



## WFP/UNHCR/SARC/SPC JOINT ASSESSMENT MISSION

### Refugees in Syria



June 2009

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Past food assistance to refugees

Assistance with basic and complementary food commodities has been provided by WFP, UNHCR and SARC to a changing number of Iraqi refugees in Syria. The first project started in January 2007, with a caseload of 6,645 vulnerable refugees (WFP EMOP 10576.0). The first distribution of the subsequent EMOP 10604 to a total number of 33,000 refugees took place in September 2007. The initial target (i.e. planned figures of entitled refugees) for the current WFP EMOP 10717 was set at provision for 360,000 refugees, but it came to be modified to 362,800 and, at a still later stage, to 218,107 following UNHCR estimates of the refugee population. The number of registered refugees, however, turned out to be lower than expected by UNHCR. Planning figures for 2009 were initially 175,000 and after revision in July, UNHCR fixed them at 168,500. Besides Iraqi refugees in Syria, food assistance was provided to about 2000 Palestinians who had fled Iraq and had been settled in the two border camps of Al Tanf and Al Hol.

The registration process has improved throughout the implementation period of this series of projects. After an initial stage of registration with SARC or UNHCR, UNHCR has now a complete electronic database of all registered refugees in the country with enhanced access to registration and improved processing capacities. Targeting issues have been repeatedly discussed among the implementing partners and donors and continuously revised according to the latest stand of information on the vulnerability of the refugee population. In addition, notable improvements have been made in the distribution of food assistance: regular distributions every two months take place simultaneously at 14 sites across the country, supplying the complete food basket, composed of basic and complementary food items. In order to lessen the burden on the beneficiaries, an increasing number of distribution sites have been put into place and in certain locations transportation of food assistance commodities to the beneficiaries' homes is provided. Also, the notification mechanism of the beneficiaries has been improved by extending sms notification to the majority of the refugees.

### Previous JAM

The previous Joint Assessment Mission took place with the participation of WFP, UNHCR, SARC, and UNICEF in October 2007. It concluded that, against the background of a prolonged crisis in Iraq, the economic situation of many Iraqi refugees in Syria is deteriorating and their vulnerability is increasing. It underlined the need for improved co-ordination among stakeholders and urged the upscaling of the intensity and scope of the operation. It recommended targeting criteria that define about 45% of the registered refugees as eligible for food assistance.

### Current JAM, participation and set-up

The recent JAM took place with the participation of WFP, UNHCR, SARC and SPC in June 2009. It consisted of a series of preparatory meetings that covered the lessons learnt in past operations, including specific logistics issues. Given the wealth of available secondary data already gained from surveys and programme monitoring, the mission designed the final questionnaires and checklist in order to only fill gaps in existing data. The household interviews conducted on a random sample in various areas of Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh were completed by information from focus groups in the same areas.

## Main findings

Since the onset of the Iraqi crisis, Syria continues to host the largest population of refugees from Iraq. In addition to Iraqis, smaller groups of Somali, Sudanese and Afghani have found refuge in Syria, mainly in the capital. Refugees and asylum seekers in Syria do not obtain a formal work permit and are not allowed to buy property or obtain license to operate businesses. Consequently, many refugees and asylum seekers are dependent on humanitarian assistance or illegal employment in the informal sector.

The total number of Iraqi refugees in Syria remains unconfirmed. While there are indications that some refugees have returned to Iraq, so far the number of voluntary returns has been very low. Refugees have settled mainly in Damascus, Aleppo and in the border Governorates. The first major group is composed of refugees who came between 2000 and 2003 and who have often settled in the structurally weaker border region of Hassakeh. People fleeing Iraq during that period came with little resources and assets have been quickly depleted. The context seems to be different for refugees who came between 2003 and 2004. This period has been described as a time of uncertainty, where the population had more time to plan departure and could mobilize all available assets. Iraqis who left their country between 2004 and 2006 faced a situation of increased violence and political instability. The majority of households are composed of refugees who have arrived in Syria after February 2006, when violence escalated following the bombing of the Samarra mosque.

Food security of refugees in Syria is mostly related to inadequate economic access, as most of them live in urban areas, where markets are well supplied over the entire year. There are no problems related to the utilization of food by the refugees. The assessment has revealed the deteriorating economic situation of refugee families due to the continuous depletion of resources and savings and to reduced remittances. About 23% of the families can still rely on savings; pensions and official allowances from Iraq represent the main source of income for only 10% of the surveyed population.<sup>1</sup> Due to the global financial crisis, remittances are decreasing and getting less regular, which strongly affects one third of households for which they represent the major source of income. Consequently, the share of income from illegal wage labor is on the rise. Also, the UNHCR/SARC cash allowance given to the most vulnerable households is becoming more important. Since there are no legal options for income generation, refugees mainly rely on food-based coping strategies in facing shocks and difficulties.

Accommodation is the main challenge for most refugees. Rents, around 9,450 SYP/month (201 USD/month<sup>2</sup>), continue to rise even for small apartments with basic utilities only. Housing costs including utilities amount to 37% of the total household expenditure and represent more than 70% of the total non-food expenditure, 43% of households are in debt for rent payment. Other major difficulties reported are health expenditures and high food prices. The share of food expenditure out of the total household expenditure is 38%.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See section 2.5 on "Income, assets and debts"

<sup>2</sup> Exchange rate: 1USD = 47 SYP

<sup>3</sup> For further details, please see Annex of Tables

Local markets are an important source for all food items consumed by the refugees: even rice, pulses and oil that are part of the food ration distributed by WFP/UNHCR/SARC, are bought by at least 40% of the households on the local markets. As to the use of the food ration, a large share of rice (mean 37%) and pulses (mean 26%) is sold in order to buy food not included in the ration or another variety or quality of the same items. In some areas food rations are also sold for money to cover rental expenses. Beneficiaries judge the quantity of rice and some other items excessive; they would prefer another variety of the same commodity and a more diverse food basket.

Refugee households were divided into three food consumption groups according to their food consumption scores as poor, borderline and acceptable food consumption. The JAM has demonstrated the positive effect of continuous food assistance: a significant majority of the surveyed population (74%) reaches acceptable food consumption, 20% have borderline food consumption and 6% have poor food consumption. While refugees with borderline or poor food consumption might have sufficient access to carbohydrates, their diet is likely to be deficient in proteins and micronutrients.

Households with borderline or poor food consumption are often one-person households, households with a handicapped member or households composed of males only. In this category, the share of households that have been in Syria for longer time is greater, these families are now often in debt for rent payment. More than 60% of these households reduce the number of meals per day, decrease expenditures on health care, borrow food or rely on money lenders.

Refugee food security status has to be assessed in relation with their health, education, cash and non-food needs. As dwindling personal savings and prolonged stay in Syria are leading to increased vulnerability, enhanced efforts are required to address the protection needs in health and education as well as the material needs for non-food items and cash assistance to the most vulnerable.

## **Main recommendations**

The findings of this assessment regarding food security have paved the way for discussion with implementing partners and other stakeholders during a consultative meeting held in Damascus on July 8-9, 2009. During this open process, the JAM findings were verified and triangulated with stakeholders' understanding of the refugee context. The objective of the consultation was to determine whether any adjustments to the targeting and the modalities of food assistance to refugees in Syria were necessary. Special emphasis was put on complementary food assistance planning and implementation.

There is general agreement among implementing partners in the operation that while it was appropriate to deactivate beneficiary files in case of two consecutive no-shows for food distribution, the other currently applied targeting criteria should be revised as they often result in an important exclusion error. Households composed of only able-bodied men in a working age have so far been excluded from food assistance. The JAM has revealed, however, that variations in the demographic composition of families - whether female-headed households or refugee households comprising only males - should not affect different food assistance entitlements, since they do not entail better access to food under the current legal regulations. The previously

applied exclusion criteria related to the arrival date have equally excluded many of the neediest and will be revised, therefore, for the new operation.

While the JAM has found some differences in the food security status of households across geographical areas and refugee groups, these differences do not warrant location specific programme responses in food aid. Differences can be attributed mainly to variations in income and the levels of non-food expenditures, and these can be better tackled through non-food responses.

The current WFP operation addresses only the food needs of Iraqi refugees in Syria. The JAM, however, has revealed that non-Iraqi refugees are among the most vulnerable refugees living in this country. Their needs will be considered in designing the new emergency operation.

In addition to the findings of the JAM, partners were consulted as to whether there were any particular times of the year when assistance ought to be better adapted to the needs of beneficiaries. While seasonal fluctuations in household expenditures as well as in consumption preferences have been pointed out, given the range of food types available to WFP, seasonal responses are not required. UNHCR has already initiated a number of non-food responses to better match the needs of refugees during these periods.

All stakeholders agreed on the need to modify the current food basket in terms of quantity and variety, in order to meet food needs better. This entails the reduction of the quantity of currently provided cereals and the diversification of pulses. It is believed that this approach will significantly reduce the sale of food aid while maintaining food security objectives. It was suggested that – to the extent possible – this new food basket should consider to include items from the following table:

Rice	Beans	Oil
Wheat flour	Lentils	Canned fish
Bulgur	Chickpeas	Processed cheese
Sugar	Dates	Tomato paste

Another way to address the issue of the sale of food aid in an appropriate manner could be a further up-scaling of non-food assistance.

In order to effectuate the above mentioned changes in the implementation of food assistance, WFP will have to consider the different response options in this context. The following approaches, to be refined during the design of the new project, have been outlined during the consultation:

- Food assistance retaining the current commodities and ration sizes while changing the variety of the supplied commodity
- Food assistance in form of a more diverse food basket
- Food assistance with a revised daily ration size that covers daily nutritional requirements
- Food assistance comprising the currently distributed basic commodities, along with an adjustment of ration size and the use of other transfer types (coupons, vouchers, cash) in order to provide a more diverse, yet nutritionally still appropriate food basket
- Use of other transfer types (coupons, vouchers, cash) to cover the entire food basket while ensuring a correct tracking of beneficiaries

As the current assistance is targeting a considerable caseload of beneficiaries through a well-functioning distribution mechanism, any new approach will have to be introduced gradually, allowing WFP to assess the efficiency of its new operation, with a particular emphasis on complementarities with other programmes. Any new approach will be introduced either geographically, to ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation, or by certain sub-groups of beneficiaries.



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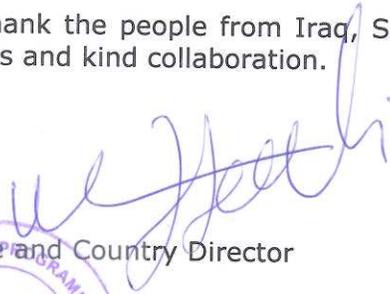
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## BACKGROUND OF THE ASSESSMENT

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Since the current World Food Programme operation (WFP EMOP 10717) will come to an end in December 2009, WFP is developing a new project in order to better respond to the changing requirements. Improvements are based on the lessons learnt from the past project cycle and feedback received from partners and the donor community. The previous Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) was conducted in Syria in 2007. WFP and UNHCR recognize the need for a re-assessment of the refugee operation as part of a periodic reflection on the ongoing programme planning cycle and of a sustained process of monitoring. The purpose of the Joint Assessment Mission in 2009 (JAM) is to contribute to the improvement of the overall programme design and impact, to facilitate resource mobilization and to help ensure the best possible use of available resources to the benefit of refugees in Syria.

The assessment should identify whether the design of the current refugee operation should continue as at present or needs redirection. It will provide an analysis of the effectiveness of the operation in the period since the last assessment, of changes that have occurred since, and will flag specific issues that have emerged in relation to the situation or the assistance operation. The assessment is to propose solutions to current problems and produce recommendations for the next planning period (Refugee EMOP 2010), including updated complementary strategies for food and related assistance and for self-reliance.

The situation of Iraqi refugees has significantly changed since the last JAM in 2007. In the past year their economic situation has been deteriorating; they have further depleted their own resources, savings and remittances, while excluded from all legal opportunities to engage in income-generating activities. Targeting criteria suggested by the last assessment have been repeatedly revised in order to include all vulnerable groups. Overall numbers of assisted refugees have not evolved as previously predicted: the number of new arrivals is lower than predicted and a significant proportion of refugees have been excluded from food assistance on the grounds of failing to show up for two consecutive distributions. At the same time, UNHCR reports that the actual beneficiaries of the last cycles constitute a regular core group of refugees definitely in need of food assistance.

WFP monitoring has repeatedly underlined the appropriateness of the current food ration composition in addressing the needs of urban refugees. Both quantity and food variety issues have been pointed out. These issues were also revealed by the analysis of food aid commodities sold by beneficiaries in local markets.

To date, UNHCR has been providing assistance to non-Iraqi refugees through SARC. According to the WFP-UNHCR Memorandum of Understanding<sup>4</sup>, UNHCR should cover the provision of food and non-food assistance to refugees, returnees and asylum seekers in cases where the number of people in need of food assistance remains below 5,000. UNHCR and SARC have underlined the need of non-Iraqi refugees for food assistance and, as the number of these refugees is above 5,000, WFP will also consider channeling assistance to this specific group.

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<sup>4</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP)*, 1 July 2002, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3d357f502.html>

## OBJECTIVES

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In consultation with all stakeholders, including Government entities and donor representatives, the Joint Assessment Mission will review the overall food and non-food assistance needs of registered refugees in Syria. It will specifically address the following issues:

- Refugee numbers and demography
- Food security and self-reliance
- Food and non-food assistance: targeting, distribution and monitoring
- Food and non-food items: supplies and logistics
- Access to health, education and other services
- Partnerships and coordination

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## METHODOLOGY

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Several approaches were used to generate information for this JAM. The mission has undertaken a desk review of relevant project documents, surveys, needs assessments and reports as well as of the quantitative and qualitative data collected by the mission itself through household interviews, focus group discussions and key informants. Since each method resulted in a separate set of findings, they had to be compared and triangulated for the final report.

Quantitative methods of the mission consisted of a household survey with a sample of 200 households, where interviews have been conducted on the basis of an agreed questionnaire. This questionnaire was proposed by WFP to address all relevant indicators for determining food security (livelihoods, access to food, risks and vulnerability) and complemented by input from UNHCR, SARC and SPC. The draft of the questionnaire was also shared with all project stakeholders during the Iraqi Refugees Working Group and asked for inputs. The training of enumerators took place in Damascus; additional smaller workshops were conducted for field based staff in Aleppo and Hassakeh. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic only and interpreters were used for household interviews among the Somali population.

