

Food distributions in east Aleppo city bring slightly better food security

Key points:



Food security has improved slightly in east Aleppo city in line with better access to humanitarian assistance.



Following WFP distributions, lower prices were registered in east Aleppo city despite limited food availability.



Severe water shortages are undermining the food security of households in Damascus, rural Damascus and Aleppo city.



Situation Update

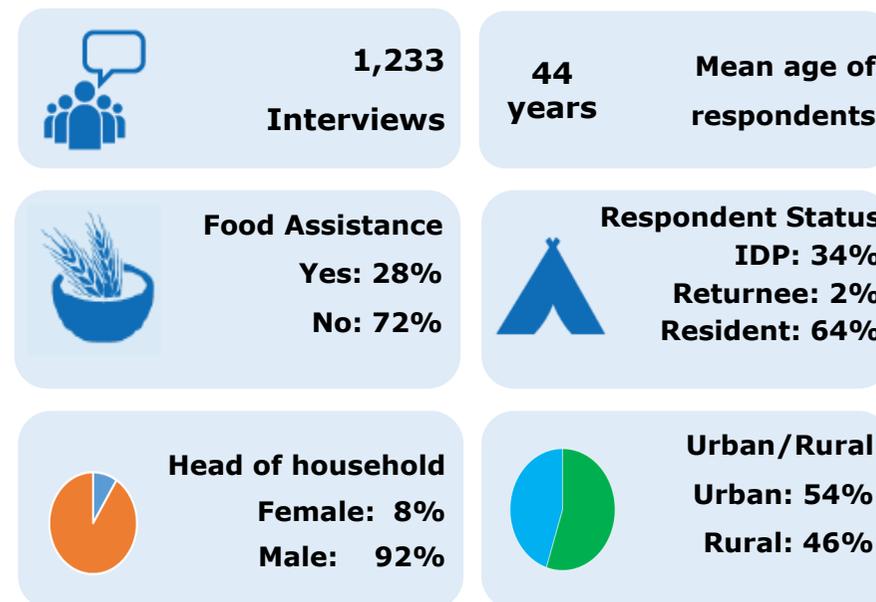
As the offensive in east Aleppo city (EAC) escalated, 36,000 people were evacuated to Idleb and western rural Aleppo between 15 and 22 December. An estimated 90,500 others were displaced to different locations inside Aleppo city. Most of those displaced are living in private houses, while a small proportion remain in the Jibreen collective shelter as the Mahalej pass-site was closed on 25 December. Following months of siege, on 19 December the UN Security Council unanimously approved a resolution urging the immediate deployment of UN monitors to EAC. The resolution also demanded that all parties allow unconditional and immediate access for the UN and its partners to deliver humanitarian assistance and medical care.

Access to food in EAC remains restricted by limited income sources, extreme shortages of water, and the weak market system and network. IDPs and the most vulnerable households are mainly dependent on food assistance provided by WFP and other humanitarian organizations. This assistance includes bread bundles, ready-to-eat rations, food parcels and bulk food for communal kitchens.

Communities in Damascus and rural Damascus are facing severe water shortages because of the escalation of conflict in Wadi Barada. This will negatively impact the food security of poor and vulnerable displaced households in Damascus, who also have to contend with limited electricity and fuel

Source: UNHCR, OCHA and WFP

Fig. 1. Sample Household characteristics





Household food security improves in Aleppo city

In December, a better food consumption score (FCS) was registered in accessible areas of Syria, in Aleppo city, and in hard-to-reach areas in Homs and Hama. By contrast, FCS fell in hard-to-reach areas in Al-Hasakeh, rural Damascus and southern areas, and in besieged parts of rural Damascus. As shown in Figure 2, the biggest drop in FCS was for households living in hard-to-reach areas of Al-Hasakeh and for those in southern hard-to-reach areas. This deterioration could be linked to the lean season and the recent influx of Iraqi refugees fleeing violence in Mosul, who have sought refuge in Al-Hasakeh governorate. As of 5 January, about 11,900 Iraqi refugees have arrived at the camp in eastern Al-Hasakeh governorate. The FCS deterioration in Rural Damascus might be linked to the severe water shortages faced by households due to the escalation of conflict in Wadi Barada valley which is the main water supply of the governorate.

The prevalence of households with inadequate food consumption in Aleppo city fell from 48 percent in November to 37 percent in December, with more households moving into the acceptable food consumption group. However, despite better access to staple foods, dietary diversity remains poor among IDPs in Aleppo city: these households are consuming dairy products, vegetables and pulses every other day, and proteins and fruit less than twice a week.

