

# COUNTRY: SYRIA

## Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria

AUGUST 2015



### IN NUMBERS



**4.2 million**  
provided with  
general food  
assistance



**818,000**  
people assisted  
through cross-line  
and cross-border  
deliveries



**Over  
106,000**  
children under  
five received  
specialized  
nutrition support



**4,300**  
pregnant and  
lactating women  
received  
fresh food  
vouchers



**105,000**  
school children  
received daily  
nutritious snacks

### FUNDING UPDATE

**US\$ 62.3 million need to be urgently mobilized to avert a critical pipeline break in November and December**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- In August, WFP delivered food for 4.2 million people in 12 Syrian governorates
- Over 60,000 food rations were redirected to respond to emerging humanitarian needs in Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Dar'a
- Food supplies reached 818,000 vulnerable people in high-conflict areas through cross-border and cross-line operations
- The Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme for young children was introduced to cross-border operations from Turkey, reaching over 80,000 children in high conflict areas of Idleb, Aleppo and Hama
- Preliminary findings of WFP Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) confirm high levels of food insecurity in Syria

## SITUATION UPDATE

During the month of August, intense fighting continued to fuel significant population displacement in several parts of Syria, particularly in the northern and central governorates, requiring rapid operational adjustments to redirect assistance to respond to newly emerging needs. In parallel, thousands of families remained trapped in several besieged locations, cut off from humanitarian reach, prompting continued advocacy and negotiation efforts to provide life-saving support to the affected population.

### Northern governorates

Thousands of people left their homes in northern rural Aleppo after ISIL launched a series of attacks on several villages in the sub-district of A'zaz, Suran and Marea in August. Preliminary partners' estimates indicate that almost 30,000 people fled the affected areas as a result, although numbers are expected to rise as fighting in the area is ongoing. The majority of the affected families sought refuge further north in IDP camps near the Turkish border, or in informal gatherings in nearby fields. Fewer families fled south to rural areas surrounding Aleppo city, where they are being hosted by relatives or in collective shelters. WFP partners on the ground are monitoring the situation to provide assistance to the newly displaced families using food supplies delivered through cross-border operations from Turkey, including ready-to-eat meals to assist those lacking access to cooking facilities.

Amidst ongoing fighting, the security situation in opposition-held areas of Aleppo governorate remains extremely volatile, making it highly risky for WFP to deliver humanitarian assistance to the population in need. On 18 August, a truck carrying WFP supplies through Bab Al-Salam corridor to eastern Aleppo city was hit by shrapnel from a nearby explosion, which set the truck on fire. Luckily no casualties were reported, while the cargo was completely destroyed. While WFP closely monitors the situation on the ground and coordinates with authorities and partners on the ground to ensure the safety of all WFP convoys, the incident highlights that indirect fire remains a significant risk in high conflict areas.

Rural Aleppo and nearby Idleb governorate have witnessed sustained levels of fighting and consequent displacement since the beginning of 2015, which resulted in a rapidly growing IDP population in the two governorates. Amidst overstretched and insufficient local resources, the ability of host communities absorb and support IDPs has decreased dramatically. This is reflected in the rapid increase in the number of IDP camps and informal shelters, 234 according to latest data, more than double compared to December 2014. Accordingly, the IDP camp population increased by more than 20 percent over the same period, with some 205,000 currently hosted in IDP camps and shelters in the two governorates combined. Through its cross-border partners, WFP is currently providing assistance to some 85,000 people in 115 camps.

### Central governorates

Elsewhere in the country, fighting which erupted on several fronts in July continued to ravage the central regions, forcing new waves of displacement. Following weeks of heavy fighting in rural Homs, ISIL seized control of Al-Qaryatein, at the beginning of August. Located about 90 Km south-east of Homs city, Al-Qaryatein was home to about 80,000 people, including some 8,000 IDPs who had fled Palmyra after ISIL took over the ancient town at the end of last May. Of these, approximately 90 percent fled the town, according to sources from the ground, seeking refuge in safer areas of the governorate as well as in neighbouring regions. Approximately 6,500 new IDPs were registered and assisted by WFP partners in government-held towns of Homs, including Sadad, Farqalas, Maheen and Hawarin, while 2,500 people fled north to IDP camps in Idleb governorate, where they are receiving WFP assistance through cross-border partner. The bulk of the population reportedly escaped towards east and north to areas under ISIL control in Homs, Deir Ezzor and Ar-Raqqa governorate. However WFP has no access these areas and is currently unable to confirm this information and verify the number and condition of the affected families.