As 90% of all registered refugees live in Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh, a random sample of households was taken from the list of UNHCR registered refugees from these areas. The sample was taken separately from Damascus and the countryside with a confidence interval of 95% and a one-stage random sampling.

WFP Syria Country Office undertook the quantitative data entry, cleaning and analysis using the SPSS software. Output from twenty focus group discussions in Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh were analyzed as text.

Specifically, focus group discussions with Iraqi refugees took place at the following sites: UNHCR Douma registration office in Damascus, Sayda Zenab, Jaramana, Massaken Barzeh and Qudsayya neighborhoods in Damascus, Al-Bab district in Aleppo, Hamdaneya counseling center in Aleppo, Al-Sakhour Medical Center in Aleppo, SARC counseling center in Aleppo, Hassakeh City, Quamishli, Yarobia, and Tal Tamir. In addition to the focus group discussions with Iraqi refugees, separate discussions took place with Sudanese and Somali refugees in Damascus. Interviews with various key informants at all sites enriched the findings of this report.

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## **PART 1 – BACKGROUND**

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### **1.1 Iraqi refugee crisis**

The Syrian Arab Republic has granted asylum to many groups of refugees, and is the only Iraq neighboring country that has continued to provide relatively easy access to Iraqi refugees. Since the onset of the Iraqi crisis, Syria continues to host the largest population of refugees from Iraq. In addition to Iraqis, smaller groups of Somali, Sudanese and Afghanis have found refuge in Syria, mainly in the capital.

While Syria stands by its commitment to maintain its borders with Iraq open and to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement, the application of visa and residency rules are issued on short-term residence permits. The uncertainty about their legal status is a growing and major cause for concern. This is especially the case for those whose residency permits have been granted on account of their children's enrolment in Syrian schools. The application of these regulations appears to have tightened over the last few months, creating anxiety among refugees who fear that with the school year ending they may face difficulties in getting their residence permits extended. Therefore, UNHCR should continue monitoring the situation with regard to documentation and intervene on behalf of individual cases with the Syrian authorities to ensure that asylum and protection space for Iraqi refugees is maintained.

The Government of Syria is considering accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and is in the process of drafting a national refugee law, for there is as yet no legal framework to regulate asylum. Hence UNHCR assumes full responsibility for refugee status determination and is committed to provide technical assistance in drafting the national refugee law. Currently, the prima facie recognition of refugee status continues to apply to most Iraqis, except those originating from the three Northern Governorates. The latter are subject to individual status determination. Asylum seekers from other nationalities, such as Sudanese, Somali or Afghanis, have to undergo individual refugee status determination.

In order to obtain a one-year residence permit in Syria, refugees must take an HIV test and produce a residency certificate from the district's mayor, a lease agreement or certification of property ownership, and a valid passport or ID. The requirement of an official lease agreement often leads to higher rents for refugees than for poor Syrians, since the latter can also settle in informal housing areas.

Refugees and asylum seekers in Syria have no formal permission to work. They are banned from owning property and obtaining licenses to operate businesses. Consequently, many refugees and asylum seekers are dependent on humanitarian assistance or have to seek illegal employment in the informal sector. Wages paid to refugees working in the informal sector are significantly lower than those of the formal sector. This situation and its financial constraints for Iraqi refugees lead to a number of serious protection concerns, including returns to Iraq or children's dropping out of school to work and support other family members. This situation also forces a number of Iraqis to engage into illicit activities such as human trafficking, prostitution, and exploitation/forced labor.

The majority of refugees who live in urban settings are subject to the same national laws and regulations as Syrians regarding the right to freely practice the religion of

their choice, observe cultural practices or form non-political associations without discrimination.

Dissemination of information on legal regulations applying to refugees takes place in various ways: regularly updated information papers and posters at UNHCR Offices, individual and group counseling with various UNHCR services, such as protection, education, resettlement and registration. Brochures describing these services in Arabic are provided to refugees, and the UNHCR assistance web site for Syria is regularly updated. These policies and regulations are also explained through a dedicated telephone number. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the degree to which refugees are aware of their rights and their ability to contribute to their own protection largely depends on their level of education and social affiliations. Insufficient awareness of rights is particularly prevalent among Somalis due to their low educational level and lack of Arabic language skills.



## 1.2 Refugee numbers and demography

The total number of Iraqi refugees in Syria remains unconfirmed.<sup>5</sup> While there are indications of some refugees returning to Iraq, the number of voluntary returns has been very low. At the same time, UNHCR has observed a decline in the number of refugees applying for registration since 2009. Still, every month over 2,000 individuals, including recent arrivals, register for the first time.

Refugees have come to Syria in different waves. A discussion of refugees with UNHCR has revealed that there are two major groups of vulnerable refugees according to their date of arrival and nature of causes of fled. The second most vulnerable group refers to refugees who arrived in Syria after February 2006 when sectarian violence broke out in Iraq. These people had to flee quickly and could not sell their properties. The context was different for refugees who came between 2003 and 2004. This period has been described as a time of uncertainty, where the population had more time to plan departure and could mobilize all available assets. Iraqis who left their county between 2004 and 2006 faced a situation of increased violence and political instability.

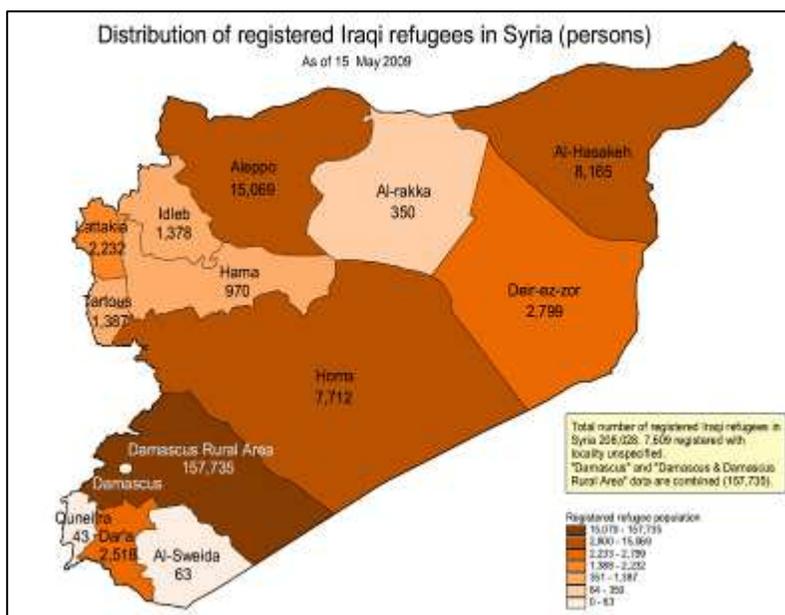
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<sup>5</sup> The Syrian Government has indicated that approximately 1.1 million Iraqis have valid visas/residency permits in Syria.

The number of Iraqi refugees continuously residing in Syria can be identified from the regular collection of food and non-food assistance provided. In March 2009, UNHCR conducted a major review of the registered population. The figure of 224,343 registered Iraqi refugees was reduced to 197,337 as a number of refugees were no longer habitual residents in Syria. Since then, new registrations have brought the total number of registered refugees to 207,669 by April 2009. According to registration statistics males compose 49.3 %, females 50.7% of refugees.

Considering the previous patterns of spontaneous and assisted return departures, new registrations as well as resettlement to third countries, and current scenarios regarding the political developments in Iraq, a decreasing trend in the numbers of registered Iraqi refugees is foreseen: to 168,500 (by the end of 2009) and 121,000 (by the end of 2010). For the non-Iraqi refugee population the planning figures stand at 5,300 persons by the end of 2009 and 6,100 persons by the end of 2010.

Refugees have settled mainly in Damascus, Aleppo and in the border Governorates. Initially refugees moved to areas that were similar to the socio-cultural and religious context in Iraq. While Christians preferred neighborhoods with a high concentration of Christian Syrians, Shia refugees moved to Shia dominated areas. This initial trend, however, has changed when refugees started to move to cheaper neighborhoods because of limited resources. Despite the fact that settlement in Damascus is partly conditioned by the perception of better chances for resettlement, the overall livelihoods condition of refugees settling in the Governorates is often better than in the capital. This is especially the case for rural areas of North-East Syria, where the integration into the new society is eased because livelihoods and population groups are similar across the border. However, the three consecutive years of drought, affecting the North-East of Syria, has negatively impacted the livelihoods of entire population, including the refugees. The feeling of relative deprivation, however, remains significantly higher for the urban refugees.



Source: CAP mid year review

The demographic profile of the refugee population can be understood from data collected through previous needs assessments and the current JAM. The majority of households (more than 85%) in all geographical areas are headed by men. The average age of the household head is around 46 years, about three thirds of the household heads fall into the age group of 31-59 years. The household head is usually living in a marriage (80% on an average) and in about 10% of the cases is single, some geographical variations, however, can be noted: in Hassakeh governorate there is a higher share of single or separated/divorced/widow heads of households.

More than half of the heads of households holds at least a secondary school diploma and 30% are university graduates, though lower education levels have been observed in Hassakeh. The educational level of the spouse is considerably lower, with Hassakeh again showing lowest levels, with an important share of spouses who did not go to school (20%).

While the average household size is 5, the share of small (1-3), medium (4-5) and large (5+) households is fairly much the same. Households are somewhat bigger in Hassakeh, where the average family size is more than 6. About one third of the families have children under 5, the share of infants in Aleppo and especially Hassakeh is higher than in Damascus. The proportion of children of relatives living in the household as well as that of elderly people is also higher in Hassakeh than in the other areas of the survey.

About 60% of households have chronically sick members to be taken care of; the average number of chronically sick people is higher in the capital than in other areas. About 16% of households support a handicapped household member, again with higher rates in Damascus.

Over 60% of households registered by UNHCR have arrived in Syria after February 2006, when violence escalated following the bombing of the Samarra mosque. Regardless the arrival date, households do not envisage to return to Iraq, or at least have not been giving any consideration to this option so far. Insecurity and instability of the home country was cited as the main reason, followed by the loss of properties.

### **1.3 Outlook of refugees movements**

High mobility of Iraqi refugees has been observed inside Syria or between Syria and Iraq. Refugees can move inside Syria to seek cheaper accommodation or employment, but also to visit relatives. While differences in prices can be noted among the neighborhoods of each major city, compared to Damascus the cost of living is significantly cheaper in the countryside, like Hassakeh, and in small cities of North East such as Tal Tamer. Iraqis are changing residence within the Governorate not only to find a lower rent, but also to obtain better renting conditions (duration of contract, lumpsum payments). Most households have changed their residence at least once since they have arrived in Syria; those in Hassakeh tend to be more mobile than those in Damascus and Aleppo. Reasons for changing residence are mostly related to rent, followed by living costs. Travels to Damascus are frequent for administrative reasons related to the Iraqi embassy and UNHCR resettlement. There is a general view among refugees that one can better avail of UNHCR services when in Damascus.

Since early March 2009, UNHCR started to systematically monitor and quantify the movements to and from Iraq. The data collected for April 2009 shows that 50% of both new and renewal registration cases had not travelled to Iraq over the previous twelve months. Of those who had returned, 74% visited Iraq one to three times, while 26% went four or more times. The estimated cumulative duration of stay in Iraq showed that 38% stayed no more than one month, 27% stayed in Iraq one to two months, 23% stayed three to five months, and 7% spent five months or more in Iraq.

The refugees indicated that the four main reasons for these back and forth trips to Iraq were family reasons (visiting relatives, looking for missing relatives, attending marriage/burial ceremonies), financial reasons (collection of pension, job hunt, current employment), visits to assess the security situation in Iraq, and documentation.

Important regional differences can be found among households as to their travelling back to Iraq for a short period of time. About 60% of households surveyed in Aleppo do travel back once a year, this figure is lower for Damascus (34%) and Hassakeh (22%). The share of households who never went back to Iraq since their arrival in Syria is 74% for Hassakeh, 60% for Damascus, and only 29% for Aleppo.

Focus Group discussions conducted during the assessment have revealed that the movement of refugees to Iraq strongly fluctuates depending on the perceived security situation in Iraq. The trend of rising salaries has also been an important pull factor. While end of 2008, there were more movements of people searching for temporary job opportunities, the context in Iraq has significantly changed over the last month and, as a consequence, movement has decreased again. People visiting Iraq have different profiles: if the head of the household cannot travel to assess the situation (because important Baath party member, clerics of either denomination, or Shiite from a Sunni area or vice versa), then elderly women are moving on their own as they are less at risk than males; at the same time young traders and lawyers are moving because of work opportunities and students to finish university education. Students would move back home with their mothers. Movement to Iraq often depends on existing family networks back home. Often the extended stay in Iraq is conditioned by the security situation itself, as people get kidnapped, lose their money and belongings. Administrative reasons, such as the renewal of residencies for only part of the household, are also leading to split families.

UNHCR commenced Voluntary Repatriation screening for the Iraqi refugee programme in October 2008. While the office acknowledges that there has been a reduction in the number of recorded security incidents in Iraq since the last quarter of 2007, it does not promote repatriation to Iraq at present, as it considers that the basic requirements for a sustainable, large-scale return of Iraqi refugees to conditions of safety and dignity are not yet in place. At the same time, UNHCR does recognize that individual families have been repatriating, and consequently, the office has gone beyond individual protection counseling by assisting families that express a free and informed decision to return. Since the beginning of the programme, voluntary repatriation demand from refugees has been low, with a total of 811 assisted individuals until the end of April 2009 (186 individuals from January to April 2009). The vast majority of returnees are Sunni Arabs coming from and returning to Baghdad.

The analysis of the refugees' movements and the preliminary results of the Return Intention Survey indicate that a core group of refugees do not envisage to return to Iraq in the mid- to long term, mainly on account of the extreme violence experienced in Iraq. Returns, especially those assisted by UNHCR since October 2008, appear to be motivated by the lack of financial resources in Syria rather than by confidence in the security and basic services situation in Iraq. As foreseen in 2008, many Iraqis are likely to remain in Syria for the coming months.