In Aleppo city, 77 percent of households reported purchasing as their main source of food, with 20 percent citing food assistance. However, according to key informants in EAC, food assistance is the main and – sometimes the only – source of food for the majority of displaced households.

December mVAM data also indicate a slight improvement in the food consumption of IDPs across surveyed locations: 57 percent of displaced households reported unacceptable food consumption compared to 64 percent in November. By contrast, inadequate food consumption increased for resident households, with 38 percent reporting poor or borderline food consumption compared to 30 percent in November. This is in line with the lean season, the ongoing deterioration of the purchasing power and the increase prices which add more constraints for many resident households in accessible areas

Figure 2: Mean FCS by aggregated district, November–December 2016

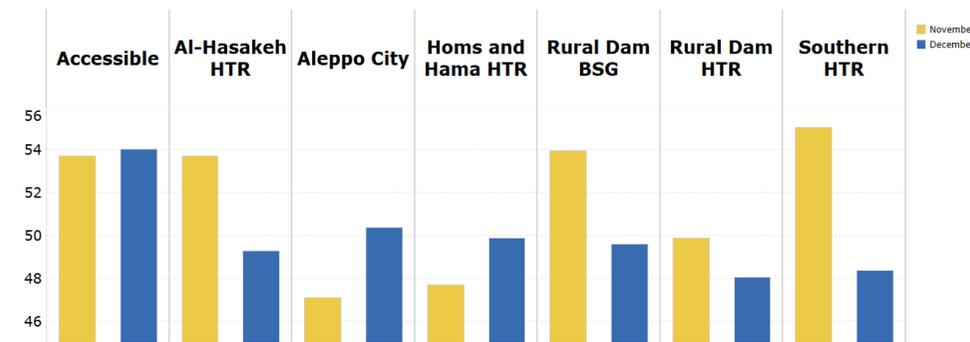


Figure 3: Households with inadequate food consumption in Aleppo City and accessible areas, November–December 2016

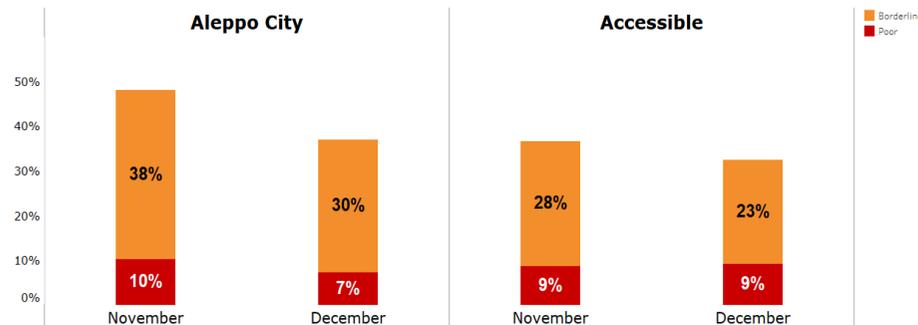
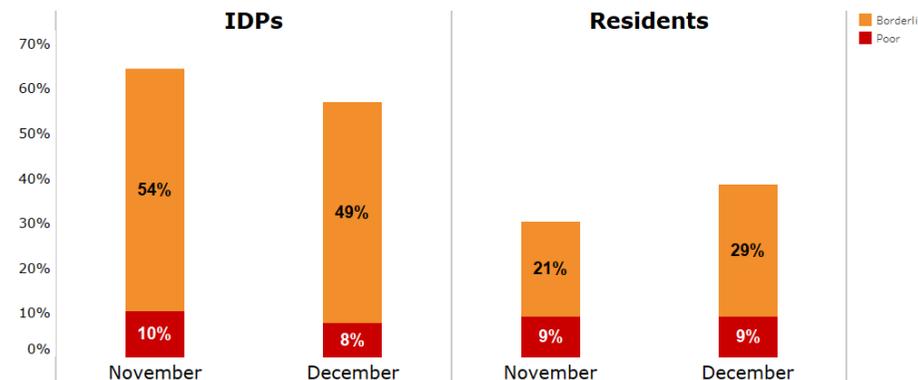


Figure 4: Inadequate food consumption for IDP and resident households, November– December 2016





Use of irreversible negative coping strategies falls slightly in Aleppo

In almost all surveyed locations, the mean reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) increased in December, especially in southern hard-to-reach areas (from 15 to 21) and in hard-to-reach parts of Al-Hasakeh (from 16.5 to 18.2). This can be attributed to intensified fighting and displacement that negatively affected food security situation in Dar'a. The only exception to this trend was Aleppo city, where the mean rCSI fell from 13.7 in November to 12.1 in December.

