



Part of 'Grow'  
programming for  
**SYRIA + FIVE**  
**VISION 2020**

# IMPACT REVIEW III

WFP HEALTHY KITCHENS INITIATIVE

MARCH 2016

SYRIA CRISIS  
REGIONAL RESPONSE



For information on WFP's Syria Crisis Response in 2013 - 2015, please use the **QR Code** or access through the link: [wfp.org/syriainfo](http://wfp.org/syriainfo)

## HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP's "Healthy Kitchens" will employ Syrian women to prepare healthy school lunches for Syrian children in schools, providing livelihood opportunities for vulnerable women, as well as educational and nutritional support to children.
- The initiative is part of WFP's 'Grow' programming, which seek to provide innovative and expanded nutrition support for children, sustainable livelihood opportunities for families.
- Beyond direct support to women and students, the Healthy Kitchens project increases impact by engaging with local supply chains for commodity procurement, strengthening local food production, processing, transport, and distribution while stimulating local economic growth.

WFP/Mohammad Batah

## Introduction:

As the Syrian conflict enters its sixth year this month (March 2016), WFP continues to develop innovative programming to address the multi-faceted challenges of this protracted crisis. While WFP will ensure the provision of life-saving basic needs, increasing resilience and livelihood opportunities have also become a necessary cornerstone of WFP's programme development. WFP's "Healthy Kitchens" project is one such example, providing employment for Syrian women to prepare, cook, and serve healthy school lunches for Syrian children in school. In addition to creating livelihood opportunities for vulnerable Syrian women, the project provides key nutritional support for children while helping to reinforce educational outcomes. Beyond direct support to women and students, the Healthy Kitchens project increases impact by engaging with local supply chains for commodity procurement, strengthening local food production, processing, transport, and distribution while stimulating local economic growth. Finally, the project provides an opportunity for WFP to expand and strengthen partnerships with other humanitarian actors across the region.

## Current project:

The Healthy Kitchens project is currently being piloted in Jordan's refugee camps (Za'atri and Azraq), where over half of the total population are children (around 60,000 children), and an average of 37 percent of households are headed by women. WFP prioritizes mothers of students attending schools in the camps for an employment opportunity through Healthy Kitchens as part of its holistic programming approach. The project's pilot phase will employ approximately 200 women to prepare and cook healthy school meals such as fresh cheese and thyme bread (manaqeeh) served with a seasonal vegetable and fruit, and provided to over 4,000 students in Za'atri and 1,500 students in Azraq per day. The project builds on key recommendations from Jordan's 2015 Comprehensive Food Security and Monitoring Exercise (CFSME) which stressed 1) the importance of increasing access to economic opportunities for refugees, and 2) the need to enable and expand small-scale income

generation, livelihood and competition to drive down the prices of food items in camp settings. In line with these recommendations WFP seeks to expand the Healthy Kitchens project where feasible across the region under its "Grow" programme, part of the Syria + Five Vision 2020.

## Supporting education:

The Healthy Kitchens project is multi-sectoral in nature, addressing not only the food needs of refugee children, but also promoting their education. There are more than 1.3 million school-age (5-17 years) Syrian children in the five regional refugee hosting countries. However, only 48 percent (667,000) school-age children, are accessing education opportunities. Close to 52 percent, (708,000) of school-age children, are out-of-school.<sup>1</sup> Providing targeted assistance in schools is a key area of intervention for WFP as it seeks to support the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative.

The project aims to improve students' school enrollment and attendance rates. Ensuring students are provided a healthy meal during school hours should decrease the number of families withdrawing their children from school as a coping strategy.



WFP/Mohammad Batah

<sup>1</sup> Programming which generates resilient opportunities for women (GROW)

## Supporting nutritional awareness:

Furthermore, the project aims to enhance children's access to healthy and nutritionally diverse foods, thereby improving their overall food security and dietary diversity. The project seeks to build on nutrition outcomes by developing student awareness of nutrition and healthy eating, helping to lay the foundation for a healthier lifestyle.