From January to 22 May 2009, a total of 2,674 Iraqi cases corresponding to 9,148 individuals were submitted (submissions and re-submissions) for resettlement. Out of these, 841 cases (2,920 individuals) have already departed for resettlement countries. Since 2007, 10,593 Iraqi refugees have departed for resettlement countries (2,879 in 2009) and 28,321 individuals have been submitted for resettlement (6,837 in 2009). Targets for departures and submissions have been revised to reflect the current and expected quotas. The timing of departures is defined mainly by the resettlement countries. UNHCR estimates that there are as many as 50,000 Iraqi refugees for whom resettlement is the only viable option.

So far 310 Palestinian refugees from Iraq living in the two border camps (Al Tanf and Al Hol) had been resettled. Resettlement submissions were made for 920 individuals from the two camps (representing 55% of the population of Al Tanf camp and 95% of Al Hol). Efforts continue to find resettlement opportunities for the remaining residents to have the camps closed as soon as possible.

The total number of non-Iraqi cases, such as Somalis, Sudanese and Afghanis, amounts only to a small fraction compared to the figures above. Within these smaller groups, there are, however, high rates of women-at-risk, unaccompanied children and adolescents, survivors-of-torture. Most of them are refugees without local integration prospects for whom resettlement is currently the only durable solution.

Most Somali refugees came to Syria about 9 years ago and could not have afforded to return to Somalia since then. A few have left Syria illegally and settled in other countries. Most Somali refugees in Syria live in the rural areas around Damascus, availing themselves of lower rents, work opportunities in the capital, and access to facilities and services.

The majority of Sudanese refugees are men who have left their war-torn country and families behind. Refugees feel insecure and under surveillance by the local authorities. Their movement in Syria is restricted and some of them have been deported in spite of having their UNHCR refugee certificates.

#### **1.4 General situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria**

The depletion of Iraqi refugees' financial resources without a prospect of generating adequate legal income in Syria, the trauma of their experience in Iraq and the added stress of their prolonged refugee status all contribute to their increasing vulnerability. Some refugees thus feel forced by economic necessity to return to Iraq. The overall decrease in the school enrolment of refugee children in 2008/2009 (as compared to 2007/2008) seems to be due not only to the fact that some families have left Syria but also to the children dropping out of the education system or unable to attend school since they need to engage in income supporting activities.

Agencies in direct contact with refugees have observed an increase in the numbers of those asking for assistance and/or requiring counseling and protection. This indicates that support should be maintained in order to allow refugees to remain in Syria rather than being forced to immediately return to Iraq.

This trend of increased vulnerability is also underlined by UNICEF: while about 26% of the families had depended on transferred money in 2007, their rate rose to 34% in 2008. At the same time, the rate of people who had their independent business among Iraqi refugees sank from 39% in 2007 to 25% in 2008. The proportion of families depending on salaries and wages as their main source of income rose from 6.8% (2007) to about 16% (2008). The share of families who can still rely on selling their assets and living off their savings has dropped by 50%. While 45.4% of the families estimated their income as of an average level in 2007, this rate dropped to 35.7% in 2008.

Integration of the Iraqi refugees is very good in the North-East (Hassake Governorate) of the country, since the migrants and the locals belong to the same ethnic groups. The frequent attribution of rising food and housing prices of the past years to the influx of refugees tends to affect the tone of relations between the refugee and the local populations. Nonetheless, Iraqi refugees have received generous assistance from their Syrian neighbors: food, furniture, but also moral support; and poor Syrians have also benefited from the kindness of the Iraqi population.

The situation of Somali and Sudanese refugees is different. During a recent participatory assessment, they have complained of discriminatory treatment on account of their ethnic affiliations. Despite the length of their stay in Syria, the relationship of Somalis with the local population is strictly a working relation, with language as the greatest obstacle to interaction. Only Syrian-educated Somali children manage to overcome this in their interaction with schoolmates. Since Somalis uphold the principles of a conservative Islamic society, women are not in a position to move freely and mix with Syrians. While the local population maintains a certain distance, the ties within the Somali refugee population have become very strong and there is much mutual support among neighbors. Sudanese refugees do not have extensive contact with Syrians either, they rather turn to the Somali refugee community. The Sudanese claim that their relationships with Syrians have been deteriorating over time.

The refugees' social positions were significantly affected by displacement. Prior to their flight to Syria, many Iraqis had been internally displaced or suffered from various forms of social and economic instability. Their problems were further exacerbated upon arrival in a host country where, despite the hospitality extended to them by the Syrian community, depleting resources as well as their incapacity to meet their basic needs posed a major challenge, particularly in an urban context.

The social ties that refugees used to have back home are weakened as many lose their previous socio-economic standing, hence family relations and dynamics are also significantly affected. Extended family support is shrinking; husbands are no longer able to provide for family needs. As a result, domestic violence and other social problems, as well as an increasing number of divorces or separations are reported. Psychological stress is widespread, affecting people of different age groups who need special assistance that is, at present, available to a very limited extent.



These developments put a severe strain on the family. In some households, traditional roles have been preserved, and it is the head of the family who is looking for a job in the informal sector. In other households, it is mostly male adolescents who would go out to find badly paid casual work to support their families. More and more women, who had not been used to work outside the home in Iraq, attempt now to contribute to the family income. This has led to alterations in parenting roles. In cases of severe hardship that occur mainly in the rural areas of the North-East, children are taken out of school to support their families. These dynamics increases the psychological pressure on families during their extended stay in the country of asylum: men feel useless to their families and communities, have little perspective for the future and describe their life as a process of "slow death".

The number of female-headed households is on the rise, according to UNICEF their proportion grew from 6.6% in 2007 to 10.1% in 2008. Male family members either remained in Iraq (and only part of the family migrated to Syria) or they have returned there in search of jobs, which further entails the burden on women.

Efforts were made to mitigate the impact of the above described development by various interventions, including the establishment of community centers, the promotion of empowerment of women at risk and of their community participation. More than 6,000 persons benefit from social activities implemented in ten community centers located in the areas of high refugee concentration in Damascus and in the community centers in Quamishli and Aleppo.

The network among Iraqis is stronger in Damascus where refugees live close to one another in certain neighborhoods. In these neighborhoods SARC and UNHCR provide community services. In Aleppo, where Iraqi homes are spread over the whole city, the role of counseling centers (SARC, Hamdaneya center/DRC) is even more important, since they help strengthen relationships within the community, particularly within the adolescent and young generations. These centers provide a forum for refugees to meet and discuss their problems. Similar services are provided by SARC and Caritas in the Hassakeh Governorate.

In order to reach and assist the neediest groups, UNHCR has introduced an outreach program to ensure that new social ties are established among refugees in their new living environment in Syria. Groups of women from various ethnic, religious and social contexts have formed: more than 80 refugee women representing 38 areas in Damascus regularly meet with UNHCR to address issues of concern to their communities. This network does not replace the existing traditional networks but it helps to locate and provide support to the most vulnerable groups.

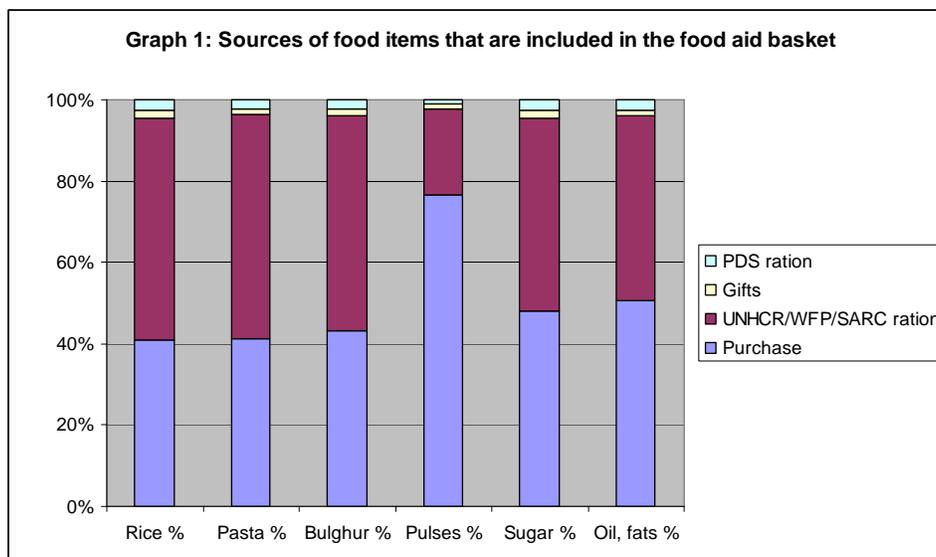
Of note, associations which existed in Iraq are still somewhat active in country of asylum, e.g. Iraqi women associations, artists' associations, tribal leaders' associations. It is believed that their current role is predominately confined to providing moral support to members and contributing to the settlement of some community-related problems. Problems arising in the communities are often reported to, and solved by, religious authorities in mosques and churches.

The situation of Somali and Sudanese refugees is very different. The Somali refugee population forms a closed community with about 90% female-headed households. Men were either killed in the war or stayed in Somalia. Women therefore took over male roles in managing their families, while male adolescents and young people venture out of the home to find jobs in the informal sector. In contrast, Sudanese refugees form a male-dominated community with members individually struggling for the daily survival. As food and shelter are the primary needs to be satisfied, some of them suggested in a focus group discussion of the JAM, that a prison was a more suitable place for survival.

## PART 2 – FOOD SECURITY AND SELF RELIANCE

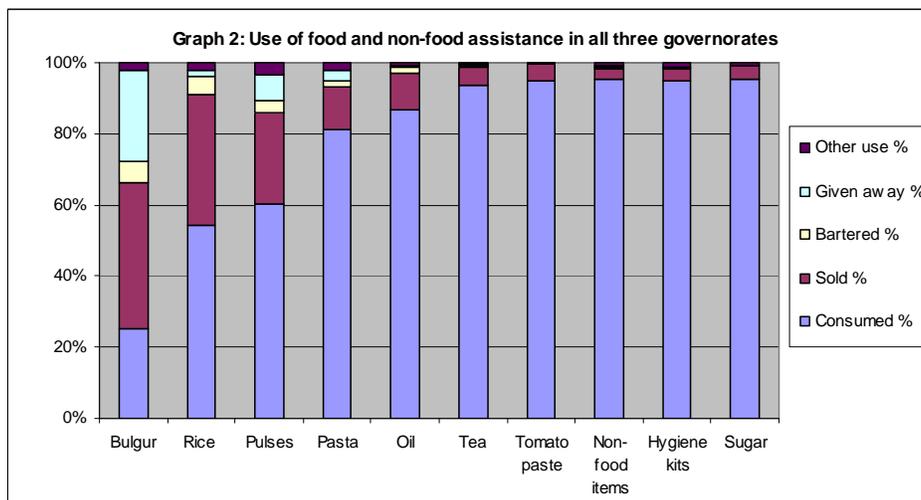
### 2.1 Refugees present sources of food and their relative importance

Food items present in the food ration distributed by WFP/UNHCR/SARC are being purchased by at least 40% of the households on the local markets. This includes rice, the major staple food, of which monthly 12.5kg per beneficiary is provided. Other food items such as bread, potatoes, vegetables, fruits, animal proteins and dairy products are exclusively purchased on the local market.

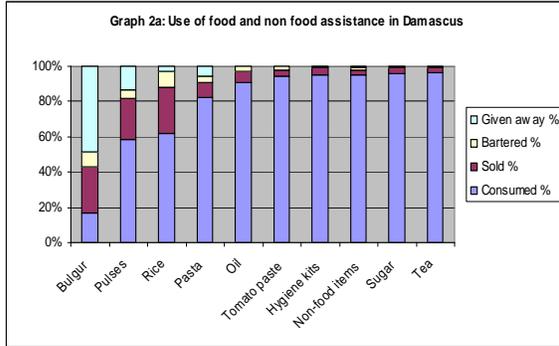


### 2.2 Use made of food aid commodities

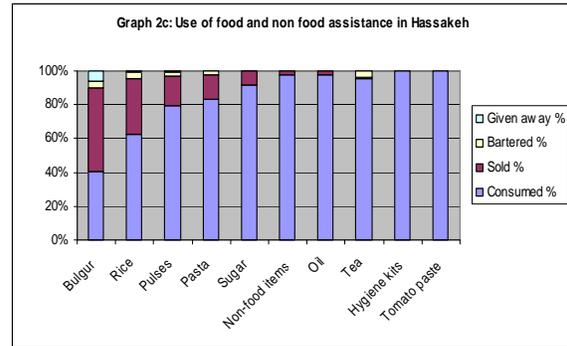
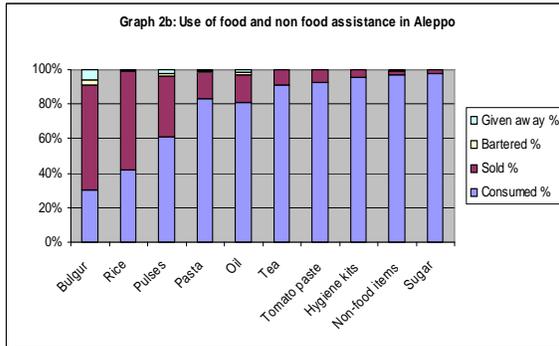
Various surveys have revealed that a significant share of the provided food assistance is being sold on the market, which indicates that several food and non-food needs of the Iraqi refugee community registered by UNHCR are not adequately addressed.



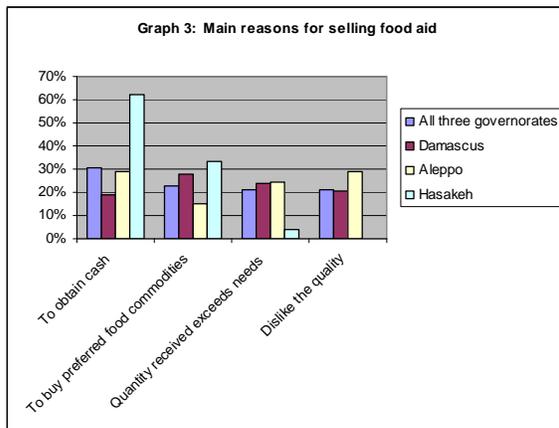
In all three governorates, a large share of the rice (42%) and pulses (29%) in the ration are being sold or bartered. The same applies for the bulgur (47%), which was received as an in-kind donation and distributed above the basic ration. Overall, 12% of the oil ration is sold or bartered.



