

SYRIA

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY UNREST IN SYRIA

May 2016



WFP/ Hussam Al Saleh

HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP provided food assistance for more than 4 million people, achieving 100 percent of its monthly plan
- 26 percent of WFPs food assistance was delivered to areas subject to various access restrictions, including to hard-to-reach and besieged locations
- WFP launched two new livelihood and resilience projects in relative stable areas of the country

In numbers

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

Funding update

WFP is optimistic that recent pledges made by various Donors will be confirmed in time to enable uninterrupted humanitarian assistance to the four million people each month who rely on WFP.

SITUATION UPDATE

During the last week of May, ISIL launched a large-scale offensive from territories east of A'zaz and Bab Al Salam crossing point (BAS) in northern Aleppo governorate, rapidly seizing control of several villages and arriving within approximately 2 km of A'zaz town. The advance is putting at risk 165,000 IDPs living in A'zaz and camps adjacent to the Turkish borders, the majority of which sought refuge in this area as a result of fighting that erupted in early 2016. According to Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), 16,150 people have been displaced from affected areas to date. The majority of the newly displaced people arrived in camps located to the west of A'zaz along the Turkish borders, while fewer moved to Daret Azza sub-district, south of Afrin, as well as A'zaz city. In anticipation of a possible take-over of A'zaz by ISIL forces, WFP partners distributed their prepositioned food rations sufficient for almost 30,000 people at the end of May in order to avoid possible food losses should ISIL take over the city. Additional ready-to-eat food rations for 40,000 newly displaced people are currently being delivered through BAS to A'zaz, which are being prioritized to the most vulnerable IDPs.

The deteriorating security situation along the Castello Road, the only access route to eastern Aleppo city, continued to be extremely critical, posing major threats of access disruption during the reporting period as the area witnessed heavy clashes and a significant increase in military activity. In late May for instance, two trucks of WFP's cooperating partners were caught in direct fire, highlighting the extremely volatile situation along the road. Consequently, the movement of humanitarian supplies is becoming increasingly difficult, resulting in delays in WFP's efforts to continue to preposition food assistance for 117,000 in eastern Aleppo city in anticipation of access disruptions. By the end of May, WFP was able to preposition food assistance for 88,700 people, while the remaining food assistance for 28,300 people will be prepositioned in eastern Aleppo city once the security situation along Castello road improves.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched a military offensive during the last week of May from the Tishreen Dam area in north-eastern Aleppo governorate in a bid to take control of Menbij city, under ISIL control since the beginning of 2014. According to informed sources, some 20,000 people have been displaced from affected areas to date, while an additional 216,000 people could be at risk of displacement in the Menbij area if further gains are made in coming weeks. Humanitarian actors, including WFP, have increased concerns as the operational environment to provide life-saving humanitarian services has become highly restrictive and accessing vulnerable communities on the move is

critical. At this point, WFP continues to closely monitor the situation in order to be able to provide food assistance once access to the area opens up.

WFP RESPONSE

Overall Achievements

WFP delivered food assistance for more than 4 million people in 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates in May, achieving 100 percent of its monthly plan. Of this, more than 845,000 people in opposition-held areas in Aleppo, Idleb, Hama, Dar'a, and Quneitra were reached through cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan, representing 21 percent of the total food assistance delivered in May. In addition, cross-line and airdrop deliveries to besieged and hard-to-reach areas amounted to five percent of the total deliveries, supporting some 210,000 people in five different locations



Joint Humanitarian Convoys to Besieged and Hard-to-Reach Locations

WFP reached four hard-to-reach and besieged locations in Homs and Rural Damascus governorates in May through a series of five inter-agency convoys, providing life-saving food assistance for almost 110,000 people. Despite this achievement, humanitarian assistance to hard-to-reach and besieged areas during the reporting period has seen a slowed pace compared to previous months, as several convoys could not proceed as planned due to enormous access challenges and increasing insecurity on the ground.

WFP was able to successfully deliver food and wheat flour assistance for 10,000 people to the besieged town of East Harasta in Rural Damascus governorate for the first time since 2012. WFP staff members who accompanied the convoy reported that many households do not have adequate access to food, resulting in cases of malnutrition in the area. Most people are therefore required to adopt

extreme coping strategies in order to deal with the dire situation, ranging from reducing or skipping meals to selling valuable assets. Elsewhere in the governorate, in the hard-to-reach town of Qudsaya, WFP provided food and wheat flour assistance for 25,000 people as well as nutrition products for the prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition in children, for the first time since April 2015.

In the central governorate of Homs, WFP delivered fortified wheat flour assistance for 71,000 people to the hard-to-reach area of Al-Houle. Although this was the second time WFP was able to reach the location since the beginning of 2016, the humanitarian situation in the area is still very critical due to severe access restrictions and limited agriculture activities. In addition, through two consecutive joint humanitarian convoys, WFP delivered food assistance for 3,250 people to the hard-to-reach town of Qaryatein, which had been under ISIL control until early April this year.

Airdrop Deliveries to Deir Ezzor City

WFP started conducting emergency high altitude airdrops to the besieged parts of Deir Ezzor city in early April, which has been inaccessible via land since March 2014 due to a siege imposed by ISIL militants. To date, WFP has delivered 830 metric tons¹ of food commodities to the city through 51 airdrop rotations. The quantities airdropped so far are sufficient to provide 41 kg to all the households registered by SARC (an estimated 100,000 people). However, for operational reasons, commodities have been dropped in different quantities and consequently it is not a full food basket for all families. Hence, ongoing airdrops are being used to top up and diversify the food rations until all families have received a complete ration and then continue with the delivery of the second monthly ration and non-food items.



