



SITUATION UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2015

SYRIA CRISIS REGIONAL RESPONSE



For information on WFP's Syria Crisis Response in 2013 - 2015, please use the **QR Code** or access through the **link: wfp.org/syriainfo**

WFP/Abeer Etiffa



World Food Programme

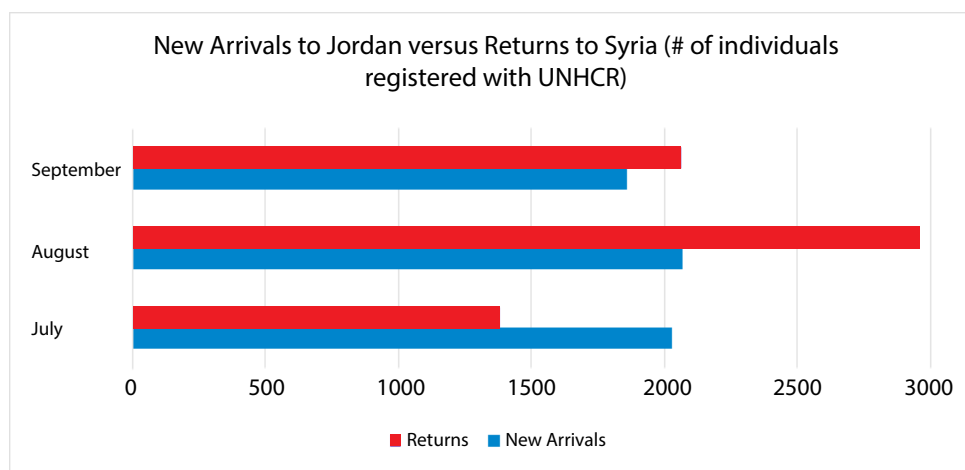
HIGHLIGHTS

- Assessment findings confirm the **correlation between the reductions in humanitarian support to Syrian refugees and the increase in the number of Syrians risking their lives in the hope of a better future in EU countries.**
- Returns to Syria amongst refugee families living in Jordanian communities increased by 17 percent between the first week of August and the first week of September, with an average of **300 people returning per week.**
- In September, a total of approximately 360,000 refugees in Jordan and Lebanon did not receive food assistance.
- The results from a rapid panel assessment conducted in Jordan reveal a startling **deterioration in food security** and an increased level of vulnerability amongst refugees in communities whom ceased to receive food assistance.
 - poor food consumption more than tripled
 - 34 percent more families withdrew their children from school and the those sending children out to work increased six-fold
- Findings from the 2015 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) confirm **the growing food insecurity of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.**

The past month has seen a dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving into the European Union (EU). This scale of migration has not only attracted a significant amount of international media attention, but has also placed strain on many government authorities which did not expect such a high volume of movement. In order to understand the reasons behind the massive migration to Europe from Syria and its neighboring countries, REACH and UNHCR have conducted assessments to examine the pull and push factors of Syrian refugee movements¹. The findings from these reports **confirm the correlation between the recent drop in humanitarian support to Syrian refugees as well as barriers to legal work and the increase in the number of Syrians risking their lives in the hope of a better future in EU countries.**

An increase in the number of Syrians reaching Europe

According to UNHCR, as of the end of September, **Syrians** represented the largest proportion of sea arrivals to Europe in 2015, **accounting for over half of the approximately 500,000 arrivals**². This represents a significant increase compared to last year, with arrivals to the EU in September 2015 **four times higher than last year**. Moreover in Jordan in the last three months, individuals returning to Syria have outnumbered those arriving to Jordan, with August being the month of highest returns (2,958).



Migration trends seem to be directly related to cuts in assistance

Compounded by the lack of assistance in the countries in which they sought refuge, some Syrian refugees are opting to return to Syria. In these past couple of months, Jordan has seen an average of 300 returns per week. Dar'a, Syria, where conflict continues at life-threatening levels, is the highest sought-after return destination due to the fact that it is the area of origin for many refugees in Jordan. Of note is that between August and September, returns decreased amongst Syrians residing in Jordanian camps (by 80 percent), but **increased by 17 percent amongst those living in the communities**. The difference in returns in relation to geographic area may be partly attributed to the differing cash-based transfer (CBT) values distributed in camps, where assistance has not been reduced this year (USD 28),

¹ It should be noted that whilst REACH focuses its assessment on Syrian refugee movements to Europe from both the region and Syria, UNHCR's assessment targets Syrian refugees residing in Jordan whom have opted to move elsewhere.

² UNHCR portal, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/asylum.php>.

compared to communities (USD 14), where the CBT has been reduced by 50 percent.