There are some regional disparities with the highest share of rice sold or bartered in Aleppo (55%) compared to Damascus or Hassakeh (respectively 35% and 36%). While the lowest share of pulses is sold or bartered in Hassakeh with 19% only, compared to 31% in Damascus and 35% in Aleppo.



The primary reason for selling food aid is to obtain cash (30%), followed by the preference for other commodities (23%), the excess quantity (21%) and the preference for another quality (21%).



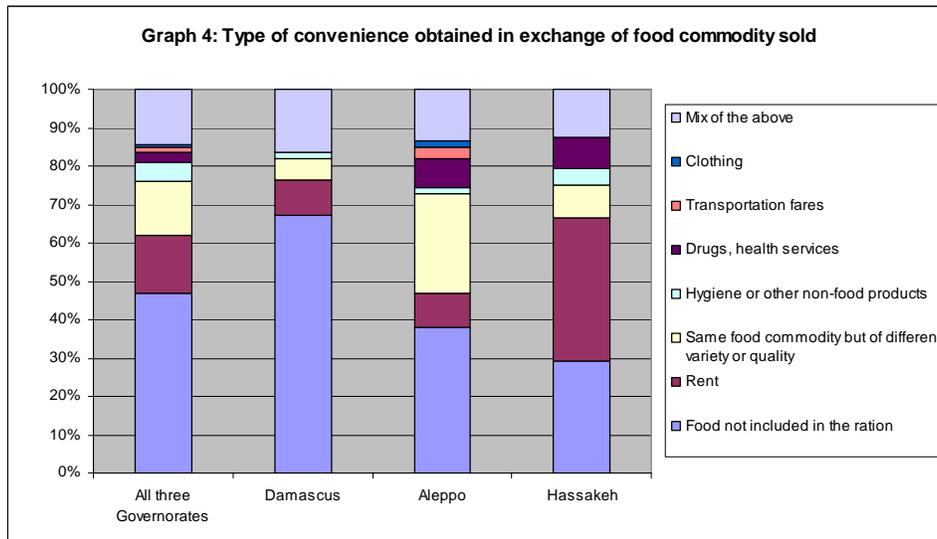
It is mostly in Hassakeh (63%) that households claim to sell food aid commodities in order to acquire cash to cover un-met food and non food needs.

In Damascus 19% of the households do so and 29% in Aleppo.

Overall, 47% of the households claim to sell or barter part of the ration in order to obtain food commodities that are not in the ration and 14% to obtain another variety or quality of the same item. Main non-food requirement covered by the cash obtained is the rental expense, with 15 % of the households doing it.

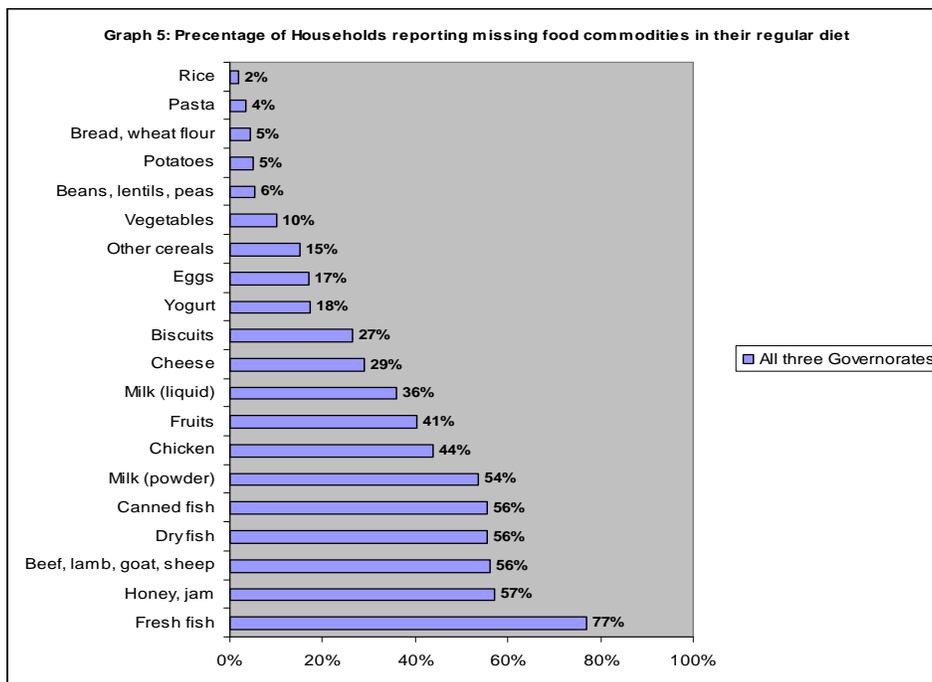
Geographical disparities are observed: while in Damascus over 67% of the households sell the food rations to buy food commodities not in the ration, it is 38 % in Aleppo and 29% in Hassakeh. Another variety or quality of the same items is bought in 26% of cases in Aleppo and only 5% and 8% respectively in Damascus and Hassakeh.

In Hassakeh, 38% of the households are selling food rations to cover rental expenses, while 9% do so in Damascus and Aleppo.



### 2.3 Food habits and preferred items and acceptable substitutes

Focus group discussions of this JAM, conducted at various sites in all three locations stressed a general consensus on the need to diversify the food ration in order to better adapt it to the needs of refugees. The Iraqi refugee population is used to have a highly diversified diet. Also, living in an urban environment where all food commodities are easily accessible the feeling of relative deprivation among a previously middle class population is very strong. This is reflected by the following graph, consistently revealing over 55% of households reporting missing fish, red meat, milk powder, jam and honey.



As the food security of refugees in Syria is not a question of availability, but of insufficient economic access, refugees would prefer to receive cash assistance instead of food aid. This would also facilitate the payment of their other main expenditure, namely rent. As to the current ration distributed by WFP/UNHCR and SARC, refugees feel that the quantity of rice and some other items is excessive and higher quality food commodities should be provided. They prefer chick peas or red split lentils, mostly during the period of Ramadan and winter time, to beans and the current variety of lentils. There was a general complaint concerning bulgur that does not fit in with the refugees' consumption patterns, the strong odor of the oil and the quality of soap/detergents. Refugees wish to see other items included in the basic and complementary food ration, such as wheat flour (especially Somali and Sudanese refugees and Iraqi refugees in Hassakeh), canned food, tuna, fresh meat, fresh milk or milk powder, cheese and jam. The current quantity of sugar, tea and tomato sauce is judged insufficient.

## 2.4 Actual food consumption

Households were categorized into three food consumption groups according to their food consumption score: poor food consumption, borderline food consumption and acceptable food consumption. In Syria, just as in Iraq, the determination of which cut-offs to use does not follow WFP guidelines, given the daily consumption of sugar and oil and the basic and complementary food ration that assure a daily consumption of staples, pulses and other food items.

The majority of the surveyed population (74%) has acceptable food consumption score, 20% have borderline food consumption score and 6% have poor food consumption score. The survey has found that bread, pasta and other cereals are consumed by all refugees with approximately the same frequency: bread is eaten almost every day, while pasta two days a week and other cereals just once a week. Differences in consumption can be seen for all other food items.

Households in the poor food consumption group eat rice and potatoes four times a week. The diet is poor in protein: pulses and eggs are eaten only once a week, dairies once every two weeks and there is practically no consumption of meat or fish. Vegetables are eaten four times and fruits only once a week. Sugar and fats are generally consumed 5-6 times a week. While this diet might provide enough carbohydrates, it is likely to be deficient in proteins and micronutrients.

Households of the borderline food consumption group eat rice five times and potatoes are consumed about 4 times a week. This diet is also poor in protein, but there is more consumption of animal protein: pulses are eaten once, meat once, yet eggs and dairy products about 3 times a week. Vegetables are eaten five times and fruits three times a week. Sugar and fats are consumed 5-6 times a week.

For the acceptable food consumption group households have access to rice six times and potatoes are consumed five times a week. In addition to the daily access to carbohydrates, this group consumes a good combination of other food items, including proteins: pulses are eaten twice, meat three times, eggs more than five times a week. Dairy products are consumed six days a week. The micronutrient intake is also much higher: vegetables are consumed almost on a daily basis, fruits about 5 times a week. Sugar and fat are consumed every day.

In general 75% of all households have three meals each day. On an average, households of the poor food consumption group have 2 meals, of the borderline consumption 2.6 meals and of the acceptable food consumption about 2.7 meals a day. Infants in all food consumption groups have more frequent meals than the rest of the family.

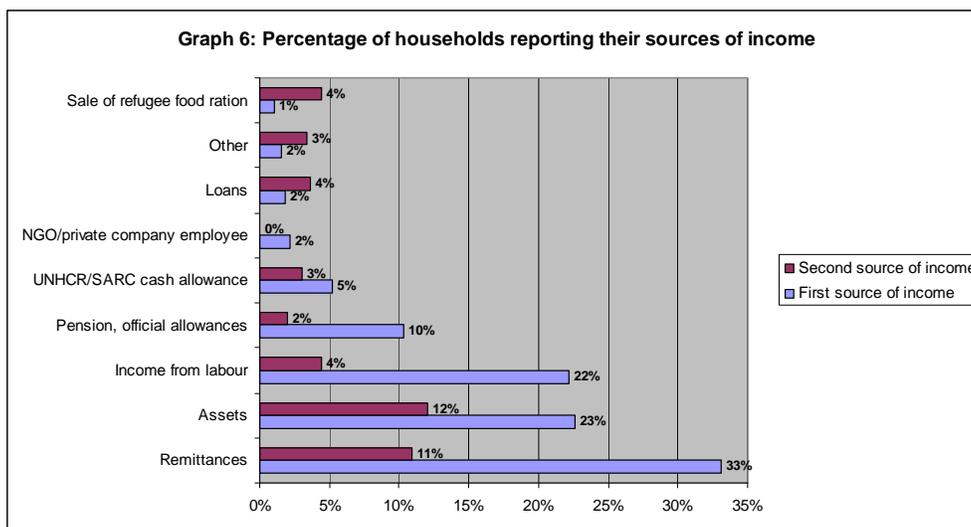
## **2.5 Income, expenditure and debts**

The Iraqi population in Syria is mainly composed of middle-class professionals, including some merchants. Over 60% of this population comes from Baghdad. It is generally believed that it is the less well-to-do that have fled to Syria, mostly by road, while wealthier refugees have chosen other countries in the region. Since their arrival in Syria, refugees have used up their savings and have sold their belonging/assets in order to meet immediate needs. These resources have depleted over time, subjecting refugees to increased vulnerability, especially in recent months of 2009.

Although Iraqis are formally not allowed to work, some of them find employment in the informal sector. Skilled young men often have better opportunities than the rest. People in their late forties and fifties, and especially professionals, find it extremely difficult to cope. This is of particular relevance to fathers of minors, because male children (14 years old and above) are often pulled out of school in order to work and support their families. In the informal labor market, low wages and exploitation of all kinds is rampant. So far there have been no mechanisms in place to protect their rights. Some refugees are deported due to work-related problems, including false allegations by employers.

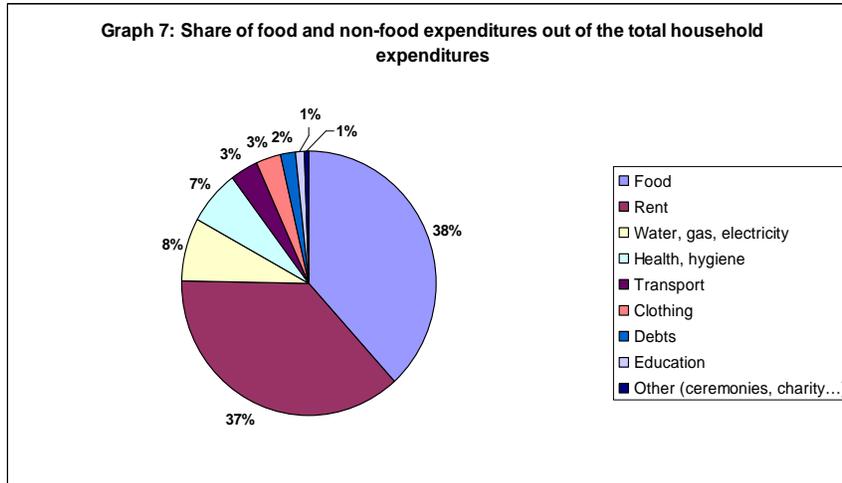
In most households (87%) there is at least one income earning household member, as it has been the case back in the home country. For households living in Aleppo a slight reduction in the number of income earning household members could be witnessed. The average number of income sources in Syria is 1.5 while families have been relying on only one main income source in Iraq.

For 22% to 33% of the refugee households, remittances, sell of assets and wages from informal labor remain the first source of income. However, income sources have been changing over the last year for most families. While remittances are getting lower and less regular, the contribution of the UNHCR/SARC cash allowance to the monthly household budget is increasing, especially for families living in Damascus and Hassakeh. The average income declared by households surveyed in the JAM amounts for 13,961 SYP/month (297 USD<sup>6</sup>) in Damascus, 19,217 SYP /month (328 USD) in Aleppo and only 10,702 SYP/month (228 USD) in Hassakeh. The income level is 27% higher in Aleppo compared to Damascus and 44% higher compared to Hassakeh.

