Food Security Outcome Trends among Syrian Refugees

Based on Post-Distribution Monitoring data collected in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey over Quarter 4 (Nov.–Dec. 2016)
**Highlights:**

- Overall food consumption in the region was stable this round compared to the quarter prior, as 78 percent of households surveyed had ‘acceptable’ food consumption following WFP assistance.

- Jordan and Lebanon continue to have the highest proportion of beneficiaries in the ‘poor’ or ‘borderline’ food consumption groups. While food consumption in Turkey, Iraq and Egypt were stable compared to the quarter prior, in Lebanon acceptable food consumption improved by 6 percentage points.

- Beneficiaries with ‘acceptable’ food consumption in Jordan however declined by 23 percentage points and non-beneficiaries by 37 percentage points. Further analysis on how and why this may have happened is ongoing.

- Given the large scale-up in WFP assistance to vulnerable populations in Turkey, Post-distribution Monitoring (PDM) in country shows those residing in camps and off-camps have similar food consumption, a very positive finding given the rapid scale-up currently ongoing for off-camp refugees and is likely a result of regular WFP assistance at the planned values. However, those residing off-camp were around three times more likely to rely on credit purchases, borrow money or sell household assets to buy food than those living in camps to maintain adequate levels of consumption.

**Overview of WFP activities:**

By the end of December 2016 WFP reached nearly 1.8 million beneficiaries with food assistance, slightly higher than the September quarter (see Figure 1). All five Syria refugee countries increase the number of beneficiaries assisted over the quarter, with Lebanon increased the most, assisting an additional 70,000 refugees in December compared to September.
Assistance values in all countries were stable with no changes since the first quarter except in Turkey. In December, WFP implemented the first cash transactions of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey, and given the planned value per person per month was higher (100 Turkish Lira) for the ESSN than for Syrian refugees already receiving e-voucher assistance in off-camp settings, those not yet enrolled in the ESSN received an increase to equalize assistance while remaining on the same modality of restricted e-voucher. WFP plans to include all off-camp refugees meeting certain vulnerability criteria into the ESSN system by mid-2017. Since the value increase took place in December, the same time PDM data was collected, results of the increase are expected to be reflected in the following quarter.

Table 1: Assistance values provided per individual/month in 2016 (USD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>In Camp</th>
<th>Ext-vulnerable</th>
<th>Vulnerable</th>
<th>Refuges Off-Camp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>28 + bread</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28 + bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Ext-vulnerable</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ext-vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey*</td>
<td>In Camp</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Refugees Off-Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food Security Outcomes: Beneficiary Trends

Over the reporting period (October – December 2016) 2,224 beneficiary and 1,128 non-beneficiary households were surveyed across the Syria refugee countries to measure the food security outcome results of WFP assistance.1

As Figure 2 shows, overall food consumption in the region was relatively stable, decreasing slightly this round compared to the quarter prior, as 78 percent of households surveyed had ‘acceptable’ food consumption.

Figure 2: Syrian Refugee Food Consumption

1 Following the same approach as prior Outcome Monitoring rounds, all country level statistics are reliable at >90 percent confidence with a ±5 percent precision.
Compared to a year ago in 2015, acceptable food consumption decreased slightly as well by 5 percentage points in 2016. Excluding Jordan, average food consumption for the region actually improved, however, a strong decline in Jordan pulled down the regional average (see Figure 6 for more details).

Similar to food consumption, Syrian refugees continue to maintain a steady dietary diversity after the baseline in 2014 (see Figure 3).

The steady improvement, excluding the peaks during first half of 2016, in the consumption-based Coping Strategy Index (CSI), which measures the short term coping mechanisms families adopt to meet their basic food needs, is a positive finding from this round of data collection (see Figure 4). Compared to Q4 2015, short term coping has returned to past levels, likely assisted by the increased voucher assistance received over 2016.

Further analysis of the CSI shows ‘relying on less preferred food’ and ‘reducing the number of meals’ were used most often at about three days per week, followed by the ‘reduction of portion sizes’ and ‘quantities of food consumed’. Compared to the quarter prior, there was a slight reduction in the use of some coping strategies, but overall was relative stable as mentioned prior.
Disaggregating food consumption by sex head of household shows that in all countries but Egypt, households headed by women and men have similar food consumption (see Figure 5). In Egypt however, female headed households had 14 percentage points lower ‘acceptable’ food consumption compared to male headed households (75 and 89 percent respectively - however findings by sex head of household are indicative only as the sample size was not large enough to be representative). Households headed by men more often consumed cereals and meat, eggs or fish than households headed by women. Egypt CO plans to look deeper into the difference in food consumption in future focus group interviews.

