

## Severe food crisis in besieged areas of eastern Aleppo city due to extremely limited availability and access

### Key points:



Food security situation further deteriorates in eastern Aleppo city with more households resorting to irreversible and extreme coping



Rice prices in eastern Aleppo city reach an all-time high at 2,000 SYP/kg (or approx. US\$ 4/kg) due to scarce availability and demand pressure



In hard-to-reach and besieged areas food basket costs have increased and key informants are concerned over the limited availability of bread



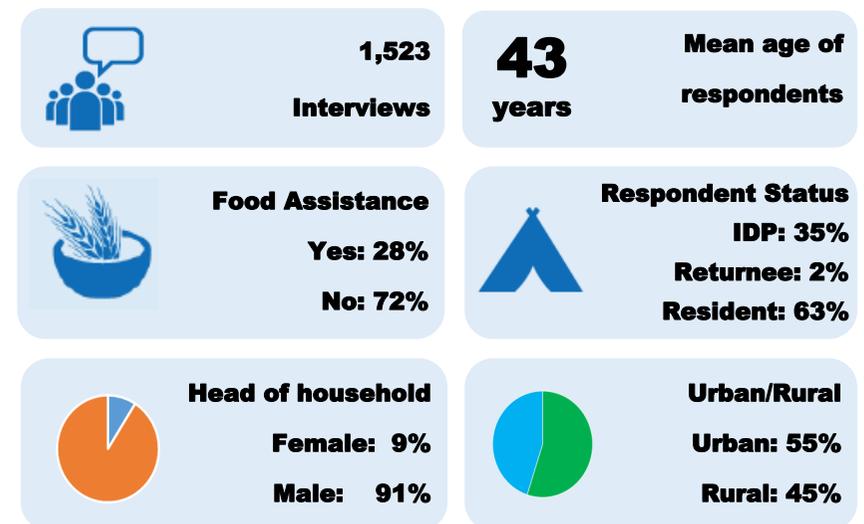
### Situation Update

The humanitarian crisis has reached unprecedented levels in eastern Aleppo City (EAC). The situation is extremely dynamic as fighting continues to spread, displacement figures are increasing daily. Since 27th November, an estimated 25,000-50,000 people have been displaced from north-eastern areas of the city. Most of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are mainly depending on food assistance that includes hot meals and Ready to Eat (RTE) rations provided by WFP and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). There is the same scenario for the thousands of returnees who have come back to their homes in the northern parts of EAC (Hanano) and whose only source of food is this food assistance.

However, many others remain trapped in the besieged parts of EAC and their deteriorating food security situation is raising major concerns of an even more severe food crisis.

Source: UNHCR, OCHA and WFP

Fig. 1. Sample Household characteristics



Source: mVAM November 2016

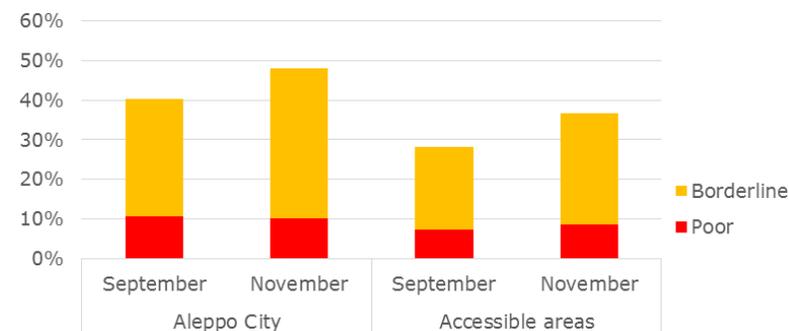


**Deteriorating household food security in eastern Aleppo city**

The proportion of households with inadequate food consumption in Aleppo city increased to 48 percent in November with more households falling into the borderline food consumption group compared to the previous round. Most of the households reported relying primarily on food purchases (67%), food assistance (25%) and casual labour (9%) as the main source of food. Overall, in Aleppo city respondents who reported having a full time job had the highest mean Food Consumption Score (FCS) (51%) followed by those who have small business and are engaged in casual labour activities (46%).

In EAC, limited availability of drinking water is aggravating the already desperate food security situation. Key informants reported severe cases where households are collecting wild vegetables and even consuming expired food. Most of the displaced and returnee households derive the majority of their caloric intake from staples (cereals) and whatever else is available reflecting poor access to a nutritious and balanced diet. After staples, the main food groups consumed are oil, followed by sugar and some pulses. Dietary diversity is particularly low for the poorest people who have no access to regular income or remittances, particularly IDPs who are still in besieged areas of EAC where the situation is believed to be dire.