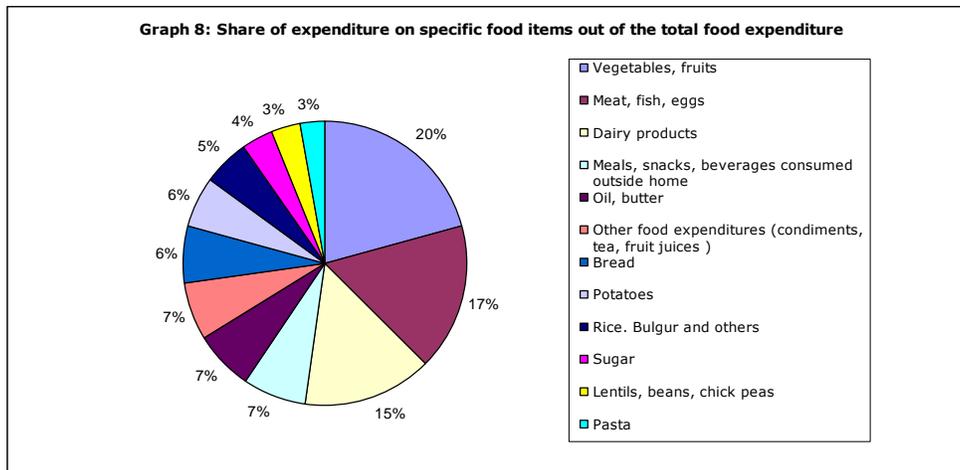


The two largest share of expenditures are spent on food and housing. The average share of food expenditure amounts to 38% of the total household expenditure and the average share of housing ones amounts for 37%.

Ten percent of the sample spends more than 50% on food out of the total expenditure. Three quarter of the sample (75%) spends less than 46% on food. Only the lowest 25% of the sample spends less than 30% on food. If refugees were not receiving any assistance, these rates would be significantly higher.



Among the food expenditures, three major types of commodities amounts for the highest share, with 20% spent on fruits and vegetables, 17% on animal proteins and 15% on dairy products. The average expenditure on food is 2,600 SYP (55 USD) per household per week or 700 SYP per capita per week (14.8 USD). The mean expenditure on bread is 200 SYP per week in Damascus. If refugees would purchase uniquely government subsidized bread, this would amount to 20 kg of bread per week for the entire household. Expenditures on dairies greatly vary among areas (365 SYP in Damascus, 438 SYP in Aleppo, and 242 SYP in Hassakeh), on animal products (426 SYP in Damascus, 821 SYP on Aleppo and 268 SYP in Hassakeh).



Over the last months, the level of all expenditures has increased for many households and yet depends on the areas of settlement. In Damascus, 56% of households have reported an increase in expenditures, in Aleppo this share was only 34% but in Hassakeh reached 63% of sampled households.

Average level of non-food expenditures differs according to the areas of settlement: in Damascus the average rent is about 7,000 SYP (148 USD), in Aleppo it is 8,400 SYP (178.7 USD) and in Hassakeh only 4,060 SYP (86.4 USD). Health and related expenses (drugs) are also differing, while a household in Damascus spent 1,873 SYP, in Aleppo 3,470 SYP and in Hassakeh only 830 SYP a month. The same trend applies for utilities (gas, electricity, and fuel), telephone, clothing and transportation.

Accommodation is a challenge for most refugees. The rents continue to rise even for small apartments with basic utilities. While most refugees live in private flats of multi-storey buildings, some refugees resort to inappropriate shelters (e.g. shops, stores, unfinished buildings), others share small apartments, which may expose them to further risks, such as domestic exploitation and mistreatment. Rents have been increasing for one third of the surveyed households in Damascus and Hassakeh and half of the households are now in debt for rent payment in these two locations. The main sources of credit are money lenders in Damascus and relatives in all other areas.

## **2.6 Nature of contact with the home country**

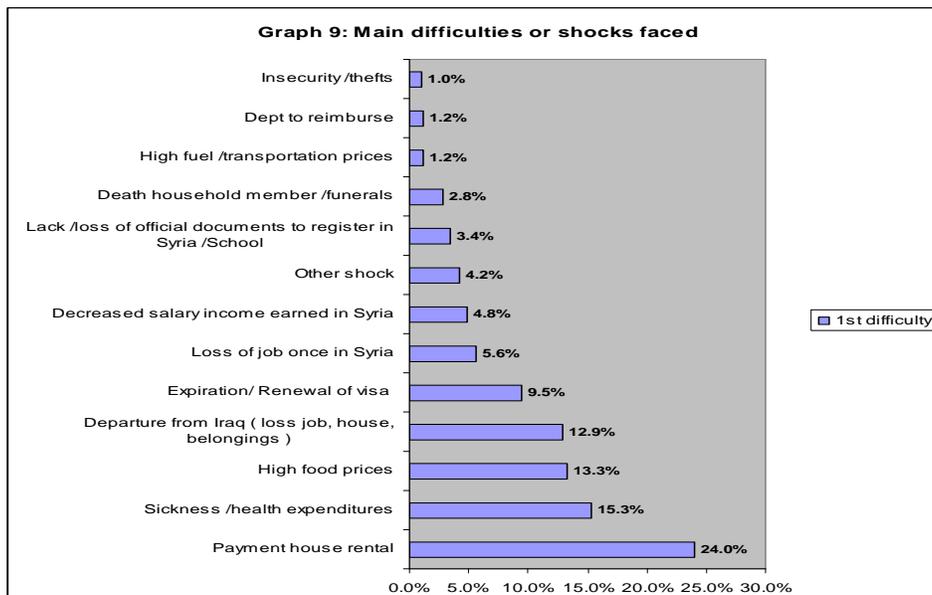
Contact with the extended family in Iraq is maintained, refugees get assistance from home in money, food and medication. Remittances (100-300 USD) are being sent and retirement salaries collected by family members back in Iraq. If there is no family to rely on, refugees would go to Iraq on a six-month basis to collect pensions. Few families can still receive some income from properties rented in Iraq.

Somali and Sudanese refugees have no contact with their home countries. Both are war-torn countries with little resources, if any, to spare and send to family members seeking asylum abroad. Because of the high rates of internal displacement in both African countries, contacts with family members can hardly be maintained.

## **2.7 Coping strategies and their sustainability**

Refugees and asylum seekers in Syria have no formal access to work and social services. Article (36) of the Syrian Labor Law prohibits the employment of a foreigner without a work permit. Refugees are excluded from property ownership and generally are not allowed to operate businesses. Nevertheless, the labor law does not discriminate between Syrian and migrant workers, whether the latter are Arabs or foreigners. The number of Iraqis provided with work permits is extremely low. Illegally employed foreigners are at risk of being detained and deported if they are caught by the police. Refugees and asylum seekers engaged in the informal sector are also at the risk of mistreatment and exploitation.

The consequences of and the responses to the lack of livelihood opportunities vary across the different refugee populations. Women and girls are affected differently from men since they are at much greater risk of being forced into prostitution in order to secure an income for their family, and there is an increased risk of child trafficking and abuse. Single females and female-headed households are particularly vulnerable to these risks.



Food and financial assistance provided by WFP and UNHCR is perceived as the primary or second source of income for only 5% of the refugees. Some refugees may reckon with irregular income mostly from daily wages in the informal sector. For some of them, remittances are part of the coping mechanisms. Few families can still receive income from rented properties. Others rely on their pensions; hence they travel back and forth to collect them. Some charity organizations also lend them assistance. Former government employees and highly qualified professionals are in a very difficult situation: lacking marketable skills and/or work permits, their pride prevents their taking up petty jobs like cleaning or domestic work. They have become vulnerable in both social and economic terms.

Coping mechanisms have not changed greatly over the last year; refugees mostly employ food-based strategies to cope with difficulties and shocks. Due to a pipeline break last year, food distribution was interrupted for a period of two months and refugees had to fall back on the help provided by their communities and Syrian neighbors. Many feared that this interruption signaled an end to food aid to refugees. During the interruption some refugees survived by consuming bread and tea only.

Focus group discussions with Iraqi refugees in Hassakeh have revealed that in this region the repertory of coping strategies common to all refugees has been widened by including birth control, the use of traditional medicine and the use of firewood heaters instead of fuel heaters.

While more recently arrived families still have some assets to sell in times of hardship, long-time refugees in Syria, particularly Somalis and Sudanese, have already depleted all their assets.

Support from relatives living outside of Syria is considered as free remittance, whereas financial support from Iraqis in Syria is mostly considered as a loan. The access to a stable flow of remittances is one of the major factors that determine food security of Iraqi refugees in Syria.

On an average, two-third of the households when in need, ask for support from relatives, friends and neighbors, this share is lower in Aleppo and higher in Hassakeh. Support is mainly received in the form of cash (80%) or mixed (food, cash and non-food items). Half of the households have been receiving such support once or twice in the past three months.

	Poor consumption (6%)	Bordeline consumption (20%)	Acceptable consumption (74%)
<b>Demographics</b>	13% female headed households 27% one-person household, 20% have big households (more than 6 members) average age of head of household is 42.2 years 17% singles and 83% married 67% take care of a chronically sick household member 33% take care of a handicapped household member households composed of only males are 26.7%	14.1% female headed households 22% one-person-households, 32% have big households (more than 6 members) average age of head of household is 44.9 years 23% singles and 67% married 59% take care of a chronically sick household member 13% take care of a handicapped household member households composed of only males are 23.2%	13.6% female headed households 5% one-person-household, 40% have big households (more than 6 members) average age of head of household is 46 years 7.1% singles and 85% married 60% take care of a chronically sick household member 16% take care of a handicapped household member households composed of only males are 6.3%
<b>Household circumstances</b>	3% arrived before 2003, 50% between 2003 and 2006 and 47% after 2006 30% have a university degree, 67% finished secondary school, all have been to school almost all basic education children attend school 71% of those with secondary school aged children, do not attend school  For boys: 40% no specific reason, 20% child work and 20% who cannot pay for school  For girls: 30% no specific reason, 30% cannot pay school, 20% sickness or handicap	4% arrived before 2003, 22% between 2003 and 2006 and 74% after 2006 25% have a university degree, 59% finished secondary school, and 9% did not go to school almost all basic education children attend school 40% of those with secondary school aged children, do not attend school  For boys: 25% did not pass admission test, 25% child work, 17% cannot pay school and 17% no specific reason For girls: 75% no specific reason and 25% cannot pay school	1% arrived before 2003, 31% between 2003 and 2006 and 68% after 2006 31% have a university degree, 62% finished secondary school, and 4% did not go to school almost all basic education children attend school 35% of those with secondary school aged children, do not attend school  For boys: 28% no specific reason, 18% lacks documentation, 14% is not interested, 12% child work and 12% cannot pay school For girls: 61% no specific reason, 12% cannot pay school
<b>Main income sources</b>	76% in debt for rent payment, about 10 months to reimburse on an average Main reason for debts: 71% rent, 19% health and 10% food 83% have only one income earner  Main source of credit: relatives (52%), friends (33%) and money lenders (14%) Main income source provides 80% of total income As the main income source: 33% rely on remittances, 17% are self employed, 13% rely on wage labor, 13% on petty trade, and only 3% on savings average total monthly income of HH: 9717 SYP (206 USD)	46% in debt for rent payment, about 9 months to reimburse on an average Main reason for debts: 62% rent, 18% health and 9% food 86% have only one income earner  Main source of credit: relatives (60%), friends (13%) and money lenders (16%) Main income source provides 84% of total income As the main income source: 27% rely on remittances, 9% are self-employed, 9% have pensions, 22% rely on wage labor and 12% on their savings average total monthly income of HH: 14581 SYP (310 USD)	40% in debt for rent payment, about 8 months to reimburse on an average Main reason for debts: 64% rent, 16% health and 11% food 87% have only one income earner  Main source of credit: relatives (73%), friends (15%) and money lenders (6%) Main income source provides 81% of total income As the main income source: 35% rely on remittances, 9% are self employed, 18% rely on wage labor and 11% on savings average total monthly income of HH: 18002 SYP (383 USD)
<b>Main expenditures</b>	13% are supporting relatives with food or cash Main food expenditures per week: 103 SYP (meat), 256 SYP (fruits and vegetables) and 117 SYP (dairies)  Food expenditures have increased lately for 83% of HH Main non-food expenditures per month: 7650 SYP (rent) and 2865 SYP (health) Housing expenditures have increase lately for 33%	4% are supporting relatives with food or cash Food expenditures per week: 280 SYP (meat), 388 SYP (fruits and vegetables) and 258 SYP (dairies)  Food expenditures have increased lately for 80% of HH Main non-food expenditures per month: 8440 SYP (rent) and 1153 SYP (health) Housing expenditures have increase lately for 28%	8% are supporting relatives with food or cash Food expenditures per week: 558 SYP (meat), 620 SYP (fruits and vegetables) and 452 SYP (dairies)  Food expenditures have increased lately for 80% of HH Main non-food expenditures per month: 10121 SYP (rent) and 1803 SYP (health) Housing expenditures have increase lately for 26%
<b>Use of food aid</b>	44% sell or barter part of the food aid ration If selling the food ration, 43% spend the cash obtained on rent, and 14% on foods not in the ration and 14% on same foods of other variety or quality	31% sell or barter part of the food aid ration If selling the food ration, 23% spend the cash obtained on rent, and 41% on foods not in the ration and 18% on same foods of other variety or quality	37% sell or barter part of the food aid ration If selling the food ration, 20% spend the cash obtained on rent, and 41% on foods not in the ration and 20% on same foods of other variety or quality
<b>Sources of food</b>	Source of rice: 53% (market), 37% (food ration) Source of pulses: 73% (market) and 20% (food ration)	Source of rice: 37% (market), 57% (food ration) Source of pulses: 72% (market) and 21% (food ration)	Source of rice: 40% (market), 55% (food ration) Source of pulses: 78% (market) and 21% (food ration)
<b>Main shocks</b>	Share of HH with main shock: sickness (23%), high food prices (17%), rent payment (17%)	Share of HH with main shock: high food prices (14%), rent payment (27%), departure from Iraq (12%)	Share of HH with main shock: sickness (16%), high food prices (13%), rent payment (24%), departure from Iraq (14%)
<b>Coping strategies</b>	Share of HH that at least once reduced the number of meals eaten (80%), borrowed food (47%), took children out of school (30%), sent children to work (17%), decreased expenditures for health care (43%), took additional jobs (57%)	Share of HH that at least once reduced the number of meals eaten (57%), borrowed food (30%), took children out of school (10%), sent children to work (8%), decreased expenditures for health care (35%), took additional jobs (33%)	Share of HH that at least once reduced the number of meals eaten (37%), borrowed food (20%), took children out of school (7%), sent children to work (6%), decreased expenditures for health care (22%), took additional jobs (32%)

## PART 3 – FOOD AND NON-FOOD ASSISTANCE

### 3.1 Current arrangements for targeting and distribution

The criteria currently applied for targeting food and non-food assistance cover 90-92% of Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR. Two categories of refugee may be excluded: those who entered Syria before January 2003<sup>7</sup> and families with only single male members aged 18 to 50 and with no disabilities. Refugees who do not meet the criteria can nevertheless be included based on whether or not the individual assessment by UNHCR finds them vulnerable and in need of food and non-food assistance. Such assessments are, however, an additional burden on UNHCR requiring considerable input of time. Assessments conducted on a continuous basis by the UNHCR Community Services and Protection units have revealed that those refugees who entered Syria before January 2000 are more in need of this assistance than those coming after the outbreak of the war.

