

# JORDAN

## FACT SHEET

SYRIA CRISIS  
RESPONSE



**World Food  
Programme**



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Since the start of the conflict in Syria, hundreds of thousands of Syrians have crossed the border into Jordan, seeking refuge from escalating violence. Increasingly, Syrians arrive with little more than the clothes they are wearing, having suffered months of food insecurity due to the high cost of living and lack of employment opportunities in Syria. As fighting intensifies in the border regions, refugees are forced to walk longer distances through the desert to find a safe passage to Jordan.

Refugees in Jordan are accommodated in host communities across all of the country's 12 governorates, as well as in Al Za'atri camp, Azraq camp, Emirati-Jordanian Camp, and two smaller transit centres – King Abdullah Park and Cyber City in Irbid.

With the majority of Syrian refugees living in Jordanian communities, public services ever more stretched and competition for employment intensifying, tensions between refugees and local communities are rising. School capacity is limited and health care is no longer free of charge. In addition, a heavy burden on municipal utilities has led to blackouts and water shortages in multiple governorates across the country.

## WFP OPERATIONS

Since the launch of its emergency operation (EMOP) in Jordan in April 2012, WFP has responded to the food needs of refugees in host communities as well as in transit centres and camps.

Up until end of September 2014, WFP assisted 98 percent of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. Thereafter, the Jordan EMOP implemented vulnerability targeting of Syrian refugees, excluding about 3 percent of households based on vulnerability criteria defined in the 2014 WFP/REACH Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME). Up until the end of 2014, WFP reached all eligible Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, with no pipeline breaks or reduction in rations. January 2015 marked the first time WFP was forced to reduce the voucher value from a planned JOD 20 per person per month, to JOD 13, in communities. In April 2015, WFP implemented another round of targeting, coupled with a tiered assistance approach (more information below).

A continued lack of funding, however, forced further reductions from May through November, including the complete suspension of assistance to around 229,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees in September. This assistance was reinstated in October, but left an indelible mark on the families who had to survive without it for one month (more information below).

### Welcome meals

Welcome meals are distributed through WFP partner IOM to newly arriving Syrian refugees in the Raba Sarhan registration centre. The purpose of the welcome meal is to provide the beneficiary with a daily food ration to cover the period between their arrival in the centre and their transfer to a camp, where they will receive new arrival vouchers. In special cases, welcome meals are also distributed in Azraq and Za'atri camps by WFP partner NRC.

### Al Za'atri Camp

After the opening of Al Za'atri camp in July 2012, WFP distributed hot meals from local restaurants to all camp residents twice a day. Following the rapid influx of refugees into the camp and escalating operating costs due to the high cost of hot meals, WFP transitioned to dry ration distributions in October 2012, once kitchens in which refugees could cook were available. In September 2013, WFP began its transition from dry rations to paper voucher assistance in Al Za'atri camp, moving completely to voucher assistance by March 2014. Six months later, WFP began rolling out e-cards to the entire camp population, moving completely from paper to electronic vouchers by December 2014.

Vouchers can be redeemed at two WFP partner supermarkets in the camp. Beneficiaries receive vouchers valued at JOD 20 per person per month in addition to bread distributed daily.

**Azraq Camp**

Since late April 2014, WFP, through its cooperating partner ACTED, has distributed welcome vouchers valued at JOD 10 per person covering two weeks to all new arrivals in Azraq camp. This marked the first time that a camp has opened with a large supermarket, allowing for voucher assistance from the onset. New arrivals also receive bread daily. Following this assistance to new arrivals, WFP distributes vouchers valued at JOD 20 per person per month as well as daily bread. In November 2014, WFP distributed e-cards to the entire camp population, transitioning its assistance from paper to electronic vouchers.

**School Feeding**

In addition to food vouchers and daily fresh bread, WFP implements a school feeding programme in both camps. In Al Za’atri, WFP covers both formal and informal schools, through partner Save the Children. In Azraq, WFP covers informal schools, through agreements with Relief International and the NRC. The programme is designed to increase enrolment and attendance by providing children with a nutritious daily snack. By addressing short-term hunger, the snacks also help students to concentrate in class.



WFP/Jordan

**Refugees in Jordanian communities**

With 81 percent of Syrian refugees located in Jordanian communities, WFP is reaching Syrian refugees in non-camp settings through food voucher assistance. Since Syrian families are accustomed to shopping in commercial market environments, vouchers provided by WFP allow them to continue their regular approach to purchasing food, helping return a sense of normalcy to their lives. Enabling beneficiaries to select their preferred food items and meet their individual consumption needs is especially important for children, the elderly and those with specific dietary requirements. Vouchers also allow for access to a greater diversity of foods with higher nutritional value, including fresh fruits, dairy products, meat, chicken, fish and vegetables.