Figure 2: Households with inadequate food consumption in Aleppo City and accessible areas



Source: mVAM November 2016



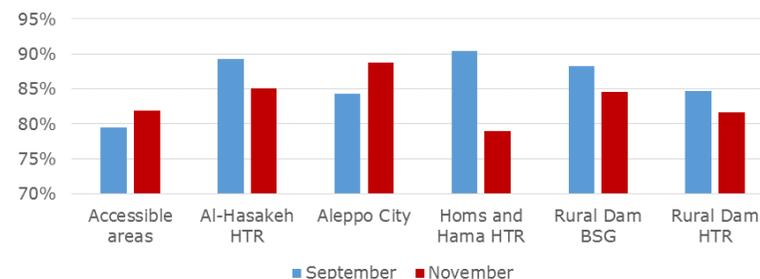
**The prevalence of irreversible coping strategies is extremely high in Aleppo**

The majority of households in EAC are eating less preferred, poor quality food and fewer meals per day, limiting portion sizes and giving up food so that children can eat. This, alongside lack of income and economic opportunities, water and electricity shortages continues to exert a high pressure on the vulnerable households that are struggling in an extremely unstable security situation.

Particularly worrying is the high incidence of households in EAC resorting to irreversible and extreme coping strategies. An increasing number of households are reportedly selling assets (including home furniture) to purchase food and in severe cases even sending children out to beg.

Aleppo city overall has the highest proportion of households engaging in negative coping strategies: at least 89 percent of surveyed respondents. In contrast, in Rural Damascus Besieged and Hard to Reach less households are engaging in negative coping most probably due to WFP food assistance and better humanitarian access.

Figure 3: Households engaging in at least one negative coping mechanism, September - November 2016



Source: mVAM November 2016

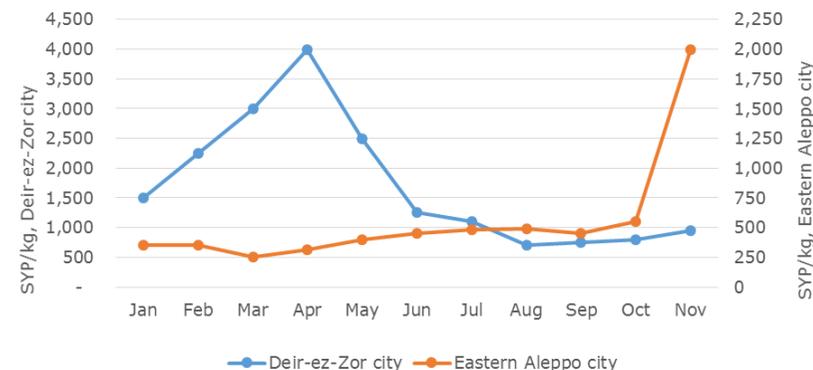


**Markets in eastern Aleppo city under strain due to low supplies and high demand from the huge influx of IDPs**

Markets in EAC are under even more strain due to increased conflict and the high influx of IDPs. Food is very scarce in all locations and markets have experienced severe shortages in most food commodities. The remaining stocks are also affected by poor storage conditions and in some cases not suitable for human consumption. This is particularly the case for rice and is reflected in the retail price trends. The price of rice per kilogram reached its highest peak at SYP 2,000/kg in November. This is an increase of 264 percent compared to October, a 400 percent increase compared to six months ago and approximately five times higher than Damascus market prices.

In Deir-ez-Zor city, market functionality has been significantly affected by the escalation of conflict. Markets, general infrastructure and commercial bridges have suffered major damages. This has meant that the last window for supplies, smuggling from the rural surroundings elements, is now impossible. Rice prices in Deir-ez-Zor city were reported at SYP 950/kg in November, increasing by approximately 19 percent as compared to October. However they are far lower than the price levels six months ago (62 percent). This reflects the positive effect of the food and humanitarian assistance that has gone into the besieged area. However, this effect is expected to wear off rapidly as winter season approaches and the security situation remains highly volatile.

Figure 4: Retail price of rice (1 kg) in Deir-ez-Zor and eastern Aleppo



Source: mVAM November 2016

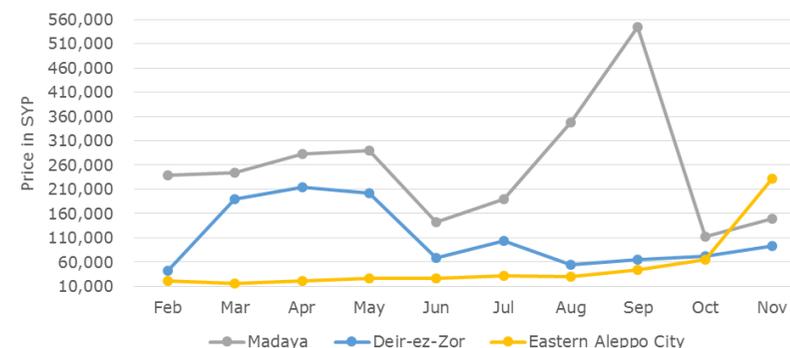


**Food basket costs increase and key informants are concerned over the limited availability of bread**

Standard food basket costs increased more than three-fold in EAC, reaching SYP 232,000. While food basket costs also increased in Deir-ez-Zor city and Madaya compared to the previous month, they remained lower than the levels recorded six months ago.