This JAM has revealed that most of households that have been in Syria for a longer period as well as those with only able-bodied male have either poor or borderline food consumption. Therefore, the current exclusion criteria for targeting food assistance drawn from the 2007 JAM will be revised to ensure these vulnerable refugee groups are entitled to food assistance.



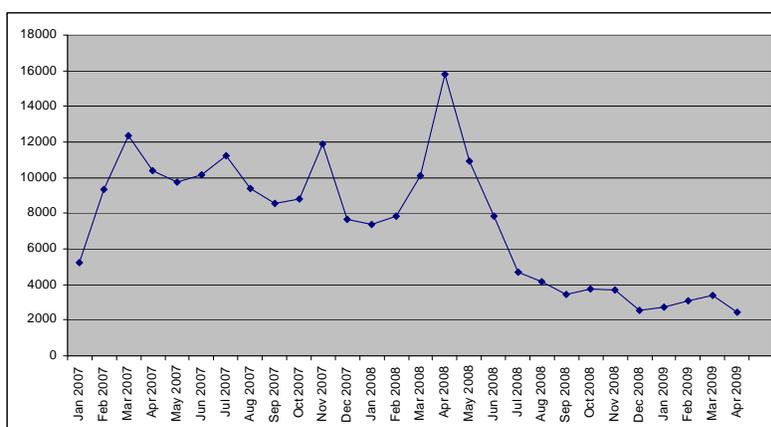
The current distribution system implemented by UNHCR, WFP and SARC is at a very advanced stage with zero tolerance for fraud. It is the first of its kind in worldwide UNHCR operations. The system is fully computerized and uses bar coding. The majority of refugees are informed through SMS circulation and the UNHCR food web site of distribution dates and locations. Refugees are communicated their entitlements at least one week before the actual distribution dates. Hard copies of the list are also posted at the distribution points and a quarterly information booklet in Arabic provides full information on services provided by UNHCR and its partners. Once the refugees approach distribution centers, their identity is checked, assistance

<sup>7</sup> This criteria has been revised early 2009 based on UNHCR and SARC community outreach data revealing an increased vulnerability of this population group to households entering Syria before 2000.

entitlements are verified and processed, and beneficiaries are given vouchers with the details of the types and quantities of food and non-food items they can expect to receive. In Damascus and some other sites, they are also provided with transport support to the nearest locations. With 14 distribution centers (2 in Damascus & 12 outside Damascus supported by mobile teams), UNHCR, SARC and WFP have the capacity to process for over 2,500 families every day. In all the distribution centers, there are sufficient waiting areas with water and toilet facilities.

### 3.2 Registration modalities

UNHCR registration of refugees takes place at its main registration centre in Douma and through mobile teams in the governorates. UNHCR has the capacity to register up to 12,000 refugees per month.



The registration interview process is designed to gain information of relevance to the UNHCR Office, such as protection (SGBV, legal aid needs, BID, security issues in COA), community service aspects (women at risk, the elderly, minors), health (fast-track of critical medical cases), and education (reasons for not attending schools). All collected data will be recorded in ProGres.

Every Iraqi refugee who approaches the office will be registered individually (those coming from the governorates Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah are registered as asylum seekers, the others are recognized as prima facie refugees). Every family member is registered under one case and all information relevant to an individual is duly recorded. Once the registration interview is completed, only one family member aged 18 or above receives a refugee certificate with his/her photo, names, date of birth and place of origin. The primary applicant's refugee certificate also lists the names of all of his/her family members. All special needs identified during an interview are recorded in the ProGres database and the case is referred to the respective unit for follow-up.

In view of current trends, the initial forecast of 40,000 refugees approaching UNHCR for registration in 2009 has been modified to 20,000 new registrations. The ongoing verification of registered refugees' presence in the country suggests that, as of the start of 2009, some 20,000 registered refugees are no longer habitual residents in Syria but are spending extended periods of time in Iraq. Based on these two trends,

the estimate of the number of refugees with an active registration status by the end of 2009 has been reduced to 168,000 individuals.

SARC as the main implementing partner for UNHCR and WFP is responsible for the distribution of food and non-food items in Damascus and in ten other cities. SARC can rely on a sufficient number of volunteers to undertake simultaneous large-scale distribution at all locations. The Douma distribution centre in Damascus is well organized with sufficient storage facilities, a waiting and a processing area. It has the capacity to distribute for up to 2,000 families per day. The second site in Saida Zeinab has the capacity to process up to 500 families per day but it needs improvement and additional storage space and a waiting/processing area. Most of the sites outside Damascus need further improvements and, in some cases, a change of the location would allow providing better service to the refugees.

### 3.3 Monitoring arrangements

The monitoring of distribution in Damascus, conducted daily by UNHCR, WFP and SARC, is sufficient and effective. The team provides guidance and support to the distribution staff on a regular basis. They also resolve operational problems that may arise at the sites and respond to the refugees' queries. While a similar mechanism is already in place in Aleppo, there is still much to be done in the other governorates. Partners use monitoring information to revise implementation arrangements on a continuous basis. Among others, this includes the establishment of new distribution sites, the up-scaling of warehouse facilities and the provision of better information to beneficiaries.



### 3.4 Evolution of the situation in the camps

Palestinian refugees who had fled persecution and violent retaliatory attacks for the perceived privileged treatment they used to receive from the former regime in Iraq sought shelter in two camps: Al Hol, located inside Syria and Al Tanf, situated in the no-man's land between the Syrian and Iraqi borders.

Al Hol camp was established in 1991 as a temporary refuge for Iraqis in the wake of the first Gulf War. In 2001, the camp was closed and then re-opened in May 2005 to

receive and accommodate some 290 Palestinians from Iraq, stranded near the Iraq-Jordan border. They were given exceptional permission to enter Syria late in 2005. Al Tanf camp was established in May 2006 to provide protection and assistance for new Palestinian refugees from Iraq.

Both camps are entirely dependent on external humanitarian assistance for covering basic needs. UNHCR is the lead agency for camp coordination and management in both camps. Several agreements have been signed with implementing partners, such as the Syrian Government, NGOs and UN agencies. The UNHCR agreement with the Governor of Hassakeh facilitates the management of the Palestinian camp at Al Hol. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, mandated by the Government to coordinate the NGO's humanitarian response to the refugee crisis, is one of the key partners to UNHCR. UNRWA supervises the school in Al Tanf Camp and provides vocational training in both camps. UNICEF plays a role in psycho-social support for the Al Tanf population and also provides hygiene kits. WFP provides basic food items to both camps on a monthly basis. The Palestine Red Crescent is responsible for medical assistance both in Al Tanf Camp and in Damascus through the Palestine Hospital.

Refugees here are restricted in their movement and need special permission to leave the camp. The refugees in Al Hol are allowed to travel within Hassakeh Governorate. The refugees of Al Tanf camp are in a particularly vulnerable situation since formally they are not admitted into Syrian territory. They are not allowed to enter Syria except for urgent or serious medical cases, and have to return to the camp after treatment. There is no possibility of local integration and residence in the camps is mandatory.

Refugees in Al Hol live in houses made of clay, straw, and mortar whereas in Al Tanf they live in tents since the construction of permanent structures is not allowed in the no-man's-land. Al Tanf camp is completely exposed on one side to a motor way, where trucks alternately speed by or stand idle for hours at a time waiting to make the border crossing. Both camps are located in arid areas with harsh climatic conditions, i.e. extreme temperatures both in summer and winter, sand storms, and floods.



The current number of refugees in the camps is 1222, with 389 persons in Al Hol and 833 persons in Al Tanf. At different levels, UNHCR has been striving for a solution to normalize the situation of the destitute refugees in both camps. Provided there will be no new arrivals to the camps and a good pace of resettlement to third countries can be assured, it is currently assumed that by the end of 2010 the number of refugees remaining in a camp situation may be reduced to 450.

Independently of this significant decrease in the number of refugees in camps, it is imperative for any future change of the food assistance ration as well as food aid delivery modalities, to carefully consider the wholly different circumstances of refugees living in these isolated camps.

### 3.5 Assistance to specific vulnerable groups

The insufficient support available to persons with specific needs constitutes a protection concern. One of UNHCR's priorities is to identify persons with specific needs and mobilize community support to meet their needs. Persons with specific needs are identified at the registration point and their data recorded electronically in the ProGres database. According to the latest UNHCR statistics of 31 March 2009, 78,102 cases meet specific vulnerability criteria like serious health condition and protection risk. The number of social vulnerability cases amounts to 29,850 out of which 32 % are children at risk, 19 % are persons with disabilities, 15% elderly, 1.5% single parents, 5% unaccompanied minors (UAM) or separated children and 32% are women at risk.

Vulnerability of Iraqi Refugees <sup>8</sup>	Individuals
Children or adolescents at risk <sup>9</sup>	9,687
Disabled	5,927
Serious medical condition	42,478
Older persons at risk	4,655
Single parents	459
Special Legal/Protection Needs	41,707
Unaccompanied or separated child	205
Women at risk <sup>10</sup>	10,112

Source: CAP mid year review

The above categories are targeted to receive various forms of health, legal, and financial counseling and social support. Those services are provided either directly by UNHCR or through its NGO partners. A wide range of projects was established for these groups, such as psychological rehabilitation and counseling, direct material assistance, skills training.

Interagency working groups were established to ensure coordination among the humanitarian organizations, avoid overlapping and ensure complementarity. The Gender-based Violence (GBV) working group focuses on awareness-raising and support to Women at Risk (WAR) and survivors of violence. In 2008, UNHCR established a team composed of protection and community services personnel who

<sup>8</sup> Note that one individual can have more than one specific need.

<sup>9</sup> Unaccompanied children; separated children; children not attending school; minor spouse; child headed household; children with special education needs; children associated with fighting forces.

<sup>10</sup> Women at risk include those who face protection risks particular to their gender, whether they are single heads of families, widowed, and unaccompanied girls or those accompanied by a male family member, as well as women that are survivors of violence.

identifies cases and their need for direct assistance, including the provision of safe housing, legal and medical support.

Special services are also implemented by partners to assist persons with disabilities, providing artificial limbs, hearing aids and other forms of support. In addition, UNHCR established support groups within the outreach program to mobilize community support to this special group of refugees.

Although the number of Unaccompanied Minors (UAM) and separated children registered alone is less than 150 cases, much attention is devoted to this group by a joint team of the UNHCR Protection and Community Services Units (CSU).



As a result of war and subsequent violence in Iraq, a considerable number of people suffer from psychological problems of various levels and nature. In absence of local capacity, the focus was only on individuals who might harm themselves or those around them. A referral system was established, an interagency working for coordination of support in this field is co-chaired by the SARC and UNHCR with participation of UNICEF and other

actors. This initiative included training of trainers and services providers.

Refugees with special needs meet the criteria for cash assistance and may be prioritized for resettlement. Most projects related to psychosocial support are undertaken at the level of community centers. The availability of psychological services, as well as safe housing for victims of GBV and trafficking, has improved but severe funding shortfalls remain.

## **PART 4 – FOOD SUPPLIES AND LOGISTICS**

### **4.1 Rations distributed and deliveries to distribution sites**

Rations distributed include the basic ration of rice, lentils and oil provided by WFP and complementary food such as sugar, tea, spaghetti, tomato paste and bulgur wheat provided by UNHCR. There is no change in food basket from what has originally been planned. Throughout 2008, a serious pipeline breakdown on basic food ration, rice, was experienced to the extent that UNHCR, WFP and SARC were obliged to interrupt distributions. However, this situation was reverted and significantly improved since the beginning of 2009.

The main port used for importing WFP commodities is Lattakia which is Syria's main sea-port on the Mediterranean 186 km southwest of Aleppo and 348 km north of Damascus. The imported commodities are cleared by WFP office in Lattakia port then dispatched by land to WFP warehouses in Damascus considered as EDPs (Extended Delivery Point), and finally the food is delivered to the different FDPs (Final Distribution Point) according to programme needs.

The Tripartite Agreement defines the role of each partner related to logistics. As to the food supply chain: WFP logistics is handling the commodity supply, the ocean transport, the clearing at the ports, the inland transportation to EDP and EDPs warehousing management. UNHCR is taking care of financial aspects related to the EPDs and transportation beyond EDPs. SARC is handling the operational part of FDPs as well as the distribution. One of the recommendations that have emerged from the discussions of this JAM is that copies of shipping documents for WFP imported commodities should be provided to SARC. This will help SARC to be prepared to respond to queries from concerned authorities.

Food commodities are being delivered to the FDP "Cargo Village" in Damascus. At this site, SARC is repacking the pulses and organizing the transport to different FDPs in Damascus and the Governorates. There is a special arrangement for the rice, which is being transported directly from WFP warehouses to the different FDPs under the supervision of Cargo Village management.



The WFP rations distributed every two months to the beneficiaries consist of 25 kg of rice, 5 kg of pulses and 1.837 Kg of Vegetable oil. In addition to this basic ration in-kind donations of bulgur and dates were distributed to beneficiaries during specific cycles. Vegetable oil is distributed every four months as it is packaged in tins of 3.67 Kg (one tin of 4 liters). Based on lessons learnt of the current operation, the new strategy of WFP will ensure the in-kind donations comply with the Syrian Standards, as well as the beneficiaries' social acceptance.

