



WFP/Syria

# COUNTRY: SYRIA

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

SEPTEMBER 2015

### In numbers

**6.5 million** people internally displaced  
**13.5 million** people require humanitarian assistance  
**8.7 million** people require food assistance

### Funding Update:

For the February-March 2016 period, WFP requires **USD 73 million** by the end of November to avert food gaps starting in February



World Food Programme

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Assistance for over 4 million people was dispatched during the September cycle, including food for 690,750 people delivered through WFP's cross-border modality from Turkey and Jordan.
- In addition, over 61,600 people were assisted through cross-line deliveries to non-government held areas in Rural Damascus, Hama and Homs through a combination of WFP deliveries and inter-agency missions.
- Over 185,000 children under five received supplementary feeding products, including 65,000 children in northern Aleppo and Idleb reached through cross-border deliveries.
- The start of the new academic year enabled WFP to resume School Feeding activities, reaching 200,000 primary school children in Tartous, Rural Damascus, Aleppo and Homs.
- Food deliveries to Al Hasakeh through Nusaybin border were affected in September due to delays in obtaining approvals from the Turkish authorities.
- Donor generosity will enable WFP to cover the food pipeline until January 2016, while an additional USD 112 need to be secured by November to cover February-March requirements.

## SITUATION UPDATE

Continuing conflict is leading to more population displacements in various parts of the country. More than 52,000 people were displaced from Madiq Castle, Suran and Kafr Zeita sub-districts in northern rural Hama, following an escalation of violence and a significant deterioration of the security situation in the area. The majority of the affected families sought refuge in safer areas of rural Hama or in nearby areas of Idleb governorate, where they are either being hosted by families and friends or are staying in informal IDP gatherings in open fields hoping to return to their villages when security conditions permit. In fewer numbers, some families sought sanctuary in IDP camps along the Turkish border in northern Idleb governorate. WFP partners are closely monitoring the developments on the ground to identify emerging needs and provide assistance to the affected families. By the first week of October, approximately 13,700 displaced people have received WFP assistance through cross-border operations from Turkey.

In parallel, ongoing clashes continued to fuel population displacement in Al Ghab plain, in north-western rural Hama, where opposition groups have launched a series of attacks government controlled locations in the area since the end of July. Most of the affected families are seeking refuge in the neighbouring coastal governorates of Lattakia and Tartous, where WFP partners reported the registration of approximately 10,000 newly displaced people in September. IDPs from Al-Ghab plain accounted for the bulk of the inflow, while fewer arrivals were also reported from rural Aleppo. Due to relatively favourable security conditions, the coastal area has attracted a large number of IDPs since the beginning of the conflict. This is putting pressure on already overstretched local resources, increasing vulnerabilities among the resident population. In September only, 1,000 host families, approximately 5,000 people, were registered for assistance by WFP partners. WFP partners were able to assist all the newly registered families using food rations redirected from insecure areas where dispatches could not be completed.

Meanwhile, a ceasefire agreement was reached on 23 September between government and opposition forces to halt hostilities in the rebel-held towns of Zabadani and Madaya, in Rural Damascus as well as in the government-held Shia enclaves of Foah and Kefraya, in Idleb. Two similar truce attempts were made in August, but had failed to yield long-term results. The agreement included the evacuation of those in need of medical assistance and the delivery of humanitarian aid. The UN, in close cooperation with ICRC and SARC, immediately started coordinating to put in place the necessary arrangements to support these efforts and deliver much needed humanitarian assistance to the affected population. The first part of the convoy took place on 18 October, delivering food, medical and other humanitarian supplies for almost 30,000 people in four besieged locations (Zabadani and Madaya in Rural Damascus, and Foah and Kefraya in Idleb) through simultaneous and carefully coordinated cross-line and cross-border access. Intense coordination and negotiations are still ongoing to conduct the subsequent convoys to deliver additional supplies to all four locations. The last time WFP reached Madaya was at the beginning of 2014, while Foah and Kefraya were last reached in March 2015. This was the first time that WFP had access to Zabadani.

