and productive assets for 1,500 farmer and herder households, benefitting some 7,500 people. This project will provide a combination of agriculture training and inputs, livestock fodder, herding kits and increased access to veterinary services, while supporting the food security through the provision of monthly food rations. The second project aims to rehabilitate greenhouses that were affected by a snowstorm last winter through the provision of plastic sheets, while addressing the immediate needs of the affected households by providing monthly food rations

during the lean season. The latter project will benefit approximately 15,000 people, who will also receive tomato seeds and agricultural trainings from FAO.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

During the reporting period, monitoring of WFP food assistance activities was conducted at 49 percent of the food distribution points through direct monitoring by WFP staff and project facilitators from two Third Party Monitoring companies. Due to security related movement restrictions and operational challenges, the monitoring coverage was 6 percent points lower than the previous quarter.

In order to further improve WFPs monitoring capacity, the Georeferenced Real-time Acquisition of Statistics Platform (GRASP) mobile data tool was successfully introduced in cross-border locations in the northern governorates of the country. The GRASP tool is an application that allows WFP to collect beneficiary data through the use of mobile devices, which can be sent either through mobile Internet, SMS or WIFI. Third Party Monitors who are contracted by WFP to operate in areas that are not accessible to WFP monitors used the GRASP technology during the reporting period and collected 1,518 post distribution-monitoring questionnaires in 250 locations in Aleppo, Idleb and Hama governorates.

While data collection was ongoing, WFP was able to update the questionnaire designs directly on the tablets in order to collect specific information directly from the field. Moreover, it enabled WFP to check and verify the third party monitors as questionnaires were coupled to the locations where they were filled in. As such, WFP was able to verify the locations where monitoring visits were conducted. WFP is planning to expand the GRASP technology to the southern governorates of the country, tentatively in the second half of 2016.

WHOLE OF SYRIA COORDINATION

The 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) was finalized in mid-October, providing a solid and common basis for the international community's response to the Syrian crisis. The HNO was the result of intense coordination efforts, which engaged a large number of humanitarian actors across 11 sectors and multiple operational hubs. The HNO indicates that by now, three in four Syrians live in poverty and 13.5 million people are in need of various forms of humanitarian assistance. Half of the working age population is unemployed, with loss of income affecting millions of dependents. Food insecurity levels are hence deteriorating as 8.7 million people, almost half of the Syria population, are food insecure of which 6.3 million people are

extremely food insecure. Most of these families are resorting to negative coping mechanisms, including the selling of assets and taking children out of school, in order to deal with the consequences of the conflict.

In addition, the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was launched at the beginning of December. Humanitarian agencies are appealing for USD 3.18 billion to fund the response inside the country, including USD 1.2 billion required by the Food Security and Agriculture Sector. Eight WFP projects across different sectors account for 21 percent of the overall HRP appeal in 2016.

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FUNDING

In 2015, WFPs emergency operation inside Syria received 54 percent of its appeal for the year. The resource shortfalls and late funding arrival have forced WFP to reduce the planned food basket by an average of 23 percent every month and heavily rely on internal loans to be able to maintain a minimum level of support to vulnerable families. However, due to a standard procurement lead-time of 2-3 months and late funding arrivals, procured food commodities did not arrive in time for the November and December distribution cycles. This meant that the food basket was reduced to providing only 77 and 68 percent of the caloric transfer in November and December, of which the latter had the largest ration cut in 2015. WFP is grateful for the generous donations that were received by multiple donors during the reporting period, which will enable WFP to be fully covered operationally until the end of March 2016. For the April – June 2016 period, USD 179 million need to be secured by late January for commodities to be available for distribution in April.

