

SYRIA

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY UNREST IN SYRIA

JUNE 2016



WFP/ Welmoed Korteweg

HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP provided food assistance to more than 4.1 million people
- More than 342,000 people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas received WFP food assistance through inter-agency convoys
- The UN, including WFP, has now reached all 18 besieged areas inside Syria at least once
- WFP initiated airlifts to Al Hasakeh governorate in early July

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

Northern Governorates

The Syrian Democratic Forces' (SDF) major offensive in northeastern Aleppo governorate continued during the reporting period, seizing more than 100 villages and towns from ISIL. Reports indicate that the SDF has now encircled Menbij town and surrounding villages, potentially cutting off all escape routes for civilians living inside the town. Since the beginning of the offensive, it is estimated that some 47,000 civilians have been displaced as a result of the escalation of violence in Menbij sub-district, most of whom appeared to have remained within the area. However, some 17,000 people fled to other ISIL controlled areas of Jarablus, Ghandora, Maskana and Al-Bab as well as to IDP camps in opposition-held areas in A'zaz. In the latter area, WFP continued to provide emergency humanitarian assistance through its cross-border partners operating from Turkey, providing ready-to-eat rations (RTE) to 1,750 civilians who were displaced from Menbij sub-district in June. An additional 38,250 people, who were previously displaced a result of an ISIL offensive on A'zaz sub-district in April and May, received RTEs in the same area. However, in Menbij sub-district, WFP was unable to provide emergency food assistance due to the highly restrictive operational environment in the area. WFP continues to monitor the situation closely in order to provide assistance once access opens up.

In parallel, in northern Aleppo governorate, heavy fighting along the Castello road, the only access route into eastern Aleppo, intensified during the reporting period, putting civilians at risk of death and injury and causing damage to schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. Although June distributions in eastern Aleppo city continued as planned during the reporting period, recurrent access interruptions were encountered; hence, WFP could only preposition limited amounts of the planned 20,000 food rations (for 100,000 people) under the August cycle.

Furthermore, at the beginning of July, heavy clashes along the road further intensified after Syrian Government forces seized territory overlooking Castello road in Aleppo's northern countryside, effectively putting the road within direct firing range of Government forces. WFP is extremely concerned at the unfolding situation, as 300,000 people who remain inside eastern Aleppo city are now at risk of being completely cut off from humanitarian access.

Central Governorates

Due to the escalation of violence in Idlib at the beginning of June, some 15,000 people were displaced from the city, of whom most were forced to seek refuge in open fields or with host families in northern Idlib governorate. In response, WFP provided ready-to-eat food rations for 10,000 newly displaced civilians through its cross-border partners operating from southern Turkey in order to cover the needs of the people during the initial days of their displacement.

Southern Governorates

Humanitarian deliveries through the Ar Ramtha crossing point at the Jordanian border have been suspended since 21 June, following a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack that took place near a camp for Syrian refugees in the area where the borders of Iraq, Syria and Jordan intersect, killing six Jordanian soldiers and injuring another 14. Although the suspension did not affect WFP's cross-border deliveries from Jordan under the June cycle, it is likely to have an impact on July deliveries if the border does not reopen quickly. All humanitarian activities in the area known as the 'Berm' (Jordan's north eastern border with Syria), where an estimated 70,000 Syrians are stranded, have been suspended. Prior to the suspension, WFP was providing assistance to more than 35,000 registered Syrians at the Berm with two-week food parcels through its office in Jordan. WFP is very concerned about the humanitarian situation and continues to monitor the situation in order to provide assistance once access opens up.

WFP RESPONSE

WFP delivered food assistance to more than 4.1 million people in 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates in June, achieving 104 percent of the plan. WFP was able to reach a higher number of people than planned due to increased access to hard to reach and besieged areas across the country (see Inter-Agency convoys to Hard-to-Reach and Besieged Areas for details).

Cross-border deliveries

Food assistance for more than 789,000 people was delivered by cross-border partners operating from Turkey and Jordan to opposition-held areas in Aleppo, Idlib Hama and Dar'a, representing 19 percent of the overall deliveries.

In addition, WFP started to support 51 bakeries in opposition-held areas in Idlib governorate, in order to complement the response provided by other humanitarian actors operating in the area. WFP envisions supporting these bakeries for a period of three months by channeling wheat flour to the bakeries, which will provide subsidized bread for an estimated 800,000 people on a monthly basis.



Inter-Agency convoys to Hard-to-Reach and Besieged Areas

During the month of June, WFP provided life-saving food assistance to more than 342,000 people living in 21 hard to reach and besieged areas in Rural Damascus, Homs and Aleppo governorates through 13 Logistics Cluster facilitated inter-agency convoys. This represents a three-fold increase compared to May, when 110,000 people were assisted in four locations.

During the reporting period, WFP delivered life-saving food assistance for 2,400 people in the besieged town of Darayya in Rural Damascus, for the first time since 2012. WFP staff who accompanied the convoy reported that agricultural activity is extremely limited in the area as lands are no longer accessible to farmers due to the prolonged armed conflict and unavailability of inputs, forcing people to adopt extreme coping strategies to cope with the severe humanitarian situation.

In addition, at the end of June, WFP reached the besieged locations of Arbin and Zamalka in the Eastern Ghouta region in Rural Damascus, providing food assistance for 20,000 people for the first time since 2012. With the completion of this inter-agency convoy, the UN, including WFP, has been able to reach all 18 besieged areas inside Syria at least once with life-saving humanitarian assistance since the beginning of the year, noting that Yarmouk in Damascus is served by UNRWA.



