

# SYRIA

## EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY UNREST IN SYRIA

March 2016



WFP/ Hussam Al Saleh

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 3.7 million people receive WFP food assistance
- WFP reaches Deir Ezzor city for the first time in two years by successfully airdropping dry food supplies for 4,300 besieged civilians in early April
- 143,000 civilians in eleven besieged and hard-to-reach locations receive WFP food assistance
- Food security in Al Hasakeh governorate further deteriorates as the protracted closure of the Nusaybin border crossing is preventing humanitarian assistance for 275,000 people in need.

### 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 requires USD 135 by the end of April in order to ensure operational continuity until the end of September.**



## SITUATION UPDATE

The Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) that came into effect on 27 February resulted in a significant de-escalation of fighting throughout the country between government forces and most of the opposition groups during the reporting period, albeit violations have occurred on all sides. The improved security situation resulted in fewer displacements in March compared to prior months.

### Aleppo Governorate

In northern rural Aleppo, however, intense clashes continued to take place between ISIL fighters, who are not party to the CoH, and opposition forces. Reports from the ground indicated that a significant number of people were displaced from the affected areas and sought refuge in rural areas between Azaz and Al-Raee, close to the Turkish border. Although official numbers are not yet available, more than 97,000 people have been displaced since early February within Aleppo governorate and nearby Idleb. In response, during March, WFP and its partners assisted over 90,000 recently displaced people.

### Dar'a Governorate

Similarly, in western rural Dar'a, fighting continued between radical armed groups and armed opposition groups. As a result, some 12,500 people, who were displaced from areas south of Nawa by the second half of March, sought refuge in nearby villages along the Jordanian border. In response, WFP distributed ready-to-eat rations for 4,400 displaced people to address their most immediate food needs in addition to ready-to-eat rations for more than 34,000 people, who had been displaced within the governorate during the past two months.

### Al Hasakeh Governorate

The protracted closure of the Nusaybin border crossing since the end of December 2015 is cutting the flow of humanitarian and commercial supplies, leading to food shortages and significant price increases. The average prices of the main food commodities have increased by more than 30 percent compared to December 2015, and in March 2016, the cost of an average food basket in Qamishly was 46 percent higher than in December 2015 and twice the price recorded in March last year. As a result, the most vulnerable families are reportedly adopting extreme coping strategies, such as begging, eating only one meal per day and drastically reducing the types of food consumed. WFP continues to advocate for the resumption of deliveries through Nusaybin or other available crossings to avert a further deterioration of an already dire humanitarian situation.

### Deir Ezzor Governorate

Following a failed attempt to successfully airdrop food commodities into the besieged areas of Deir Ezzor city in late February, WFP was able to conduct two successful airdrop operations at the beginning of April, airdropping dry food (rice, beans and chickpeas) through high altitude parachute airdrops for 4,300 people for one month. SARC successfully received the food supplies and has started the distribution.

This was the first time in two years that WFP food reached the besieged parts of Deir Ezzor city, where the food security situation of the up to 200,000 besieged civilians has reached alarming levels. According to a food security update issued in March 2016 by WFPs Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) unit, most of these civilians are consuming only one meal a day, consisting of bread, water and wild vegetables. Dairy products, vegetables and fruits are not available on the local market, and prices of other commodities are sold at prohibitive prices; rice and wheat are sold at prices that are respectively 643 percent and 146 percent, higher than in Damascus city according to WFP price monitoring data for February 2016.

WFP will continue its high altitude airdrop operation, and aims to start airdropping other food items (vegetable oil, salt, sugar, lentils, bulgur wheat) once the operation accuracy has been perfected.



## WFP RESPONSE

### Overall Achievements

In March, WFP delivered food assistance for 3.7 million people in 12 of the 14 Syrian governorates, achieving 93 percent of its monthly plan. Of this, more than 803,000 people in high conflict areas in Aleppo, Idleb, Hama, Dar'a, and Quneitra were reached through cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan, representing 22 percent of the total food assistance delivered in March. In addition, cross-line deliveries to besieged and hard-to-reach areas amounted to four percent of the total deliveries following access improvements after the Munich meeting in February.

In areas experiencing bread shortages or where milling and baking facilities have been compromised, WFP also provides fortified wheat flour. The flour is either distributed directly to beneficiaries or channeled to contracted bakeries to produce bread bundles then distributed to beneficiaries by WFP partners, while WFP covers production and transportation costs. This arrangement improves access to this staple food item for those families who do not have adequate access to the baking facilities and fuel they need to produce bread. In February, an average of 44,000 bread bundles were produced every day, meeting the daily needs of approximately 242,000 people.



### Joint Humanitarian Convoys to Besieged and Hard-to-Reach in Rural Damascus and Homs Governorates

WFP reached eleven hard-to-reach and besieged locations in both Rural Damascus and Homs governorates in March through a series of inter-agency cross-line convoys, providing life-saving food assistance for almost 143,000 people in need.

Through a series of two convoys, food assistance for more than 36,500 people was delivered to six locations in Kafr Batna district in Rural Damascus. Each family received one

monthly food ration as well as two bags of fortified wheat flour. Prior to this delivery, humanitarian assistance reached Kafr Batna sub-district at the end of February for the first time since the start of the siege in late 2012. The prolonged siege has resulted in dire humanitarian conditions leading to high levels of poverty and vulnerability among affected households.

Elsewhere in the governorate, in the hard-to-reach town of Bloudan, WFP delivered food rations for 35,000 people as well as 11 mt of nutrition supplies. The town, located 51 kilometers north-west of Damascus, was last reached by WFP in June 2015.