## Supporting Women's employment:

In addition to supporting the educational needs of Syrian children, the Healthy Kitchens project is designed to create livelihood opportunities for vulnerable Syrian women. The employment and livelihood situation across the region remains dire – especially for women. In Jordan, only seven percent of Syrian women who live outside of refugee camps participate in the Jordanian labour market.<sup>2</sup> Ninety-percent of Syrian refugees working outside camps are employed in the informal sector, with poor wages scarce working rights, and increased protection vulnerabilities.<sup>3</sup> In Lebanon, Syrian refugees are unable to work legally, and 70 percent live below the poverty line.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of higher rates of unemployment, female-headed households are twice as vulnerable to food insecurity as those headed by males. In response, the Healthy Kitchens project aims to increase women's access to the job market, enabling them to meet their families' basic needs and strengthen household resilience. Furthermore, the project seeks to mitigate harmful coping strategies such as engaging in high risk/illegal income generating activities (e.g. illegal construction, prostitution). The Healthy Kitchens project was developed through a culturally sensitive lens, respecting women's traditional employment roles, and providing them with a safe working environment.

With a focus on employment, the Healthy Kitchens project empowers women and their families to live more dignified lives within a context of displacement. In Jordan, it is estimated that 90 percent of the female beneficiaries engaged in the project will be paid to work for the first time in their lives. This has a powerful impact on long-term self-confidence and

empowerment, while providing much needed opportunities for women to overcome social isolation by working and interacting with their peers. By assisting vulnerable Syrian refugee women to be more self-reliant by developing new skills and enhancing existing ones, the Healthy Kitchens project will facilitate Syrian refugees' reduced dependence on humanitarian assistance, and their return to productive employment, once a durable solution to displacement is found – meeting a key benchmark of the Vision 2020.

## Farm to table – Supporting the entire food system:

As WFP transitions its regional programming from immediate food assistance to a longer-term, sustainable approach under the 'Syria + Five Vision 2020,' programming will prioritize providing holistic support to enhance the food supply chain – from farm to table. The Healthy Kitchens project, under the larger 'Grow' initiative, is a primary example of supporting the complete food supply chain: production, processing, transport, and distribution/retail. WFP will support local farmers by purchasing their crops (production) which will be used in the school meals prepared by women (food processing) and then served to students (distribution/retail). By supporting the whole supply chain, WFP seeks to build the capacity of both the public and private sectors, ensuring increased economic development at local, national, and regional levels; providing direct and indirect livelihood opportunities; and helping communities strengthen their resilience.

## Strengthening partnerships:

The Healthy Kitchens initiative promotes strategic partnerships across the region. In Jordan, WFP has already partnered with UN Women to build cooking facilities in Za'atri camp, and to identify vulnerable Syrian women for employment support. This partnership could be expanded as the Healthy Kitchens project is further developed across the region. Furthermore, WFP could potentially partner with FAO to support local agriculture production and food processing, which, in turn, can be used to supply food for the Healthy Kitchens. As the Healthy Kitchens project develops across the

<sup>2</sup> Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) Regional Strategic Overview 2016-2017, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/> p.34

<sup>3</sup> The ILO Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis (Update: February 2016)

[http://www.ilo.org/pardev/information-resources/publications/WCMS\\_357159/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/pardev/information-resources/publications/WCMS_357159/lang--en/index.htm) p.7

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

region, there is potential to forge partnerships with international NGOs with expertise in livelihood programming. In addition, it will be essential for WFP to partner with host countries' Ministries of Education and/or Labour to ensure a longer-term sustainable handover to host governments and the private sector.

### 'Grow' programming:

The Healthy Kitchens initiative falls under WFP's wider 'Grow' programme, to provide innovative and expanded nutrition support for children, sustainable livelihood opportunities for families, in particular, mothers, while further reinforcing education incentives to increase enrolment and attendance.

WFP's 'Grow' programme is designed to connect with UNDP and UNICEF regional strategies. Agencies will work jointly with relevant Ministries of Education, connecting 'Grow' activities to UNDP school rehabilitation/construction programming under its "3x6" strategy and UNICEF formal education support to provide holistic education support that achieves

organization overlapping regional objectives of ensuring inclusiveness, national ownership, and sustainability.

### Conclusion:

The Healthy Kitchens project is an example of how WFP continues to build upon its core strengths to naturally expand to meet unique context demands, and more completely fulfill its mandate through innovative and sustainable programming. Such programming, which focuses on pertinent themes directly linked to the protracted crisis, (including food security, education, livelihood creation and resilience) is becoming ever more essential to address the needs of vulnerable Syrians. Moving forward, this type of project will likely become a cornerstone of WFP's Syria + Five Vision 2020, as it will promote education, create livelihood opportunities and strengthen national resilience. Most importantly, this type of programming will only be feasible in cooperation with key partnerships with other UN agencies, international NGOs, and governments.



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