The WFP food voucher programme builds ties between refugees and host communities, helping to stimulate the economy in local communities including promoting local production and markets.

WFP provides voucher assistance in Jordanian communities through cooperating partners ACTED and Save the Children. Since January 2013, WFP has increased its caseload by more than 260 percent and expanded its partner shop capacity to over 88 shops in all governorates of Jordan. At the same time, WFP and partners have scaled up the distribution site locations, the retail network and monitoring activities on all aspects of implementation.

In partnership with MasterCard, WFP has transitioned nearly all of its assistance to refugees in Jordan to e-cards. E-cards facilitate a rapid increase in implementation capacity and provide an assistance mechanism for other organizations, either through vouchers tied to specific shops or for cash through ATMs at banks.

### The ONECARD

In January 2015, WFP launched the ONECARD system in partnership with UNICEF to support their winterization programme in camps, allowing beneficiaries to purchase winter clothes for children at WFP-contracted supermarkets. This programme was successfully repeated in the winter months of 2015/2016 in camps.

The ONECARD was also used by IOM in August 2015 to provide non-food item voucher assistance to single parent-headed families in Azraq camp. In December 2015, Mercy Corps began using the ONECARD for a 4-month cash assistance programme targeting 660 Syrian refugee families and 440 vulnerable Jordanian families in communities. A dedicated wallet on the card allows cash withdrawals from ATMs.

### Nutrition

In January 2014, WFP began the distribution of SuperCereal Plus for moderately malnourished children under five and pregnant and nursing women in Jordanian communities through partner Medair, and in Al Za'atri camp through partner Save the Children. Syrian refugees were screened and those with moderate acute malnutrition were referred for treatment at Jordan Health Aid Society medical clinics. Once Azraq camp opened, ACTED was identified as the nutrition partner there. Based on the Inter-Agency Nutrition Survey 2014 findings, which showed a significant improvement in moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) rates in both camp and community settings, WFP ceased the implementation of its targeted nutrition programme and supplementary feeding activities at the end of August 2014. Together with the nutrition sub-working group, WFP developed a strategy to address micronutrient deficiencies (of which the survey found a high prevalence) and MAM through non-nutritional management, including raising awareness of good nutritional practices.

### Targeted Assistance

In July 2014, WFP launched the Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME). The CFSME found that 85 percent of refugees living in communities continue to be in need of food assistance. Subsequently, the study found 15 percent of community population to be more food secure, with a 95 percent confidence interval and 7.5 percent margin of error at governorate level. WFP excluded 3 percent of its beneficiaries based on targeting criteria defined by the CFSME. In April 2015, a second round of targeting was implemented, based on enhanced criteria developed using vulnerability data from various sources, taking into account proxy indicators that correlate closely with poverty and vulnerability to food insecurity. The April round of targeting brought in tiered assistance for those in need, classifying families as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable. Those in the first category, around 240,000 individuals, received half the voucher value (JOD 10); and those in the second, around 190,000 individuals, received the full voucher value (JOD 20). These figures have subsequently changed with the processing of appeals received from households who wished to have their exclusion or categorization reconsidered. The targeting has not been implemented in camps, where around 95,000 individuals continued to receive the full voucher value.

In September 2015, refugees categorized as vulnerable in communities did not receive any assistance, and the extremely vulnerable again only received JOD 10. In October, thanks to additional funding, assistance to refugees in the vulnerable category was reinstated at JOD 10, and increased to JOD 15 for the extremely vulnerable. As of March 2016, thanks to generous pledges made at the London Conference in February, assistance to the extremely vulnerable refugees in communities was increased to the planned amount of JOD 20.

### Assistance at the border

Since early March 2016, WFP staff have been distributing ready-to-eat parcels to tens of thousands of Syrians at the Jordanian border waiting to be granted access to the country. The 7kg parcels, sufficient to last one person for seven days, are composed of items such as tinned vegetables, beans, chickpeas, biscuits, dates, jam, tea and sugar, as well as fresh produce including cucumbers, oranges and apples. Fresh bread (provided by IOM) is also distributed on a daily basis. Assistance at the border is closely coordinated with the Jordanian Border Guards, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM and ICRC.