In northern rural Homs, WFP took part in two consecutive convoys to the Houle area, delivering food rations, wheat flour and nutrition supplies for 71,000 people living in five hard-to-reach locations in the area. Prior to these deliveries, the area was last reached with WFP assistance in June 2015, and had been witnessing a worsening food security situation attributed to a severe lack of food supplies due to an escalation in fighting in the nearby village of Hourbnafo in rural Hama that took place prior to the cessation of hostilities.



## CHALLENGES

Deliveries through Nusaybin border crossing have been suspended for over three months, as Turkish authorities have closed the border crossing since 27 December 2015 for security reasons. As a result, food for only one percent of the 275,000 targeted beneficiaries in Al Hasakeh could be dispatched to partners during the reporting period, and at the end of the month, WFP had only 3,460 ready-to-eat rations available that are carefully prioritized to respond to sudden displacements and meet the needs of IDPs at shelters and camps.



## NUTRITION PROGRAMME

### Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme

Under the Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme (BSFP), WFP dispatched supplementary nutrition products for more than 163,000 children aged 6-59 months through both regular and cross-line deliveries, achieving 68 percent of the plan to reach 240,000 children. Of these, more than 44,000 children were assisted through cross-line deliveries to Madaya, Zabadani, (Rural Damascus) and Al Houle (Homs), while the remaining 119,000 children were reached through regular deliveries to Homs, Lattakia, Aleppo, Hama, and Tartous governorates. Deliveries from Turkey were temporarily suspended in March due to production delays, resulting in a relative low achievement in deliveries implemented through cross-border.

### Cash Based Transfers for Pregnant and Lactating Women

More than 8,000 pregnant and lactating women received cash based transfer support during the reporting period to purchase locally produced fresh products from selected retailers in both Lattakia and Homs governorates, representing a 12 percent increase in the number of beneficiaries reached compared to last month. During the reporting period, the value of the CBT support provided to pregnant and lactating women was increased by 14 percent due to the devaluation of the Syrian pound against US dollar, which has adversely affected the purchasing power of the benefitting households.

## FORTIFIED SCHOOL SNACKS PROGRAMME

WFP provided fortified date bars for almost 207,000 children in schools in Rural Damascus, Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Tartous governorates during the reporting period, representing a seven percent decrease compared to last month's deliveries. This was due to concerns raised about the quality of date bars from one supplier. In response, WFP decided to suspend its agreement with the concerned supplier and is currently exploring other regional suppliers in order to meet the demand for the academic year of 2016-2017. Additionally, WFP is intensively exploring options to further enhance the local production of date bars, and in this regard, a food technologist is on mission to Syria to provide the necessary support for the programme.



WFP/ Syria

## LIVELIHOOD AND RESILIENCE

As part of its overall efforts to support 500,000 people through livelihood and resilience activities in Syria during 2016, WFP has so far launched two livelihood projects in Tartous and Al Hasakeh governorates in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, FAO, and local partners.

The first project will be implemented between January and July 2016 and is aimed at the restoration of livelihoods for 2,000 greenhouse vegetable producers in Tartous governorate. During the reporting period, WFP distributed plastic sheets to 562 vegetable producers in Tartous and Baniyas sub-districts (Tartous) in cooperation with Al Batoul NGO and the Directorate of Agriculture, bringing the total number of beneficiaries who received plastic sheets to 1,558 after the first distribution in February. The project also calls for the distribution of 3,000 food rations to food insecure farmer, worker, IDP and returnee households, benefitting 15,000 individuals, while FAO will distribute seeds and conduct training.



WFP/ Homs Markets

The second project is designed to provide early recovery support on food security and livelihoods in Al-Hasakeh governorate. It aims to strengthen agricultural production, improve knowledge and practices of farmers, support household food diversification, and address the urgent food needs of assisted households during the lean season. The project will be implemented in the agri-ecological zones of Al-Hasakeh, particularly in the districts of Al Shaddadi, Tal Brak, Amouda, Tal Tamr and Qamishli which have been affected by drought conditions and have suffered from a declining availability and higher prices of agricultural inputs, damage and destruction of irrigation infrastructure like the rest of the agricultural areas in Al-Hasakeh. During the reporting period, the 1,500 farming families have been identified (7,500 individuals) were identified, of which approximately 30 percent are women-headed households.

## FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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The Food Security and Agriculture Sector continued to support the implementation of food security and agriculture related responses by facilitating coordination and joint planning among Sector partners during the reporting period.

At the end of March, the Sector took part in a coordination workshop held in Beirut with NGOs engaged in cross-border operations from southern Turkey. The objective of the workshop was to enhance coordination between cross-border and cross-line deliveries, given the increased level of cross-line inter-agency convoys conducted from within Syria.

In addition, the Sector organized a workshop in Amman for the Jordan-based partners to discuss multi-sectorial programming for nutrition and nutrition-sensitive agriculture to develop a shared understanding of the linkages between nutrition, food security and agriculture. Moreover, the workshop was organized to identify opportunities for collaboration across sectors and building partners' capacity to integrate nutrition aspects in food security and agriculture programming, so as to maximize the nutritional benefits of resilience-building interventions within the Syrian context.

## FUNDING

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WFP highly appreciates the recent generous pledges which donors made during the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference held in London at the beginning of February to support WFP Syria-related operations. At present, WFP operational funding requirements are covered until the end of June; however, WFP requires USD 135 by the end of April in order to ensure operational continuity until the end of September.

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