#### **4.2 Possibilities for local purchases in the coming months**

In late 2008, WFP Syria faced a temporary ban on food imports. Therefore, in order to avoid any disruption in the distribution process, WFP Syria purchased locally 11,760 MT of rice during 2008 and 2009. After the lifting of temporary ban, WFP logistics resumed its first International shipment in July 2009.

All UNHCR complementary food rations are procured from the local market through a local frame agreements signed with various suppliers covering a twelve-month period at a fixed price. This arrangement is not only very efficient and effective in delivering sufficient commodities within a shorter period of time but also significantly boosts the support to the local economy. This arrangement will continue throughout 2009 and 2010.

#### **4.3 In-country transport, storage and handling operations**

Syria disposes of excellent infrastructure and private transporters exist in a very competitive market. WFP logistics team in Syria is currently updating the Logistics Capacity Assessment. The 2002 and 2006 versions can be found online.

#### **4.4 Warehouses and warehouse management**

WFP is currently using four warehouses in Damascus city that are all funded by UNHCR. The total storage space is 8,800 m<sup>2</sup> and these warehouses are managed by private companies specialized in warehousing management. Distribution in Damascus is taking place in Douma and Sayda Zenab sites.

There are adequate storage facilities for UNHCR commodities in Damascus. UNHCR also provides financial support to WFP and SARC to ensure sufficient storage facilities at all the EDPs.

The distribution site in Qamishly is rented by UNHCR and is in good conditions. Once the distribution is completed, the balance of commodities is dispatched to another UNHCR warehouse in Al-Hol Camp. This warehouse storage conditions are reasonable, however ventilation is insufficient. The Al-Hol site is also being used for distribution to the Iraqi refugees. Since it is located 50km from Al-Hassakeh city, UNHCR is currently looking for a distribution site and storage facility in Al-Hassakeh city.

In Deir Ezzour, distribution is taking place in the SARC center. As the warehouse is located in the basement of the same building, which is not considered to be an

optimal solution for the storage of commodities, partners are looking for another site. Although a new distribution site has been introduced in Abu Kamal, storage of commodities is still taking place in Deir Ezzour. Raqqa has both a suitable warehouse and a good center for distributing food assistance to the refugees.

The site in Aleppo is considered as satisfactory, however distribution and warehousing might take place in future at a larger site, called SARC City. The Idleb warehouse has been evaluated as unsatisfactory by all partners and will be changed as soon as possible.



The general recommendation is to avoid storing large quantities of food commodities in distribution centers outside Damascus, except for Hassakeh, Raqqa and Aleppo that have good storing conditions.

#### **4.5 Challenges and lessons learnt**

There were many logistics challenges faced in the past, such as the delay in receiving the shipping documents, which led to further postponement in the clearing process, as well as the quality of food aid commodities and their compliance with Syrian Quality Standards. WFP is very keen on getting samples for any imported food in order to match imported food specifications with the Syrian quality standards. Considerable efforts have been made to overcome these challenges through opening an effective dialogue with the concerned authorities, the submission of original documents once they are received and the interim use of copies of shipping documents.

It is necessary to guarantee an accurate flow of information related to commodity transactions, such as the WFP commodity tracking documents of CRN/LTI/WB, EDPs & FDPs physical inventories, closing stocks in line with UN adoption of IPSAS. WFP has agreed with SPC and SARC to channel the communication flow as follows: the operational issues will be addressed to SARC and management/ policy issues to SPC.

There is a need to build different logistics scenarios to cope with any potential emergency in the region and devise the scope of intervention. WFP - Syria has prepared a Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA) for Syria and Lebanon, which proved to be an effective tool for the Lebanon operation in 2006. Currently WFP is working on an update of the LCA for Syria.

An enhanced exchange of information and expertise among all parties is needed. WFP contributed to this effort through two trainings for warehouse management in March 2009, and remains available to conduct further training upon request. Also, it is suggested that WFP and UNHCR field monitoring reports are shared with SARC to allow all partners to have a common awareness on problems and challenges related to the distribution.

During the implementation of activities in 2008, difficulties related to the coordination mechanisms established among partners caused delays in delivery of assistance. Continuous planning, assessment and evaluation should be a standard procedure and should also consider a higher refugee participation in the process.

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## **PART 5 – HEALTH, EDUCATION AND OTHER SERVICES**

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### **5.1 Provision of health services and health status**

All registered refugees have access to UNHCR-supported health services. Primary health care is delivered through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which is the main implementing partner of UNHCR for primary health care activities. UNHCR signed agreements with the government hospitals under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher Education. Therefore, registered refugees can access secondary and tertiary health care through the designated government hospitals. UNHCR has put in place a Health Information System (HIS).

According to UNICEF data, access to safe drinking water is guaranteed at all times for about 68% of the refugee population in Damascus, and 73% claim to have sufficient access, i.e. minimum 20 liters a day. From 2007 to 2008 the incidence of diarrheal infections among children increased, which may be attributed to the lack of clean and safe water.

The number of mothers practicing exclusive breastfeeding rose from 14.8% (2007) to 35.7% (2008). This could be attributed to the awareness raising training provided to healthcare workers and the health education sessions for mothers. At the same time 45.7% of the mothers did not start giving supplementary food to their children at the age of 6 months.

The general nutritional status of children is improving, with the rate of wasting dropping from 15% in 2007 to 7.9% in 2008 (3.2% for severe and 4.7% for moderate wasting). Severe stunting has decreased from 10.8% to 7.5% and moderate stunting from 10.4% to 9.5%. As compared to 2007, both moderate and severe underweight sharply declined respectively to 4.4% and 1.5%. The fact that the highest rates in all measures of malnutrition were found among children under the age of 1 year points to the importance of continuous health education, particularly in the area of breastfeeding and the timely introduction of safe and proper supplementary food.

UNICEF recommends increasing the efficiency of health centers and clinics that may provide therapeutic and preventive services, particularly concerning children and mothers care. Provision of appropriate services for Syrian citizens as well as refugees requires a continuous training of health workers (doctors, nurses and midwives) and a good supply of quality equipment to health centers.

### **5.2 Refugees access to and use of health services**

Access to services is conditioned by the geographical distance to designated health centers. Refugees feel that the number of these centers should be increased to ensure a better coverage of the population. In general, refugees are satisfied with the service offered, although they find waiting times excessive due to the limited staff in these centers.

Although there is a cost saving protocol in place, according to which refugees are reimbursed for 80% of the medical bill, refugees are often not fully aware of this arrangement. Many of them believe that private clinics and hospitals provide better services. While an improvement in health services was reported in the focus group

discussions conducted in Aleppo and Damascus (with the exception of Massaken Barzeh and Qudsayya), refugees in the Hassakeh Governorate complained of a deteriorating health system and asked for a better geographical coverage by setting up clinics in smaller settlements, such as Yarobia and Tal Tamir. Refugees living in these areas have to pay high costs for transportation to reach the nearest SARC clinic.

While Somalis are entitled to the same services as Iraqi refugees, they complain of discrimination, unfair and unequal treatment compared to Iraqis. This feeling of being discriminated against has also been mentioned, but less frequently, in the focus group discussion conducted with Sudanese refugees.

### **5.3 Education**

While Iraqi refugees have free access to basic and secondary schools, students still face problems related to the difference in curricula of the two countries. Most basic education-aged children are attending school, with some exceptions in rural areas. Secondary school-aged children, however, would often discontinue their studies in Syria. In Damascus there are special tutoring classes for Iraqi children, but this service is not available in the countryside. Parents' worries about the future of the young generation have surfaced in all focus group discussions. Many have asked for scholarships for their children to enable them to continue their university studies.

### **5.4 Social services**

Ten community centers were established in areas with a high concentration of refugees, which provide social services to various population groups: men, women and children of different age, sex and social background. A standard package of the provided services includes: recreational activities, skills training, remedial classes, informal education support, legal and social counseling as well as language and computer classes. Special attention is paid to children with psychological disorders.

UNICEF has established child-friendly spaces to support unprivileged children. The access of refugees to UNHCR social workers at the Douma registration centre, the main office as well as at the community centers has improved. Needs assessment and social counseling is provided to those in need, including home visits when necessary. Communication with refugees has also improved, mainly due to the outreach programme and the hotline services.

The food security situation of the refugee should be assessed in relation with their health, education, cash and non-food needs. As dwindling personal savings and a prolonged stay in Syria are leading to increased vulnerability, UNHCR should reinforce its efforts to address the protection needs in health and education as well as the material needs for non-food items and cash assistance to the most vulnerable.

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## **PART 6 – PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION**

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### **6.1 Current arrangements**

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) is mandated by the government to coordinate the NGO humanitarian response to the refugee crisis. SARC is one of the key partners of UNHCR and WFP in the areas of relief support (distribution of food and non-food items) and health assistance for Iraqi refugees. It is also the main partner of UNHCR in supporting non-Iraqi refugees.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), which has been playing a pivotal role, has continued to register new international NGOs wishing to be part of the response. Since May 2008, when the first international NGOs signed their MOUs with SARC, fourteen have been active by the end of May 2009. Although challenging, this highly positive development is instrumental in increasing humanitarian outreach beyond Damascus and its surrounding areas. An efficient coordination is required to ensure that NGOs, both those already active and those in the process of registering, are allowed to deploy their knowledge and experience for the benefit of Iraqi refugees in Syria.

Partnership among the UN agencies is mainly managed by the UN Country Team (UNCT). Joint planning and activities are undertaken with UNDP on livelihood studies, with UNICEF on education, with UNFPA on reproductive health, with IOM on the prevention of human trafficking and safe housing, with UNRWA on joint planning and programming to progressively ensure similar treatment of Palestinians in Syria and those who arrived from Iraq.

### **6.2 Interagency coordination mechanisms**

Inter-agency coordination mechanisms for the humanitarian response to the needs of Iraqi Refugees in Syria were established and further reinforced in 2008 with support from the UNCT. Nine inter-agency thematic working groups are actively engaged in coordinating the humanitarian response for the Iraqi Refugees in Syria: Gender-Based Violence, Food, Education, Health, Psychosocial and Mental Health, Palestinian Refugees from Iraq, Livelihoods and Skills Development, and Physical Protection – all under the overall leadership of, and coordination by, the Iraqi Refugees Working Group. Members of the working groups are UN agencies, international NGOs, SARC and some local organizations. Specific Ministries of the Syrian Government are engaged to some extent in specific working groups (primarily Ministry of Health and Education). More active participation of SARC in the existing coordination mechanisms is needed in order to prioritize the needs of the refugees among the participating agencies.

An inter-agency response to the needs of the Iraqi refugees in Syria for 2009 took place as part of the CAP Review for Iraq and the Region. This process has reinforced the coordination and inclusiveness among the main stakeholders. UNHCR was the lead agency for this process with support from OCHA. Existing coordination structure and mechanisms formed a base for this process that aimed at further reinforcing the common identification of key priorities and strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The findings of this assessment regarding food security have paved the way for discussion with implementing partners and other stakeholders during a consultative meeting held in Damascus on July 8-9, 2009. During this open process, the JAM findings were verified and triangulated with stakeholders' understanding of the refugee context. The objective of the consultation was to determine whether any adjustments to the targeting and the modalities of food assistance to refugees in Syria were necessary. Special emphasis was put on complementary food assistance planning and implementation.

There is general agreement among implementing partners that while it was appropriate to deactivate beneficiary files in case of two consecutive no-shows for food distribution, the other currently applied targeting criteria should be revised as they often result in an important exclusion error. Households composed of only able-bodied men in a working age have so far been excluded from food assistance. The JAM has revealed, however, that variations in the demographic composition of families - whether female-headed households or households comprising only males - should not affect different food assistance entitlements, since they do not entail better access to food under the current legal regulations. The previously applied exclusion criteria related to the arrival date have equally excluded many of the neediest and have to be revised, therefore, for the new operation.

While the JAM has found some differences in the food security status of households across geographical areas and refugee groups, these differences do not warrant location specific programme responses in food aid. Differences can be attributed mainly to variations in income and the levels of non-food expenditures, and these can be better tackled through non-food responses.

The current WFP operation addresses only the food needs of Iraqi refugees in Syria. The JAM, however, has revealed that non-Iraqi refugees are among the most vulnerable refugees living in this country. Their needs will be considered in designing the new emergency operation.

In addition to the findings of the JAM, partners were consulted as to whether there were any particular times of the year when assistance ought to be better adapted to the needs of beneficiaries. While seasonal fluctuations in household expenditures as well as in consumption preferences have been pointed out, given the range of food types available to WFP, seasonal responses are not required. UNHCR has already initiated a number of non-food responses to better match the needs of refugees during these periods.

All stakeholders agreed on the need to modify the current food basket in terms of quantity and variety, in order to meet food needs better. This entails the reduction of the quantity of currently provided cereals and the diversification of pulses. It is believed that this approach will significantly reduce the sale of food aid while maintaining food security objectives. It was suggested that – to the extent possible – this new food basket should consider to include items from the following table:

Rice	Beans	Oil
Wheat flour	Lentils	Canned fish
Bulgur	Chickpeas	Processed cheese
Sugar	Dates	Tomato paste

Another way to address the issue of the sale of food aid in an appropriate manner could be a further up-scaling of non-food assistance.

In order to effectuate the above mentioned changes in the implementation of food assistance, WFP will consider the different response options in this context. The following approaches, to be refined during the design of the new project, have been outlined during the consultation:

- Food assistance retaining the current commodities and ration sizes while changing the variety of the supplied commodity
- Food assistance in form of a more diverse food basket
- Food assistance with a revised daily ration size that still covers daily nutritional requirements
- Food assistance comprising the currently distributed basic commodities, along with an adjustment of ration size and the use of other transfer types (coupons, vouchers, cash) in order to provide a more diverse, yet nutritionally still appropriate food basket
- Use of other transfer types (coupons, vouchers, cash) to cover the entire food basket while ensuring a correct tracking of beneficiaries

As the current assistance is targeting a considerable caseload of beneficiaries through a well-functioning distribution mechanism, any new approach will have to be introduced gradually, allowing WFP to assess the efficiency of its new operation, with a particular emphasis on complementarities with other programmes. Any new approach will be introduced either geographically, to ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation, or by certain sub-groups of beneficiaries.