Compounding fighting and displacement, food prices continue to increase as a result of reduced food production and market disruption, further compromising access to food for the poorest households. During the first half of the year, for example, the nominal price of rice increased by 54 percent, while that of wheat flour went up by 38 percent. A record upsurge in the price of fuel was also noted (50 percent), which resulted in higher energy costs for farmers, transporters, mills, bakeries and ultimately



households. Overall, according to recent assessments, the cost of a standard food basket is now three times more expensive when compared to pre-crisis levels. As the income levels have remained stagnant, the purchasing power of ordinary Syrian households has been dramatically eroded, limiting their ability to meet the most basic needs. As a result, a growing number of families are resorting to irreversible negative coping strategies which further compromise their food security and will have long-term consequences.

## WFP RESPONSE

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### Overall achievements and challenges

In September, WFP delivered food assistance to more than 4 million people in 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates, accomplishing 95 percent of its monthly plan, through a combination of regular, cross-border and cross-line deliveries. In areas affected by bread shortages, assistance included wheat flour which was either provided directly to the beneficiaries in rural areas, or channelled to bakeries for bread production in urban areas where beneficiaries are less likely to have access to baking facilities.

The presence of radical armed groups continued to prevent all planned deliveries to some 550,000 targeted beneficiaries in the north-eastern provinces of Deir Ezzor and Ar-Raqqa. In parallel, persisting insecurity and access restrictions prevented the provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable families in high conflict areas of the country, including in Rural Damascus, and rural parts of Homs, Hama, Idleb and Aleppo governorates.

Amidst escalating fighting and growing humanitarian needs across the country, WFP re-allocated the food supplies that were unable to reach their original intended destinations, due to insecurity and access constraints, to assist the newly displaced families in other areas of the country. In September, food assistance was re-allocated for almost 100,000 people were delivered to partners in Hama governorate, which recorded large numbers of new arrivals over the past five months from hotspot locations within the governorate as well as from neighbouring Idleb. Likewise, partners working in Lattakia and Tartous governorates received additional food rations for over 52,000 people following the recent influx of new arrivals from Hama, Idleb and Aleppo governorates. Similarly, Aleppo governorate received additional food rations for 50,000 people as the number of people in need of critical assistance has outgrown the plan, forcing partners to provide assistance on a rotational basis to ensure minimum levels of assistance to all those in need.

### Deliveries to hard-to-reach Areas

Assistance provided during the month of September

included food supplies for over 750,000 people living in high-conflict areas of the country subject to access challenges, delivered through a combination of cross-border and cross-line deliveries.

Cross-border operations from Turkey and Jordan accounted for 17 percent of the total quantities dispatched by WFP during the reporting period, with supplies for over 690,000 people delivered in Idleb, Aleppo, Hama Dar'a and Quneitra governorates. Over the first half of the months, deliveries from Jordan and Turkey experienced minor delays owing to security issues affecting the border crossings, which caused the temporary suspension of the operations.

WFP assistance for almost 62,000 people was delivered across the lines of conflict during September. This includes assistance for approximately 40,000 people living in opposition-held areas of Al-Houle delivered through two inter-agency missions facilitated by WFP Logistics Cluster on 22 and 29 September. In addition through coordination with local partners, WFP provided assistance to more than 21,500 people in opposition-held areas of Rural Damascus and rural Hama.

### Deliveries through Nusaybin corridor

Food deliveries to AL Hasakeh through the Nusaybin border crossing was affected in September, due to delays in obtaining approvals and insecurity in the areas surrounding the crossing point. In spite of these delays, WFP was able to provide food assistance to beneficiaries in Al Hasakeh using food stocks delivered in August.

## Nutrition Programme

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Amidst reports of alarming malnutrition levels in the country, WFP has progressively introduced specialised support programmes for beneficiary groups with specific nutrition requirements and therefore more vulnerable to the risk of food insecurity.

### Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme

Under the blanket supplementary feeding programme, young children under the age of five receive supplementary feeding products such as Nutributter (6-23 months) and Plumpy'Doz (6-59 months) to prevent malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. In September, WFP provided specialized nutrition support to almost 186,000 young children, out of a planned 240,000. Of these over 65,000 children in high conflict areas of Idleb, Aleppo and Hama were reached through cross-border operations from Turkey, while the remaining children were assisted through in-country deliveries to Aleppo, Homs, Lattakia, Hama and Tartous. Achievements fell below planned due to a combination of access constraints and partners' capacity issues affecting in-country and cross-border operations in Rural Damascus, Dar'a and Idleb governorates.

## Voucher-based nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women (PLW)

WFP continued to provide food vouchers to pregnant and lactating women in Latakia and Homs to enable them to purchase locally produced fresh products and improve their dietary diversity and micronutrient intake. During the month of September, more than 4,800 women received food vouchers in both governorates. Meanwhile, efforts are underway to expand the coverage of this activity to other parts of the country. Accordingly, WFP teams conducted a market assessment in Al-Hasakeh, to explore the feasibility of the voucher scheme in the governorate. In parallel, initiatives were put in place to identify suitable retailers to support the launch of the activity Tartous and Aleppo governorates, where market assessments have been already conducted over the past months. To date, WFP voucher transfers have injected over US\$1.1 million into the local economy, yielding benefits for local actors along the food value chain.

## SCHOOL FEEDING

The School Feeding programme resumed in regular primary schools with the start of the 2015/2016 academic school year on 13 September, with plans to reach over 300,000 primary schools children in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Tartous and Al-Hasakeh governorate by the end of the year. In September, approximately 200,000 children have been reached with 185 mt of date bars in the targeted governorates. The operations were slowed down due to security related access restrictions in parts of Rural Damascus as well as delays in obtaining the necessary approvals for Aleppo and parts of Rural Damascus. In addition, the school feeding activities were temporarily put on hold in Al-Hasakeh following disagreement between Kurdish and Government authorities over the curriculum to be adopted by primary schools in the governorate. The programme will resume once the issue has been resolved.

WFP initiated the procurement of a trial batch of 20 mt of fortified date bars from a selected Syrian supplier in September, which are expected to be available for distribution in Rural Damascus in November. WFP's local purchasing initiative aims at establishing a reliable and cost-effective supply chain, while injecting resources into the local economy and contributing to the creation of new employment and income opportunities for the local population. The current trial contract will inject approximately USD 50,000 into the local economy.

## INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

The Food Security and Agriculture Sector established a Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of 12 food security expert. The TWG met in Beirut on 7-8 September

to share preliminary findings of the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) conducted in May-June 2015, and prepare Sector level inputs for the 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The HNO report provides the wider humanitarian community in Syria with a shared understanding of the crisis, including the most pressing humanitarian needs and the estimated number of people in need of assistance, and will form the basis of next year response planning. Subsequently, on 14-15 September, an inter-sector Whole of Syria HNO workshop was held in Jordan, with the participation of more than 130 members from different sectors were present. Following the workshop, a draft HNO document was circulated to all sectors to provide feedback, while the final document is expected to be available by mid-October.

Following the inter-sector HNO workshop, a food security sector meeting was organized on 26 September in Damascus to update partners on the findings. In addition, during this meeting, WFP presented the preliminary findings of the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), which found that the food security situation in Syria has now reached worrying proportions, as one third of the population is food insecure and more than half of the population is at risk of slipping into food insecurity. The CFSVA analysis of the findings are currently being finalized and a final report is expected to be shared in October.

## FUNDING

So far in 2015, WFP has received 50 percent of its funding requirements for the year. Resource shortfalls and late funding arrival have forced 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.

Starting in late September and through October, strong advocacy efforts combined with the international focus on the Syrian refugee crisis have prompted donors to step up to WFPs call for assistance. WFP has received a generous response from Switzerland, UK, ECHO, Canada, Austria, Switzerland and France who provided contributions amounting to USD 99 million. WFP is grateful for this support, which will enable operational requirements to be covered until mid- February 2016.

WFP continues to appeal for timely donor support to ensure that commodities arrive in time to meet operational requirements and ensure sustained assistance to beneficiaries in the coming months. For the February-March 2016 period, WFP requires USD 73 million by the end of November to avert food gaps starting in February.