Heavy clashes continued to take place in Al-Ghab plain, in northern rural Hama. Fighting in the area had intensified in July, as ongoing fighting at the border with Idleb spread further into Hama governorate, culminating in the take-over by AOGs of several government controlled locations in the area. Partners reported that some 33,000 people have so far sought refuge in safer areas of the governorate, approximately half of whom have been registered for assistance so far. Approximately 5,000 people sought refuge in neighbouring Lattakia, of which 3,750 were assisted through WFP partners on the basis of a rapid needs assessment conducted by SARC.

### **Southern governorates**

In Rural Damascus, shelling and heavy clashes continued to take place in Az-Zabadani, about 50 Km north-west of Damascus city, as government forces have been intensifying efforts since July to regain control of the last opposition-held enclave in the Qalamoun mountain region. In parallel, humanitarian access to Qudsaya has been progressively shrinking due to its proximity to the frontline. The access constraints further intensified at the end of July, as the authorities imposed strict security-related movement restrictions in the area. Partners' estimates point to some 250,000 people trapped inside the area, including approximately 25,000 Palestinian refugees who relocated to the area in early 2014. WFP last reached Qudsaya in April 2015, when 1,000 rations were delivered in support of 5,000 people. Since then, WFP has attempted to deliver food assistance through its partners in Qudsaya but did not receive the necessary approvals. Inter-agency efforts are underway to conduct an inter-agency convoy to Qudsaya, with plans to deliver humanitarian assistance for an initial 20,000 people. Should this attempt be successful, additional missions will be conducted to support the remaining vulnerable families in the area.

## **WFP RESPONSE**

### **Overall achievements**

Amidst a growing humanitarian crisis, WFP continues to target 4.25 million vulnerable conflict-affected people in Syria through a combination of general food assistance, supplementary nutrition support for children under five, voucher transfers and school feeding activities. In August, WFP delivered food assistance in support of approximately 4.2 million beneficiaries to 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates. In areas affected by bread shortages, assistance included wheat flour which is either provided directly to the families in rural areas, or channeled to bakeries for bread production in urban areas where beneficiaries are less likely to have access to baking facilities.

August food deliveries included assistance for close to 818,000 people living in high-conflict areas of the country, delivered through a combination of cross-border and cross-line missions. Through its cross-border operations, WFP delivered 159,090 food rations from Turkey and Jordan to over 795,000 vulnerable people in Aleppo (26 percent), Idleb (46 percent), Hama (3 percent), Dar'a (21 percent) and Quneitra (4 percent), representing 19 percent of its total assistance. In addition, coordination with local partners enabled WFP to deliver 7,500 food rations, sufficient for 22,500 people, in the opposition held areas of Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahem in Rural Damascus. These areas have been under a truce agreement since March 2015, which ended years of fighting and allowed the resumption of WFP deliveries.

### **Response to emerging needs**

Widespread insecurity continued to prevent all deliveries to Deir Ezzor and Ar-Raqqa governorates, as well as to several hard-to-reach locations in Rural Damascus, Homs, Hama and Idleb governorates. WFP continues to advocate for unfettered humanitarian access to all civilians in need and coordinates with partners and other UN agencies reach people in need in highly insecure areas through all possible means of delivery, including inter-agency convoys and emergency airlifts. At present, however, a significant amount of food supplies remain unable to reach their originally intended destinations. Amidst escalating fighting and growing humanitarian needs across the country reported over the past months, in August WFP redirected a large part of these resources to assist newly displaced families and to reach civilians in hard-to-access areas where the opportunity became available.

Reallocation of assistance takes place in close coordination with cooperating partners, who closely monitor the situation on the ground and provide WFP with details reports on the registration of new beneficiaries and increased needs for assistance. In August, additional supplies for over 100,000 people were delivered to partners in Hama governorate, which recorded large numbers of new arrivals over the past four months, from hotspot locations within the governorate as well as from neighbouring Idleb governorate. Likewise in Homs, partners were provided with additional supplies, sufficient for approximately 100,000 people, to assist the newly displaced families from Al-Qaryatein and to participate to an inter-agency cross-line mission to Al-Houle, initially scheduled to take place in August (see Logistics Cluster section for further details). Similarly, 4,500 rations were redirected to partners in Rural Damascus in order to enable to deliver assistance to vulnerable communities in the opposition-held areas of Yalda, Babilla and Beit Sahem.