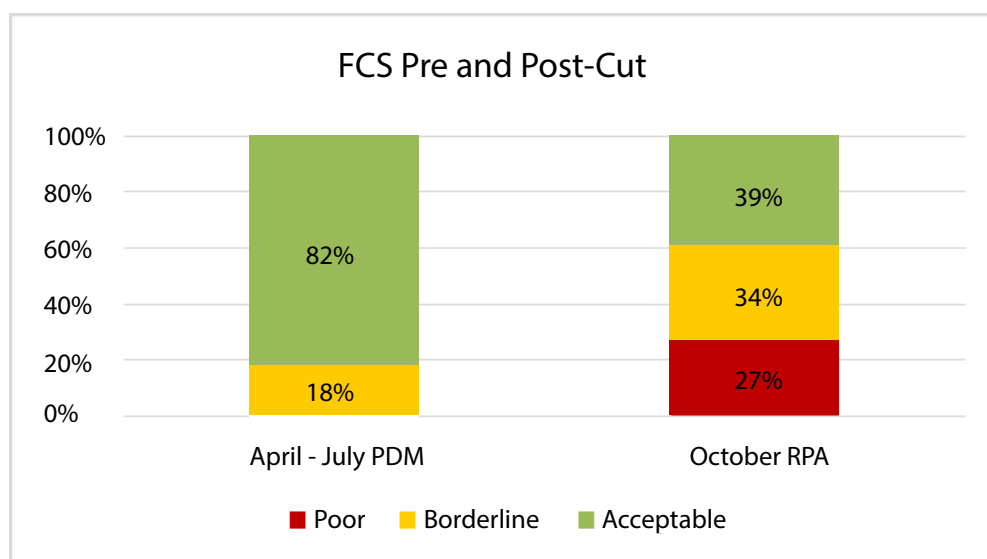
UNHCR and REACH echo the main push factors for the displacement of Syrians seeking asylum in Europe. The largest number of respondents from UNHCR's assessment (37 percent) stated the inability to provide for their families motivated them to migrate to Europe, whilst 21 percent and 13 percent stated that their journey was due to the lack of employment opportunities and limited of vision for the future³. More concerning for humanitarian aid agencies is the fact that when asked, **33 percent of respondents stated they would stay in their current location (Jordan) if assistance was uncut – specifically, 5 percent attest to this if food assistance was reinstated.** While work permits and increased cash assistance would sway approximately 20 percent of Syrian respondents.

These findings corroborate WFP's message that CBT cuts should not be linked directly to an increase in numbers of those seeking refuge in Europe; rather, any exodus from Jordan (to Europe or Syria) is a culmination of various factors, of which the WFP cuts were, for many, **"the last straw"**.

The impact of cuts in Jordan's communities

WFP monitors recently visited a household only to find the family had packed their bags and were ready to leave the country. When asked why, they replied simply, **"We cannot survive without food assistance."**

In Jordan, WFP conducted a rapid panel assessment in order to better understand the impact of food assistance cuts for vulnerable Syrian refugees in communities. The "vulnerable" group represents 229,000 refugees residing in communities whom as of September ceased to receive food assistance due to funding shortfalls. Baseline data from the pre-cut period was obtained from WFP post-distribution monitoring (PDM) in Quarter 2 while data from the post-cut period was collected from the same group through a rapid panel assessment this month. A total of 89 households were assessed. The results from the assessment reveal a startling deterioration in the food security of refugee families, as **the proportion of families with poor or borderline food consumption more than tripled** (from 18 percent to 61 percent) since WFP's cuts in assistance.



In terms of coping strategies an overwhelming **75 percent of families reported they are engaging in more frequent and severe coping strategies to meet their basic food needs** since they stopped receiving assistance. For instance, almost double the number of families are now restricting food consumption by adults in order for small children to eat: 70 percent of families, compared to 37 percent when they received JOD 10 assistance. As for livelihood coping strategies⁴, since the September cuts, **34 percent more families have withdrawn their children from school and 29 percent of families are now sending under-age children to work** compared with only 5 percent before. The results from the rapid panel assessment clearly demonstrate that

³ UNCHR, Population Movements to Syria and Beyond, September 2015.
⁴ Livelihood coping strategies indicate a family's medium to long-term coping capacity.

vulnerable refugee families residing in Jordan's communities are highly dependent on food assistance and without it their level of vulnerability has further increased, underscoring the imperative need to reinstate this group for WFP's future programming. As one Syrian refugee stated "should I spend the little money that I have on feeding my children or keeping a roof over their heads?" - Halima, Jordan.