Airdrops to Deir Ezzor

Since the airdrop operation in Deir Ezzor city started at the beginning of April, WFP has completed 62 airdrop rotations, successfully delivering 1,004 metric tons¹ of food commodities, including chickpeas, beans, rice, as well as vegetable oil, lentils, bulgur wheat, salt and sugar. With rotation 45, which took place on 1 June, sufficient quantities had been airdropped to provide each of the 18,000 households registered by SARC with 41 kg of food commodities.

The special operation was initially planned for a period of three months. However, in light of the dire humanitarian situation amongst the population, as well as the time required to complete all planned flights, the operation has been extended for an additional two and a half months, until 31 July this year.

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. Subsequently, WFP ran out of stocks of general food rations in March and ready-to-eat rations in June, and no distributions have taken place since then.

WFP commences airlift operation to bring much needed humanitarian assistance to Al Hasakeh governorate

In light of the protracted inability to deliver food assistance to Al Hasakeh governorate, WFP initiated an airlift operation to Qamishly city from Damascus airport, which commenced on 9 July. Over the course of one month, WFP plans to conduct 25 rotations to Qamishly city in order to deliver 1,000 metric tons of urgently needed humanitarian cargo including food, nutrition supplies, medicines and other relief items on behalf of other humanitarian organizations, including WFP assistance for some 74,000 people. Food distributions will be conducted by WFP's partners on the ground in coordination with local relief committees in 35 distribution points around the governorate covering rural and urban areas, prioritizing the most vulnerable civilians, including a small number of Iraqi refugees. The Logistics Cluster is coordinating the airlifts with technical assistance from the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS).

In addition, deliveries to Ar-Raqqa governorate remained impossible due to the presence of ISIL. Food originally allocated to this governorate was redirected to areas witnessing the arrival of newly displaced people, or where needs exceeded the plan. Consequently, in June, partners operating in Tartous, Idleb, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs and Dar'a governorates received additional food supplies in order to assist displaced families with urgently needed food assistance.

NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Prevention of Acute Malnutrition and Micronutrient Deficiencies

Through the blanket distribution of supplementary nutrition products, WFP aims to prevent acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in 240,000 children aged 6-59 months throughout Syria on a monthly basis. In June, WFP supported more than 102,000 children through both regular and cross-line deliveries, of which more than 3,000 children were assisted through inter-agency cross-line convoys in besieged and hard-to-reach areas in Rural Damascus, Homs and Aleppo governorates. However, achievements fell below planned levels as cross-border deliveries from Turkey of nutrition products have been affected by international procurement delays, which are expected to affect the programme in July as well.

¹ The tonnage indicated is a preliminary figure based on the day's rotation. The figure is subject to reconciliation once all cargo has been received on the ground and potential damages have been ascertained.

Cash Based Transfer for Pregnant and Lactating Women

WFP provides pregnant and lactating (PLW) women in Lattakia and Homs governorates with cash based transfers (CBT) worth USD20 each month in order to enable them to purchase locally produced fresh products from selected retailers. In June, WFP supported more than 9,000 PLWs with CBTs, achieving 97 percent of the monthly plan.

FORTIFIED SCHOOL SNACKS PROGRAMME

Following the start of the summer holidays in late May, the Fortified School Snacks Programme has been put on hold until the academic school year resumes in early September. In the meantime, stocks of fortified date bars will be stored in temperature controlled warehouses across the country.



LIVELIHOOD AND RESILIENCE

WFP currently implements four different livelihood and resilience activities throughout the country, providing assistance to 33,500 people across the country.

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 continued to support 2,700 targeted households in cooperation with a local partner and the Directorate of Agriculture. The distribution of plastic sheets to restore the green houses was finalized in April this year.

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 cooperating partner provided two community based sessions on vegetable production and gender.

In efforts to establish a long-term community-managed profitable beekeeping industry in Homs, Hama, Lattakia, Tartous and Rural Damascus governorates, WFP is implementing a project together with the Federation of Agriculture. This 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. During the reporting period, target areas in the governorates were identified while beneficiary list in Lattakia governorate were finalized.

Lastly, in Hama governorate, WFP is implementing a 'Road to Food Security' project together with the Aga Khan Foundation, which envisions to strengthen local food production and processing systems for 1,470 households (benefitting 7,350 people). During the reporting period, community groups were set up that were provided with training on the implementation of the activities. Furthermore, several food production toolkits and irrigation inputs were distributed to 530 households.

FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE CLUSTER

During the reporting period, the Food Security and Agriculture Sector facilitated a series of inter-agency discussion meetings with sector stakeholders with the objective to identify the areas that will require food assistance through joint humanitarian inter-agency cross-line convoys in July. Furthermore, coordination meetings were organized with partners from various hubs in Damascus, Al Hasakeh as well as in Turkey and Jordan in order to consolidate efforts to improve coordination on joint programming, household targeting and coverage areas.



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 June, after doing so for the first time in May since the outbreak of crisis in 2011. Through its internal advance financing mechanism, WFP will be able to loan enough funds against forecasted contributions to cover its operational needs up to the end of the year. This will enable WFP to provide undisrupted humanitarian assistance to four million people that are targeted each month with food assistance across the country.



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