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CHALLENGES

The delivery of WFP food assistance to Al-Hasakeh governorate has not been possible since late December 2015, due to interrupted access through border crossing points surrounding the governorate. Consequently, WFP stocks of monthly general food rations in the governorate have now been completely exhausted, which prevented the delivery of food assistance for a planned 275,000 people during the month of May. However, limited amount of ready-to-eat rations that are left in the governorate are being carefully prioritized to meet the most urgent food needs of the most vulnerable people. As a result, WFP was able to provide ready-to-eat rations for 10,630 people who are staying in IDP shelters in the cities of Qamishly and Al-Hasakeh during the reporting period, leaving stocks of ready-to-eat food rations for only 5,420 people in the governorate to date.



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NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Prevention of Acute Malnutrition and Micronutrient Deficiencies

Under the Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme, launched in March 2013, WFP provides specialized nutrition products to children aged 6-59 months in order to prevent acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. During the month of May, WFP provided assistance to more than 132,000 children, or 55 percent of the monthly plan, through both regular and cross-line deliveries. Achievements fell below planned levels as cross-border deliveries of nutrition products to opposition-held areas in northern Syria were affected by international procurement delays, which are expected to affect the programme in June as well.

¹ Please note that the indicated tonnage is a preliminary figure based on the day's rotations. This figure is subject to reconciliation once all cargo has been received on the ground and potential damages ascertained.

Cash Based Transfers for Pregnant and Lactating Women

Recognizing the high risk of malnutrition amongst pregnant and lactating women (PLW), WFP launched a cash-based-transfer support programme for PLW in July 2014 in order to improve the dietary diversity of this vulnerable group. Eligible women receive cash-based-transfers worth USD 20 which enable them to purchase fresh products like dairy and meat from selected retailers. During the reporting period, WFP provided cash-based transfers to almost 8,500 PLW, achieving 97 percent of the monthly plan. In addition, in efforts to further expand the programme, WFP signed an agreement with a new cooperating partner in Lattakia governorate, which will enable WFP to reach an additional 2,400 PLWs by the end of 2016.

FORTIFIED SCHOOL SNACKS PROGRAMME

In collaboration with UNICEF and the Syrian Ministry of Education, WFP has been implementing a Fortified School Snacks programme in Syria since August 2014, providing pre-primary and primary school aged children with fortified date bars during school days. During the reporting period, WFP distributed fortified date bars for almost 65,000 children in approximately 220 elementary schools across 3 governorates. However, achievements fell below planned levels due to operational constraints and quality related issues, which forced WFP to scale down the programme in light of the start of the summer holidays at the end of May. Stocks of fortified date bars will be stored in temperature-controlled warehouses during the summer holiday until the academic year will resume in September.

LIVELIHOOD AND RESILIENCE

As part of its overall efforts to support 500,000 people through livelihood and resilience activities in areas of relative stability inside the country, WFP launched two new projects during the reporting period, bringing the total number of projects to four. Activities are currently implemented in six different governorates in cooperation with a diverse group of partners, including NGOs, UN agencies, and respective line ministries and directorates

The first project is implemented in Tartous governorate and aims to restore livelihoods for vegetable producers after a snowstorm in early 2015 damaged their greenhouses. During the reporting period, WFP provided food rations for 13,500 affected households, as the distribution of plastic sheets to restore the greenhouses was finalized in April. The project also calls for the distribution of seeds and agricultural training, which is currently being conducted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The second project is designed to provide early recovery support to 1,500 families on food security and livelihoods in Al-Hasakeh governorate, benefitting a total of 7,500 people. The project aims to strengthen agricultural production, improve knowledge and practices of farmers, support household food diversification, and address the urgent food needs of households during the lean season. In light of these objectives, during the reporting period, WFPs implementing partner facilitated a series of eleven capacity building sessions for identified farmer families on home gardening, livestock care and management as well as household-level dairy production.

In addition, in efforts to further expand livelihoods and resilience interventions, WFP launched a new programme together with the Federation of Agriculture in order to put in place a long-term community-managed profitable beekeeping industry. The project will establish bee colonies in 2,100 beehives, train up to 700 local beekeepers and enhance the coordination among beekeeping associations, in order to support local economies and build resilience in Rural Damascus, Homs, Hama, Lattakia and Tartous governorates.

Lastly, WFP launched a new project in Hama governorate in cooperation with the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). This project will target 1,470 households (benefitting 7,350 people) by creating employment opportunities for targeted households in order to strengthen local food production and processing systems. The project will provide agriculture inputs and training on integrated water resource management, agro-processing and dairy products as well as home and kitchen gardens, while targeted households will also receive food assistance for a period of six months.



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FUNDING

WFP welcomes the significant contributions and support provided by its donors, in particular sizeable pledges made during the February 2016 London Conference. This has enabled WFP to distribute a full food basket with no reductions in ration sizes in May for the first time since the outbreak of crisis in 2011. WFP is optimistic that these pledges will be confirmed in time to enable uninterrupted humanitarian assistance to the four million people each month who rely on WFP.



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