Increased levels of food insecurity and vulnerability in Lebanon

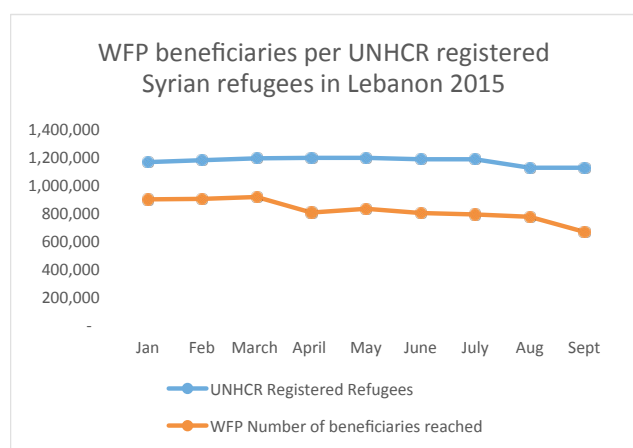
Results from the 2015 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) confirm **the food security situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon significantly worsened since the previous year**. Moderate food insecurity doubled to affect a quarter of households while the proportion of food secure households fell from 25 percent to 11 percent. Assessment results attest that 70 percent of refugee families are living below the national poverty line⁵ compared to 50 percent in the previous year. This finding can serve to explain why a majority of refugee households (52 percent) are living below the survival expenditure basket⁶, a steep increase from 29 percent in 2014.

Findings from the VASyR also indicate that the use of **emergency coping strategies has more than doubled amongst refugee families** over the last year (from 28 percent in 2014 to 61 percent 2015). These emergency coping strategies include the reduction of essential non-food spending (education and health (55 percent)) the withdrawal of children from school (19 percent), the involvement of children in income generating activities (4 percent) and the acceptance of high risk/illegal jobs (2 percent).

An overwhelming majority of households (89 percent) reported having experienced a lack of food or money to buy food in the 30 days before the survey, 22 percent more than in 2014. Out of those that faced a lack of food or money to buy it, **almost 100 percent applied food consumption related coping strategies**, chiefly relying on less preferred or expensive food, reducing the number of meals per day, borrowing food from friends or relatives and reducing portion sizes at meal times. It is important to note that at the time of the assessment the CBT value was 30 percent higher (USD 19) than the current value (USD 13.5), which further supports the argument that these refugee families require a greater level of food assistance.

Operational Status and Plans

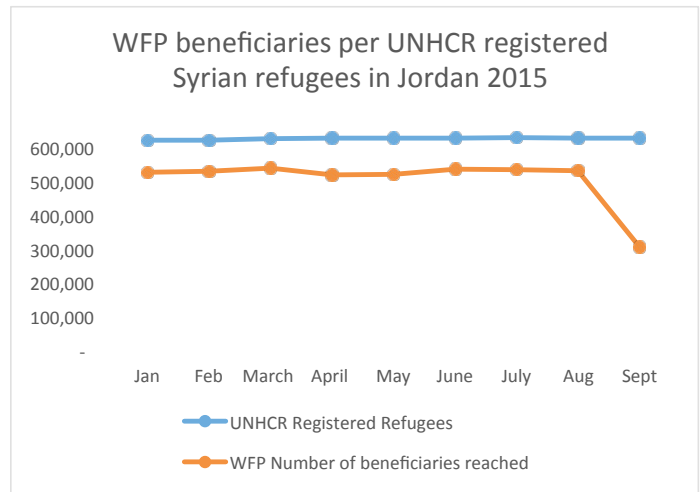
WFP's reach in the region decreased by over one quarter since the start of the year, now covering only 30 percent of UNHCR registered Syrian refugees in the region. Whilst the situation in the neighboring countries has progressively deteriorated with the remaining refugees coping on 50 percent of the CBT value, recent donor contributions in the month of September will allow WFP to significantly raise the value of the CBT for vulnerable refugees in both Jordan and Lebanon. Furthermore, WFP is extremely grateful for this generosity which will also allow us to reinstate those who have been cut off from assistance in the communities in Jordan ahead of what is expected to be a harsh winter. While this positive shift comes at a critical time it is important to note that this assistance remains at less than the recommend level of support and will only last until January, halfway through the winter.