## APPENDIX

### Tables corresponding to the graphs in the main text

**Table 1 (Graph 1)**

Table 1: Sources of food items that are included in the food aid basket						
	Rice %	Pasta %	Bulghur %	Pulses %	Sugar %	Oil, fats %
UNHCR/WFP/SARC ration	54.4	54.6	52.8	20.8	46.8	44.8
Purchase	40.5	41.1	42.9	76.2	47.6	49.6
PDS ration	2.6	2.4	2.4	1	2.6	2.4
Gifts	1.8	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.4
Borrowing/ debts	0.2	0	0	0	0	0
Barter or trade	0.2	0	0	0	0.4	1.2
Not eaten in the past 7 days / not usually eaten	0	0.6	0.4	0.6	0	0

**Table 2 (Graphs 2, 2a; 2b; 2c)**

Table 2: Use of food and non-food assistance in all three governorates					
Food Item	Consumed %	Sold %	Bartered %	Given away %	Other use %
Bulgur	25	41	6	25	2
Rice	54	37	5	2	2
Pulses	60	26	3	8	3
Pasta	81	12	2	3	2
Oil	87	10	2	1	1
Tea	93	5	1	0	1
Tomato paste	94	5	0	0	1
Non-food items	94	3	1	0	1
Hygiene kits	95	3	0	1	1
Sugar	95	4	0	0	1

**Table 3 (Graph 3)**

Table 3: Main reasons for selling food aid (first reason)				
	All three governorates	Damascus	Aleppo	Hassakeh
To obtain cash	30%	19%	29%	63%
To buy preferred food commodities	23%	28%	15%	33%
Quantity received exceeds needs	21%	24%	24%	4%
Dislike the quality	21%	21%	29%	0%
Mix of all reasons	5%	9%	3%	0%

**Table 4 (Graph 4)**

<b>Table 4 : Type of convenience obtained in exchange for food commodities sold</b>				
<b>Convenience</b>	<b>All three Governorates</b>	<b>Damascus</b>	<b>Aleppo</b>	<b>Hassakeh</b>
Food not included in the ration	47%	67%	38%	29%
Rent	15%	9%	9%	38%
Same food commodity but of different variety or quality	14%	5%	26%	8%
Hygiene or other non-food products	5%	2%	2%	4%
Drugs, health services	3%	0%	8%	8%
Transportation fares	1%	0%	3%	0%
Clothing	1%	0%	2%	0%
Mix of all	14%	16%	14%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Table 5 (Graph 5)**

<b>Table 5: Percentage of households reporting food items missing from their regular diet</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>%</b>
Canned fish	77%
Eggs	75%
Milk (liquid)	69%
Honey, jam	63%
Fresh fish	56%
Cheese	53%
Dry fish	44%
Milk (powder)	37%
Chicken	29%
Biscuits	20%
Yogurt	16%
Fruits	12%
Vegetables	10%
Other cereals	8%
Pasta	7%
Beans, lentils, peas	7%
Beef, lamb, goat, sheep	5%
Rice	4%
Potatoes	3%
Bread, wheat flour	3%

**Table 6 (Graph 6)**

Table 6: Sources of income in Syria		
	First source of income	Second source of income
Remittances	33%	11%
Sale of assets	23%	12%
Income from labour	22%	4%
Pension, official allowances	10%	2%
UNHCR/SARC cash allowance	5%	3%
NGO/private company employee	2%	0%
Loans	2%	4%
Other	2%	3%
Sale of refugee food ration	1%	4%

**Table 7 (Graph 7)**

Table 7: Share of food and non-food items out of total expenditure	
Items	%
Food	38.0%
Rent	37.0%
Water, gas, electricity	8.0%
Health, hygiene	7.0%
Transport	3.5%
Clothing	3.0%
Debts	2.0%
Education	1.0%
Other (ceremonies, charity...)	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

US\$ Exchange rate: 47

**Table 8 (Graph 8)**

Table 8: Share of expenditure on specific food items out of the total food expenditure	
Food Item	%
Vegetables, fruits	21%
Meat, fish, eggs	17%
Dairy products	15%
Meals, snacks, beverages consumed outside home	7%
Oil, butter	7%
Other food expenditures (condiments, tea, fruit juices )	7%
Bread	6%
Potatoes	6%
Rice, Bulgur and others	5%
Sugar	4%
Lentils, beans, chick peas	3%
Pasta	3%

**Table 9 (Graph 9)**

<b>Table 9: Main difficulties or shocks</b>			
	<b>1st difficulty</b>	<b>2nd difficulty</b>	<b>3rd difficulty</b>
Payment house rental	24.0%	19.6%	6.9%
Sickness /health expenditures	15.3%	8.1%	4.8%
High food prices	13.3%	16.3%	12.6%
Departure from Iraq ( loss job, house, belongings )	12.9%	4.2%	1.6%
Expiration/ Renewal of visa	9.5%	5.6%	4.6%
Loss of job once in Syria	5.6%	4.2%	1.6%
Decreased salary income earned in Syria	4.8%	3.8%	3.4%
Other shock	4.2%	7.9%	8.7%
Lack /loss of official documents to register in Syria /School	3.4%	1.4%	1.6%
Death household member /funerals	2.8%	0.8%	0.4%
High fuel /transportation prices	1.2%	1.6%	1.8%
Dept to reimburse	1.2%	3.2%	3.0%
Insecurity /thefts	1.0%	0.6%	0.6%
No difficulty mentioned	0.6%	22.6%	48.5%

## Additional tables

### General profile

Date of arrival	
Before 2003	2%
2003-2006	30.2%
After 2006	67.7%

### Refugee household composition

Sex of Household Head	
Male	86.3%
Female	13.7%

Marital status of household head				
	Total	Damascus	Aleppo	Hassakeh
Single	10.9%	5.1%	1.4%	7.4%
Married	81.3%	77.8%	87.7%	70.4%
Divorced	1.8%	4%	5.5%	7.4%
Widow	4.6%	11.1%	4.1%	11.1%
Separated	1.4%	2%	1.4%	3.7%

Average Age of Household Head (in years)	
Male HH	45.68
Female HH	44.47

Age Group of Household Head	
18-30 years	12.1%
31-59 years	73.2%
60-99 years	14.7%

Level of Education of head of household	
No School/Illiterate	4%
No School/Literate	0.8%
Primary School	11.7%
Intermediate School	22.2%
Secondary School	17.3%
Diploma After Secondary School	13.9%
University Degree	21.4%
Post Graduate Degree	8.7%

Level of Education of Male household head	
No School/Illiterate	2.6%
No School/Literate	0.7%
Primary School	11.9%
Intermediate School	21.5%
Secondary School	17.8%
Diploma After Secondary	13.3%

University Degree	22.7%
Post Graduate Degree	9.6%
<b>Level of Education of Female household head</b>	
No School/Illiterate	13.2%
No School/Literate	1.5%
Primary School	10.3%
Intermediate School	26.5%
Secondary School	14.7%
Diploma After Secondary	17.6%
University Degree	13.2%
Post Graduate Degree	2.9%

<b>Household Size</b>	
Small (1-3)	28.2%
Medium (4-5)	35.1%
Large (5+)	36.7%

<b>Households With Children Under 5</b>	
No	62.1%
Yes	37.9%

<b>Chronically sick household members</b>	
No	39.7%
Yes	60.3%

<b>Handicapped household members</b>	
No	83.9%
Yes	16.1%

#### Refugee household living conditions

<b>Type of dwelling</b>	
Private house, durable material	14.5%
Private house, non-durable material	1%
Private flat in multi-storey building	70.8%
Room(s) shared in a private house/flat	12.1%
Room(s) shared in collective center	1%
A location in the place of work	0.6%

<b>Number of rooms for the household</b>	
1 room	19.6%
2 rooms	40.9%
3 rooms	33.3%
4 rooms	4.8%
5 rooms	1.2%
6 rooms	0.2%
<b>Space for one household (small, medium, large)</b>	
1 room	19.6%
2 rooms	40.9%
More than 2 rooms	39.5%

<b>Average rent according to space in Syrian Pounds (small, medium, large)</b>	
1 room	6525
2 rooms	8306
More than 2 rooms	10462

<b>Household in debt for rent payment</b>	
No	56.5%
Yes	43.5%

<b>How many months of debt to reimburse</b>	
1 month	12.6%
2 months	15.5%
3-5 months	29%
6 months or more	43%

### Food availability and access

<b>Average number of income-earning household members</b>	
Currently	1.16
When in home country	1.38

<b>Trends in the number of income-earning household members compared to home country</b>	
Less	23.4%
Same	68.1%
More	8.5%

<b>Average number of income sources</b>	
In Syria	1.54
In home country	1.17

<b>Number of income sources in Syria</b>	
1 source	56.3%
2 sources	33.9%
3 sources	9.9%

<b>Number of income sources in home country</b>	
1 source	84.9%
2 sources	14.1%
3 sources	1%

<b>First (main) income source in home country</b>	
Use of savings	1.2%
Self-employed	30.6%
Wage-labor	17.5%
Agriculture	1.2%
Petty trade	6.3%
Civil servant	25.2%
NGO/private company employee	11.1%
Pension, official allowances	5.4%
Other	1.5%

<b>Second income source in home country</b>	
Self-employed	3%
Wage-labor	3.4%
Petty trade	1.2%
Civil servant	1.8%
NGO/private company employee	2.2%
Pension, official allowances	1.4%
No second source	85.7%
Other	1.3%

<b>Average share of income provided by sources (currently)</b>	
First source	81.3%
Second source	16.3%
Third source	2.4%

<b>Average share of income provided by first (main) income source in Syria</b>	
Use of savings	78.3%
Sale of personal valuables	75%
Self-employed	84.9%
Wage-labor	82%
Casual work	100%
Petty trade	77.9%
NGO/private company employee	80%
Pension, official allowances	69.4%
Remittances	85.7%
Loans	83.3%
Sale of refugee food ration	66%
UNHCR/SARC cash allowance	74.2%

<b>Average share of income provided by second income source in Syria</b>	
Use of savings	36%
Sale of personal valuables	36.7%
Self-employed	36.3%
Wage-labor	34.6%
Pension, official allowances	31.5%
Remittances	43.7%
Loans	35.8%
Sale of refugee food ration	31.6%
UNHCR/SARC cash allowance	39.3%

<b>Type of household assets owned</b>	
Fridge	53.8%
Oven	36.5%
Washing machine	40.3%
Fan	57.1%
Heater	36.7%
Iron	35.9%
Sewing machine	3.6%
Television	62.5%
Satellite dish	59.9%
Radio	14.9%
Generator	1%
Car, taxi	0.2%
Motorbike	0.4%
Bicycle	1.8%
Cash, jewelry	20%
Cell phone	97.4%

**Average household expenditures on food in Syrian Pounds per week**

Total	2604.1
Per capita	697.8

**Share of expenditure on non-food items out of total non-food expenditure**

Gas	10.2%
Housing	59.9%
Water	2.4%
Health	8.9%
Education	1.7%
Transport	5.6%
Clothing	5.2%
ceremonies	0.7%
Debts	3.1%
Charity	0.3%
Hygiene	1.9%

**Debt to reimburse at this moment**

No	56.3%
Yes	43.8%

**Main reason for debts**

To buy food	10.6%
To cover health expenses	16.6%
To pay school, education costs	0.9%
To pay for official documents, visa	1.8%
To pay rent	64.5%
To buy clothes, shoes	0.9%
To send to the family in home country	0.5%
All the above mentioned	3.2%
Jobless	0.9%

**Main sources for credits**

Relatives (excluding 'free' remittances from migrants abroad)	68.2%
Traders/shop-keeper	5.1%
Money lender	8.8%
Advance payment from the job	1.8%
Friends/Neighbors	16.1%

**When you are in need, do you sometimes ask for support from relatives, friends or neighbors?**

No	31.9%
Yes	68.1%

<b>How often have you received such support in the past 3 months?</b>	
Never	12.4%
Once or twice	42.0%
Three times or once a month	32.8%
More than once a month	12.7%

<b>Which type of support can you receive?</b>	
Food	5.0%
Cash	80.5%
Both food and cash	4.4%
Hygiene products, other non-food items	0.6%
Mixed (food, cash, non-food)	9.5%

<b>Use of coping strategies</b>	<b>Turn to the consumption of less preferred and cheaper food commodities</b>	<b>Borrow food or rely on help from friends or relatives</b>	<b>Limit portion size of the meals</b>	<b>Restrict adult's food consumption to secure the need of children for food</b>	<b>Reduce number of daily meals</b>	<b>Skip entire days without eating</b>	<b>Incur debts for food</b>	<b>Sell some food ration items to buy other food items</b>
Never	40.1%	76.0%	39.9%	60.1%	56.7%	90.5%	65.3%	73.5%
Seldom(1-5 days/month)	11.7%	10.7%	16.7%	8.9%	13.3%	5.8%	11.5%	12.7%
Sometimes (6-11 days/month)	27.4%	9.1%	21.2%	11.1%	16.5%	2.4%	15.7%	8.9%
Often (11-24 days/month)	12.3%	2.8%	10.3%	9.9%	6.7%	1.2%	6.3%	3.8%
Every day	8.5%	1.4%	11.9%	10.1%	6.9%	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%

<b>Use of coping strategies</b>	<b>Sell domestic assets (radio, furniture, fridge, TV, carpet..)</b>	<b>Sell productive assets (bicycle, car, sewing machine, motorbike..)</b>	<b>Reduce health-related expenditures</b>	<b>Take children out of school</b>	<b>Send children to work</b>	<b>Seek alternative or additional jobs</b>	<b>Receive charity /zakat</b>	<b>Send household members back to Iraq to collect PDS, pensions, cash or other valuables</b>
Never	84.5%	92.7%	74.4%	91.1%	93.8%	66.5%	95.2%	80.4%
Seldom(1-5 days/month)	6.9%	2.0%	6.7%	1.2%	1.0%	5.8%	2.0%	6.5%
Sometimes (6-11 days/month)	5.8%	3.0%	13.5%	2.4%	2.2%	12.3%	2.0%	7.9%
Often (11-24 days/month)	2.9%	2.0%	4.6%	2.8%	2.0%	10.1%	0.8%	4.4%
Every day	0.0%	0.2%	0.8%	2.4%	1.0%	5.2%	0.0%	0.8%