In EAC, key informants voiced their concerns particularly over the extremely limited availability of bread. Bakeries are working at minimum capacity: public bread is not available and scarce availability in shops resulted in a dramatic price increase up to SYP 2,000/bundle, a thirteen-fold increase compared to the previous month and forty-fold more than the official price (SYP 50/bundle). In Madaya (and Az-Zabadani), fresh bread has not been available since February, indicating extreme shortage and severely disrupted bakery capacity. Most households are depending on home-made bread from WFP wheat flour but are still constrained as fuel availability is becoming an increasing problem.

Figure 5: Standard food basket cost in besieged areas, January – November 2016

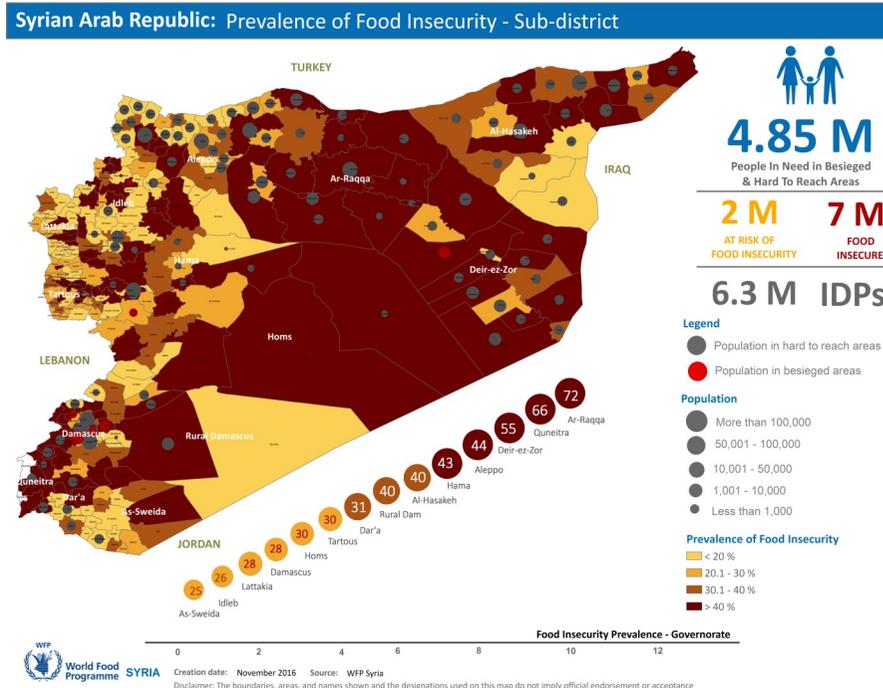


Source: mVAM November 2016

### Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via telephone interviews in November from both key informants and households. The telephone numbers called were generated using random-digit dialling, yielding 1523 completed surveys. The questionnaire contained questions on demographics, income sources, food assistance, household food consumption, coping strategies and primary food sources. A final open-ended question gave respondents the chance to share additional information about the food situation in their communities. The data was weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household. Information collected through mobile phone interviews may be biased towards younger, somewhat better off households who live in urban areas and have better access to electricity and phone-charging services. To obtain a more granular analysis of food security, districts have been combined into nine strata: accessible areas, hard-to-reach Al-Hasakeh, hard-to-reach Aleppo and Idleb, Aleppo city, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, hard-to-reach Homs and Hama, besieged Rural Damascus, hard-to-reach Rural Damascus, and hard-to-reach Southern. This sampling frame groups together areas with similar geography and access status, allowing for a large enough sample size to make statistically significant comparisons.

Map 1: Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Syria—sub district



Source: WFP, Food Security Cluster



**For further information:**

**Arif Husain**  
**Jean-Martin Bauer**

arif.husain@wfp.org  
jean-martin.bauer@wfp.org

**mVAM Resources:**

**Website:** [http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam\\_monitoring/](http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/)  
**Blog:** [mvam.org](http://mvam.org)  
**Toolkit:** <http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM>



**vam**  
food security analysis