Following repeated calls from partners indicating the urgent need of additional supplies, approximately 10,000 food rations (sufficient for 50,000 people) were redirected to assist vulnerable families in Aleppo city. Partners operating in the area reported deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the city. Hosting one of the largest IDP community in the country, vulnerabilities are rapidly increasing in the city also among the resident communities. Growing insecurity, high prices of food, fuel and water are putting additional pressure on the already overstretched resources of the local population. Partners reported that due to significant levels of vulnerability, it has become increasingly difficult for them to further prioritize assistance, as the number of families in critical need of support has outgrown the plan, forcing them to provide assistance on a rotation basis to ensure a minimum level of food support to all those in need and avoid creating tensions among the beneficiary communities.

Finally, cross-border operations from Jordan were also scaled up for the month of August, targeting 200,000 individuals up from an initially planned 150,000, to respond to a growing humanitarian crisis in Dar'a governorate, where over 76,000 people were temporarily or permanently displaced over the last three months only.

## **NUTRITION PROGRAMME**

WFP assistance in Syria addresses the immediate food needs of vulnerable conflict-affected families thereby reducing the use of negative coping strategies which would jeopardise their food security and lead to long-term and irreversible impact. At the same time, WFP complements the provision of emergency food assistance with specialized support for beneficiaries who have specific nutrition needs, and as such are more vulnerable to the risk of food insecurity, such as young children and pregnant and lactating women.

### **Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme**

Under its Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme, children between 6-59 months residing in families and host communities receive supplementary feeding products to prevent malnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies which would compromise their healthy development as adults. In August, over 82 metric tonnes of supplementary feeding products were delivered to partners to provide nutrition support to approximately 106,600 children under five. Of these, nutrition supplies for over 80,000 children in high conflict areas of Idleb, Aleppo and Hama were delivered to eight partners through cross border operations from southern Turkey for the first time. This achievement came after a mission to Gaziantep conducted last May by WFP Syria head nutritionist, which set the basis for the

inclusion of specialized nutrition intervention to the cross-border operations.

### **Voucher-Based Nutrition Programme for Pregnant and Lactating Women**

WFP provides monthly vouchers to pregnant and lactating women, enabling them to diversify their diet by purchasing locally produced fresh products not included in the general food ration. This intervention aims at improving their micro-nutrient intake, and ensure the healthy development of their unborn or infant child, thus preventing the inter-generational cycle of malnutrition. During the month of August, WFP distributed fresh food vouchers to over 4,300 women in Homs and Lattakia, which they can redeem in selected retailers. In parallel, assessments are underway to identify additional partners and retailers to further scale-up the programme and expand the coverage to additional governorates.

## **SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME**

In collaboration with UNICEF and the Syrian Ministry of Education, WFP currently implements a School Feeding programme in Syria, aimed at boosting enrollment rates and regularize attendance, while contributing to the children's nutrition intake through the provision of fortified snacks on school days. Following the end of the academic year, during the months of July and August the programme transitioned to summer school clubs, remedial classes for children who faced challenges during the year. During the two months, approximately 105,000 children received nutritious date bars in participating institutions in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs and Tartous governorates. To increase awareness on the objectives of the programme and further encourage attendance, WFP organized an art competition at the participating summer school clubs where children were invited to make thematic drawings and paintings on the importance of nutrition and education. WFP, through an official jury, is now in the process of reviewing the paintings and will pick a winner in each sub-district.

With the start of the new academic year, the programme will transition back to regular schools in September. According to preliminary enrollment data provided by the participating primary schools, WFP will target 350,000 children, while arrangements are being finalized to initiate dispatches accordingly. In the meantime, efforts are ongoing to gradually transition to local procurement for date bars. Through a tendering process launched in July, WFP selected a potential supplier and initiated the procurement process for a trial batch, and the first locally produced date bars will tentatively be dispatched in October.