In EAC, key informants reported that many displaced and returnee households were selling their assets to purchase food during the siege. However, despite the severe situation, key informants reported decreasing in resorting to irreversible coping mechanisms following the improvement in the humanitarian access and the distributions of food assistance

In all surveyed locations, more than 80 percent of respondents reported engaging in at least one negative coping strategy in December. This percentage has notably increased in Homs and Hama hard-to-reach areas where 92 percent of households reported using negative coping mechanisms in comparison with 79 percent in November

As Figure 7 shows, IDP respondents had a higher mean rCSI (24.7) than residents (15.2) in December. Mean rCSI was the highest for households who had been displaced for between 3 and 6 months. The indicator was lower for those who had been displaced for less than 3 months. The lowest recorded among IDPs with more than one year as their situation will be relatively more stable including finding income sources, renting a house and receiving food assistance and lower still for those displaced for over one year.

Figure 5: Mean rCSI, September–December 2016

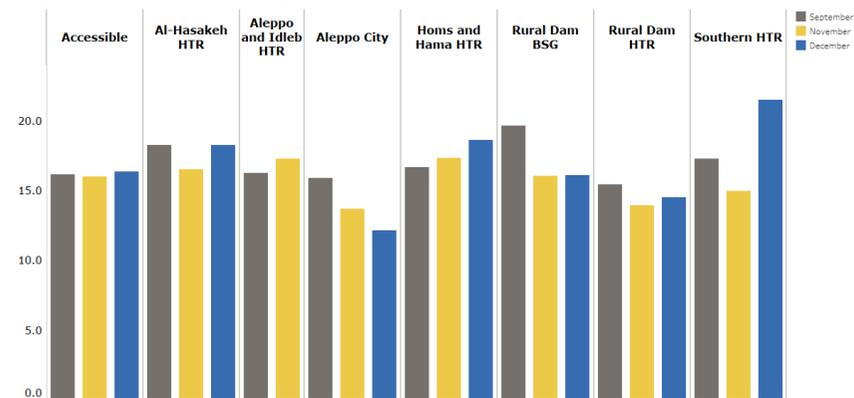


Figure 6: Households engaging in at least one negative coping mechanism, November–December 2016

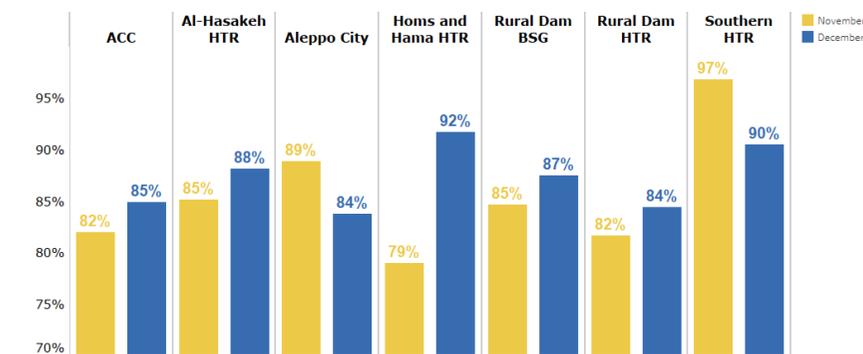


Figure 7: Mean rCSI vs. household status and length of displacement, December 2016





Lower prices in EAC despite limited food availability

Although food availability is limited in EAC and market functionality is restricted, food prices fell significantly in December. Figure 8 traces the retail price of rice, reflecting the positive impact of WFP food assistance and lower pressure on markets due to more supplies through humanitarian assistance. Market monitoring data indicate slightly better food availability, but the prices of main foods remain unaffordable for most poor and vulnerable displaced households. As such, many staple foods continue to be inaccessible in the markets. A kilo of rice was sold at SYP1,000 in December, 50 percent less than in November but still 122 percent higher compared to six months ago and twice as expensive as in west Aleppo city.

In most besieged locations including Madaya, Deir-ez-Zor and east Ghouta, food prices are gradually increasing, reflecting the lean season, the limited availability of fuel and the increasing dependency on markets.

In Deir-ez-Zor city, traders managed to move and sell limited food supplies from the rural side, which had a small positive impact on food availability in markets. Rice was reportedly selling at SYP 1,000/kg during December, up 5 percent compared November but still 20 percent lower than six months ago. The prices of foods that are being distributed as food assistance, mainly rice and sugar, are lower than those of other staples because of decreased demand.