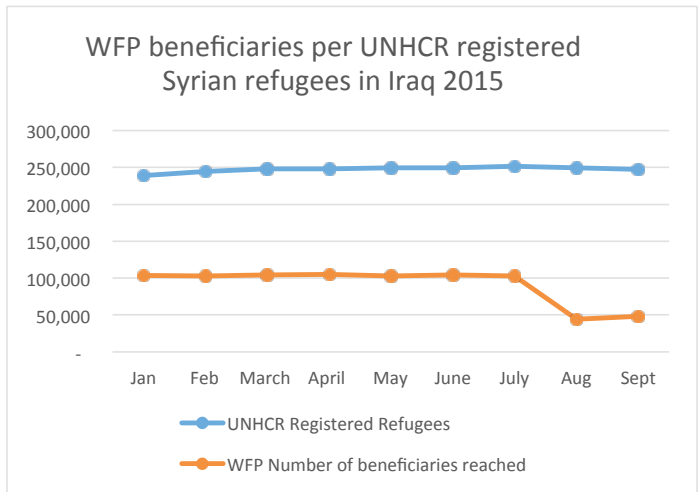
UNHCR has registered over 1.1 million Syrians in **Lebanon**, representing the world's highest concentration of refugees per capita. In September, severe funding shortfalls necessitated a change in distributions that would maximise the number of households assisted. As depicted by the graph's drop in WFP beneficiaries in September, households were 'capped' at five, therefore eligible households with more than five members only received five amounts of USD 13.5 this month. Thanks to a small surge in donations, WFP is able to increase the CBT value from 50 percent to 80 percent of the planned amount (from USD 13.5 to USD 21.6) next month to support its targeted beneficiaries til the end of January.

⁵ USD 3.84/person/day
⁶ The minimum culturally-adjusted items to cover the survival needs of one household for one month

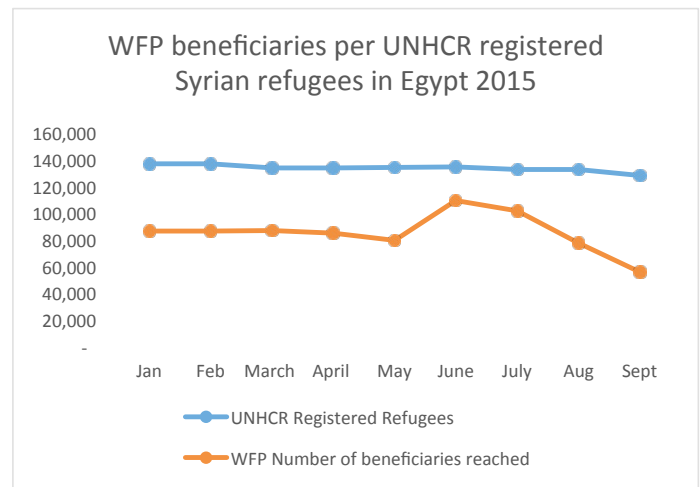
In **Jordan**, under the tiered assistance strategy, some 211,000 Syrian refugees in communities classified as extremely vulnerable received USD 14.1 as a CBT during September, just 50 percent of the advised value per person. However another **229,000 beneficiaries also living in communities currently in the vulnerable category did not receive any assistance during September due to the lack of resources** (see graph). Full assistance for refugees in camps was maintained at USD 28.3. The reduction in caseload drastically plummeted WFP's coverage of registered refugees from 85 percent to 49 percent this month. Fortunately, recent support from several donors has meant that WFP will be able to reinstate the 229,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees next month with the recommended CBT value of USD 14.1. In addition, the CBT for the extremely vulnerable caseload, some 211,000 refugees, will be increased from 50 to 80 percent of its planned value (from USD 14.1 to USD 21.2). This increase will make a significant difference with the rapid approach of the winter months. All refugees inside camps will be maintained at the full CBT of USD 28.



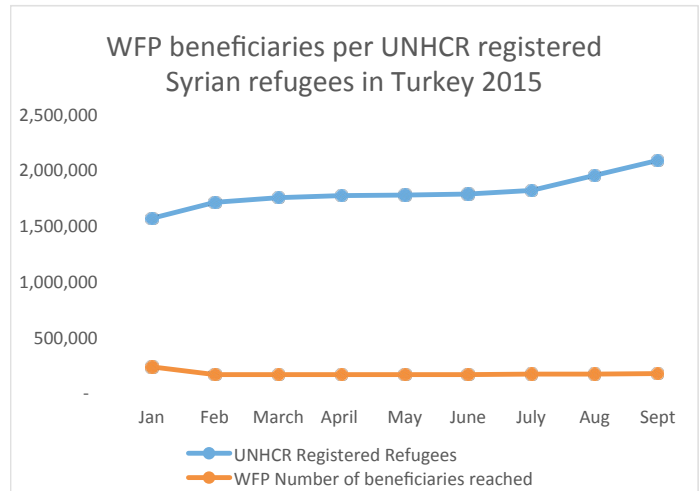
WFP in **Iraq** will continue basing its support to Syrians through the tiered approach which began in August upon completion of the targeting exercise. To this avail, approximately 1,000 extremely vulnerable Syrians will continue to receive a CBT of USD 19, whilst the 49,000 vulnerable refugees receive one of USD 10. There are also 3,000 Syrians in KRI whom are still receiving food parcels, but will be assessed and included into the tiered assistance approach as of October. The chart demonstrates the drastic reduction in WFP beneficiaries as of August based on the results from a tent-to-tent food security and vulnerability assessment. In view of this, WFP will conduct a re-assessment of the food security levels of both refugees who continue to receive food assistance and those who do not to monitor the change in their food security status in the month of November. Work is also underway to ensure that the levels of vulnerability of refugees residing in communities is also assessed to ensure assistance is channeled accordingly.