## FOOD SECURITY SECTOR

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A Food Security Sector coordination workshop took place in Beirut on 19 and 20 August, with the participation of 41 members from 15 organizations, representing sector partners from all operating hubs (Syria, Jordan and southern Turkey) as well as from Iraq and Lebanon. During the meeting, WFP shared the preliminary findings of Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA), and discussions were held among sector partner in preparation of the final report, which will play a critical role in the sector response planning for 2016.

The CFSVA, the first country wide large scale Food Security survey conducted in Syria, was conducted between May and June 2015 on a sample of over 19,000 households in 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates. Due to access restrictions, data from Deir Ezzor and Ar-Raqqa governorates could not be included in the survey. While final results are expected to be released at the end of September, preliminary findings were found to be largely consistent with the recently completed WFP/FAO Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM), confirming the prevalence of severe food insecurity in the country, particularly in areas with high concentration of IDPs. Moreover, survey results indicate that households resilience is further shrinking, forcing them to resort to negative coping strategies which further compromise their food security.

In addition, the Beirut workshop served as a platform for sector-level consultations in preparation of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) exercise which will form the basis for the overall inter-sector humanitarian response planning in 2016. A Technical Working Group (TWG) was established, consisting of food security experts representing all hubs to develop sector inputs for the HNO, which will be shared with other agencies during an inter-sector workshop in mid-September.

## LOGISTICS CLUSTER

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Through a separately funded Special Operation, WFP provides logistics support to the wider humanitarian community operating within Syria. Through its Logistics Cluster mandate, WFP fills logistics gaps faced by the humanitarian community by providing common free-to-user and cost-recovery services including transport services, dedicated storage, coordination and information management support. In addition, the Logistics Cluster provides critical support for the implementation deliveries to cross-line and cross-border deliveries to hard-to-reach areas within the country, thus playing a key role in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139, 2165 and 2191, which call for increased humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas in Syria.

In August, over 224 mt of relief cargo was transported by the Logistics cluster on behalf of different UN agencies. Additionally, over 661 mt of partners' cargo was stored in the cluster's common facilities in Rural Damascus, Qamisly, Lattakia and Homs. In August, the Cluster planned to facilitate a series of three inter-agency cross-line convoys to Al-Houle, in rural Homs, to deliver humanitarian assistance to 97,500 people the area. However, tensions along the access routes, including demonstrations in solidarity in solidarity with the besieged population of Foah and Kefraya (Idleb), forced the rescheduling of the missions, which will be conducted in September.

## FUNDING

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In 2015, WFP has only received 32 percent funding this year against its appeal so far. Combined with late funding arrival, this has compelled WFP to reduce the planned food basket by an average of 22 percent every month and heavily rely on internal loans to be able to maintain a minimum level of support to vulnerable families on a monthly basis. Amidst persisting funding gaps, WFP conducted a critical review and prioritization of needs, which included the adoption of an economical food basket - with reduction in the most expensive commodities (canned food) - which will provide approximately 80 percent of the project plan caloric transfer. Accordingly, revised funding requirements until the end of the year amount to US\$ 85.5 million, of which US\$ 62.3 million remain currently unfunded and need to be secured immediately to avert a critical pipeline break in November and December. Given the long procurement lead time, it takes 2 to 3 months for cash or in-kind contributions to arrive in-country for distribution.

The Logistics Cluster is also facing a severe funding shortfall, as only 22 percent is funded against the yearly requirement of USD 9,8 million. As levels of UN cross-border and cross-line traffic are steadily increasing, it is expected that the costs of the Logistics Cluster are set to rise. This means that approximately USD 2 million is urgently needed to secure the continuation of cross-border and cross-line activities for the rest of the year. Should the lack of funding force the closure of the transshipment hubs, or a reduction in coordination and cross-line convoys, there would be a substantial disruption to the UN's implementation of cross-border and cross-line missions.

## CONTACT

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Operation	Project Duration	Planned number of people	Total requirements (in US\$)	Total received (in US\$)	Total Funded (%)	Shortfall for the November-December period (%)	People Assisted	
							Planned (August)	Reached (August)
EMOP 200339: Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria	Oct 11 Dec 15	4,500,000	2,209,500,064	1,184,850,108	54%	73%	4.25 million	4.2 million

Country: [Syria](#)

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