Figure 8: Retail price of rice (SYP/kg) in Deir-ez-Zor and east Aleppo city, January-December 2016

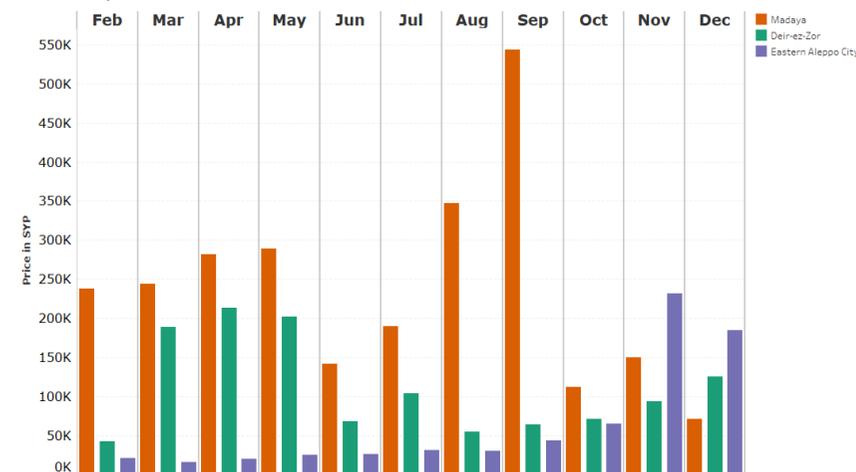


Food basket costs increase and key informants are concerned over the limited availability of bread

In December, the cost of the standard food basket fell notably in EAC to SYP 184,800 – 20 percent lower than November. The cost dropped by 52 percent in Madaya reaching SYP71. By contrast, the food basket became more expensive in Deir-ez-Zor city, up 33 percent compared to November. However, it is still 42 percent cheaper than before the airdrops.

Key informants in EAC voiced particular concerns over the devastation of buildings, markets and infrastructure, as well as the lack of water and electricity. Many interviewed households said they feel safer thanks to WFP assistance, affirming “[we are] no more struggling to find a piece of bread for our children” – although EAC bakeries are still struggling to function. In Madaya and Az-Zabadani, the unavailability of fresh bread has been an increasing problem since February because bakeries have been severely disrupted and there is a lack of wheat and fuel.

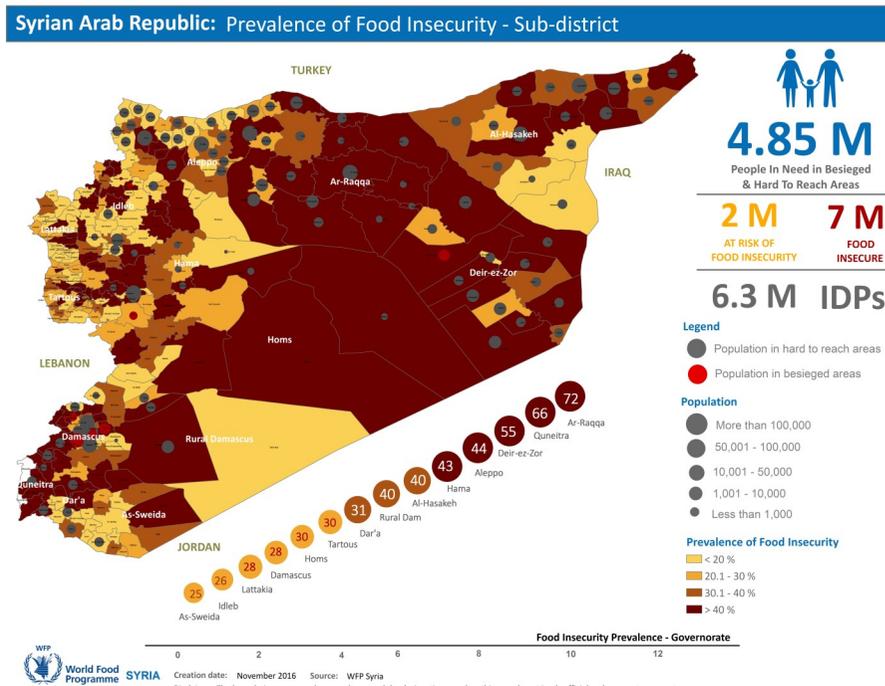
Figure 9: Cost of standard food basket in besieged areas, February– December 2016



Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via telephone interviews in December from both key informants and households. The telephone numbers called were generated using random-digit dialling, yielding 1,223 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/
Blog: mvam.org
Toolkit: <http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM>



vam
food security analysis