## IMPACT OF REDUCTIONS

In June 2015, WFP launched the latest CFSME, highlighting the dramatic deterioration of food security among refugees in communities; the number of households who are food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity has increased from 48 percent in 2014 to 85 percent in 2015. Repeated reductions in the voucher value forced people to employ drastic measures to meet their food needs; 67 percent of households have resorted to crisis and emergency coping measures in 2015, 32 percent more than in 2014. Such measures including sending male children to work, reported by 15 percent of households with school-aged male children (a 12 percent increase from 2014), as well as reducing expenditure on essential needs such as health and education, reported by 51 percent of households (compared to 29 percent 2014). This increasing vulnerability is summarized by the much higher number of households living below the poverty line: 68 percent (compared with 44 percent in 2014), which, given the larger size of these poorer households, translates to 75 percent of individuals. Most households have now gone into debt to meet their needs, with nearly 50 percent holding over JOD 500 (USD 705) of debt, almost double the amount from 2014.

In October 2015, WFP conducted a rapid panel assessment with families in the vulnerable category who had been monitored in Q2 2015 and did not receive any assistance in September, to measure the impact of these cuts. Eighty-nine families were interviewed and paired analysis was conducted comparing information collected pre-cuts and post-cuts. The results illustrate how quickly and severely their situation deteriorated, with the number of families with poor food consumption skyrocketing from 0 percent to 27 percent, and the cumulative number in the poor and borderline food consumption categories more than tripling, from 18 percent to 61 percent.

Almost all families (82 percent) reduced food consumption after the cuts. Consumption of meat decreased again, this time by half, with further decreases for cereals, dairy and vegetables by around one third. Three quarter of families were reducing the number of meals eaten in a day, and 84 percent limited portion size at meals. Other coping strategies became more and more extreme, with almost one quarter of families removing children from school in the month preceding the assessment. Sadly, 29 percent of households sent children to work to help meet household needs, more than five times as many as before. Whereas previously only 4 percent of families admitted to sending at least one family member to beg, this number more than tripled following the cuts, to 13 percent. Nearly 80 percent of families borrowed money to pay for basic food needs, which only increased their debt levels. When asked about their probable plans if they did not receive WFP food assistance in the future, almost half would consider leaving Jordan, either for Europe (20 percent) or back to Syria (26 percent).

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

WFP's voucher assistance has supported and stimulated the Jordanian economy since the onset of the Syrian crisis. An Economic Impact Survey conducted in March 2014 by WFP found that in 2014 WFP's voucher assistance alone would amount to 0.7 percent of Jordan's GDP. In terms of direct economic effects, the study found that 87 cents of each dollar spent by voucher recipients is channeled to food commodity purchases from suppliers within Jordan. In addition, the voucher programme has led to USD 2.5 million investment in physical infrastructure by participating retailers, created over 350 jobs in the food retail sector, and generated almost USD 8 million in additional tax receipts for the Government of Jordan. In terms of indirect effects, the study found a predictive multiplier ranging from 1.019 to 1.234; WFP distributed about USD 212 million in food vouchers during 2014 which led to more than USD 325 million of indirect benefits for the Jordanian economy. Another Economic Impact Study was conducted in 2015 and will be published shortly.

WFP planned to distribute around USD 152 million in food vouchers in 2015. However, due to funding shortfalls which caused repeated reductions in the voucher values, this amount was not reached.

## CHALLENGES

Sustainable funding, including ensuring the timing of donations meets the cash flow requirements, continues to pose challenges for future food assistance, maintaining the cash flow and for ensuring contingency stocks are ready to assist possible influxes of refugees.

## THE SCIENCE OF SURVIVAL

"School will not spare my family from poverty and hunger. I want to be able to give them whatever they need to survive. My father has sacrificed enough for us" – Jaber, 15

Teenager Jaber lives in a makeshift home built on a plot of land where the landlord used to raise sheep. His family, his mother, his partially blind father, his brother and two sisters escaped the conflict in Syria two years ago after their neighborhood was subjected to intensive shelling.

In early June, Jaber packed his school bag for the final time and took the decision to drop out of school in order to work and earn money for his family's survival. He pretends to be totally indifferent about the idea of not going back to school "I prefer earning money than doing homework," the 15 year-old says with a wry grin.

His mother, however shares a different side of the story. Jaber was in fact one of the top students in his class with a particular passion for science. He dreamed of being a pharmacist but he knew he could not pursue that dream when he saw how the WFP assistance his family relied on heavily is constantly reducing.

"Between the end of the cash assistance we used to get from various charities to cover the rent and the reduction in the value of food assistance, we simply could not afford to keep Jaber in school," Abu Jaber says. "I cannot begin to explain the shame and heartbreak I feel for not having the power to stop my son from dropping out of school," he adds in a choked voice.



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