Analysing findings at the country level shows Jordan and Lebanon continue to have the highest proportion of beneficiaries in the ‘poor’ or ‘borderline’ food consumption groups. While food consumption in Turkey, Iraq and Egypt were stable compared to the quarter prior, in Lebanon, food consumption improved by 6 percentage points from prior quarter but still remains lower than the other three countries.

The proportion of beneficiaries with ‘acceptable’ food consumption in Jordan however declined significantly by 23 percentage points. One possible explanation can be the use of an Amman-based remote call centre to collect outcome data this round instead of face-to-face interviews\(^2\). Seasonal patterns are an unlikely explanation given ‘acceptable’ food consumption in Q4 2015 was higher at 76 percent including a lower voucher value than in 2016 and there was no change to targeting criteria during the reporting period. Jordan M&E plans to conduct additional qualitative interviews and focus groups discussions to determine why this may have happened.

\(^2\) The remote call center partner in Jordan ‘Crystal Call’ is already running rM&E for Yemen, Syria and Libya as well with high level of accuracy.
Country in Focus: Scale-up in Turkey

Post-distribution Monitoring (PDM) shows those residing in camps and off-camps have similar food consumption, a very positive finding given the rapid scale-up currently ongoing for off-camp refugees and is likely a result of regular WFP assistance at the planned values (see Figure 7). In the quarter prior food consumption and camp and off-camp was 95 and 92.5 percent respectively, thus, off-camp food consumption increased slightly while camp food consumption was stable. In addition, the consumption-based CSI of beneficiaries in camp and off-camp was 8.7 and 9.8 respectively, showing similarly low levels of negative coping as well.

However, stark differences were found between camp and off-camp populations related to longer term coping strategies adopted (see Figure 8). Those residing off-camp were up to three times more likely to rely on credit purchases, borrowing money or selling household assets than those living in camps. Moreover, 16 percent of those living off camp withdrew their children from schools and 18 percent sent their children to work, compared to just 2 percent in camps. They are also more prone to reduce health expenditures. This is a worrying finding possibly linked to the number of free services provided in camps which decrease the need for families to adopt such drastic coping mechanisms to meet their basic food needs.

![Figure 7: Food Consumption in Turkey by camp/off-camp](image)

![Figure 8: Livelihood Coping in Turkey by camp/off-camp](image)
FSOM – Comparing beneficiaries & non-beneficiaries

The fourth round of Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM) took place over the reporting period, collecting outcome information from both beneficiaries and those excluded from assistance (considered non-beneficiaries), surveyed as a reference group. Aside from monitoring the outcomes of food assistance, FSOM has helped countries fine-tune their targeting systems by reporting on both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq collected data on non-beneficiaries this round as Turkey is in the process of scale-up and plans to roll out FSOM in 2017. Regionally, while beneficiaries maintained similar food consumption as the quarter prior, non-beneficiary food consumption decreased slightly with a 5 percentage point decrease in ‘acceptable’ food consumption. However in Jordan, not only did beneficiary food consumption decrease, non-beneficiary food consumption declined at an even higher rate (81 to 44 percent acceptable in Q3 and Q4 respectively), which needs to be further assessed. As mentioned previously, one reason may be the data collection method (Remote vs face-to-face), but there may be other external factors as well. The Jordan team is already looking into this issue.

Interestingly, beneficiary and non-beneficiary households with ‘acceptable’ food consumption have followed a very similar trend, maintaining about a 20 percent difference between them every quarter of 2016 (see Figure 9). While in some ways a positive finding, showing the positive effect of WFP assistance, as mentioned in prior reports, this points to the need for countries to continue to refine the targeting criteria to help minimize this gap between the two groups.

![Figure 9: Acceptable Food Consumption by beneficiary/non-beneficiary, 2016](image-url)
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For further questions please contact:

Anna-Leena Rasanen – Regional M&E Advisor (anna-leena.rasanen@wfp.org)
Edgar Luce – Regional M&E Officer (edgar.luce@wfp.org)