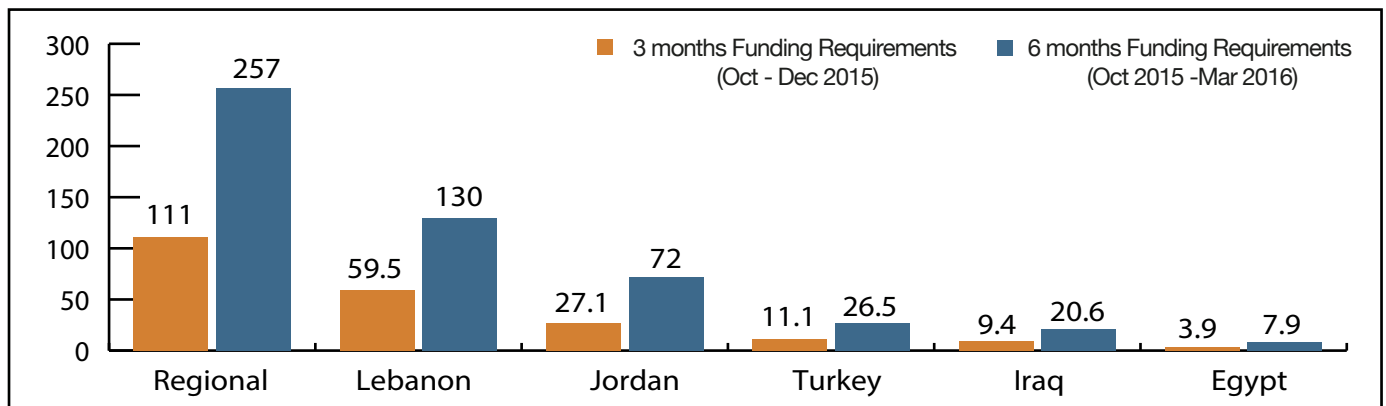
The ongoing joint Vulnerability Assessment of the Syrian refugees in **Egypt** has been completed in Alexandria and Damietta and is still on-going in Greater Cairo. As a result of this continued assessment reductions in the number of beneficiaries assisted are being made on a monthly basis. A total of 13,000 individuals – both Palestinian Refugees from Syria and Syrian refugees – were excluded from the WFP beneficiary list in August. Some of these were excluded partly because of vulnerability assessment results, but a large proportion were temporary exclusions induced by funding shortfalls and may hence be re-included once the vulnerability assessment interviews are complete. For those still receiving WFP support, a CBT of USD 17 is distributed.



Working with the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), WFP in **Turkey** continues to assess the vulnerability of the refugee population residing outside of camps in an effort to channel assistance to those most in need in communities. The off-camp programme – which has supported over 4,000 Syrians this month – will be maintained throughout the year, targeting up to 45,000 Syrian households by year’s end. WFP, TRC and the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) work together to provide Syrians in camps with sufficient CBT value to enable beneficiaries to cover their kilo caloric requirements. The number of camp beneficiaries assisted by WFP and supplemented by AFAD is limited to approximately 150,000 individuals in eleven camps⁷, owing to funding constraints. Whilst AFAD covers the entirety of CBT to the population of the remaining fourteen camps.



REQUIREMENTS AND SHORTFALLS (in USD)



WFP net funding requirements for Syria regional operation for the next three months (October-December 2015) stands at **USD 111 million**. For the next six months (October 2015 – March 2016), WFP requires **USD 257 million**.

Donors are represented in alphabetical order.

WFP is grateful for the critical support provided by multilateral donors in response to the Syria crisis, as well as that of Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and private donors.

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⁷ Due to funding constraints, WFP in Turkey was forced to hand over 9 camps to the Government in February, hence only supporting 11 camps with WFP vouchers since then.