Current Nutrition Situation

According to a SMART1 nutrition survey conducted in accessible areas of 11 out of 14 governorates in Syria in 2015 and 2016, the level of acute malnutrition amongst boys and girls under the age of five is found to be within acceptable levels with a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) at three percent. However, chronic malnutrition in the same age group was at 12.7 percent, while acute malnutrition amongst women of child bearing age (CBA) was reported at 7.8 percent. Anemia is widespread amongst both children under the age of five and women with a prevalence of 25.9 percent and 24.5 percent respectively.

Other aggravating factors play a role in the overall nutritional status, including population displacement, high food insecurity, deteriorating livelihood options, and sub-optimum infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices contributing to diarrhea and other childhood diseases. These factors combined with an overall worsening healthcare sector and deterioration in other public services negatively impact the nutrition situation, particularly in besieged and hard-to-reach locations.

The Whole of Syria (WoS) nutrition sector estimates that 4.3 million boys and girls aged 6-59 months and pregnant and nursing women are in need of preventive and curative nutrition services in 2017. Of these, an estimated 73,000 children aged 6-59 months are acutely malnourished, 734,000 children suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, 2.8 million children under two years of age require optimal feeding to ensure adequate nutrition status, and 1.5 million pregnant and nursing women require preventive nutrition services against undernutrition.

Nutrition Response

1- Nutrition Specific Interventions
- Prevention of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies
- Treatment of acute malnutrition

2- Nutrition Sensitive Interventions
- Nutrition component of general food assistance
- Enhanced dietary diversity for pregnant and nursing women through cash-based transfers (CBT)
- School meals programme

3- Policy and Advocacy for Nutrition

---

1) Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
Prevention of Acute Malnutrition and Micronutrient Deficiencies

This programme, which was launched in Syria in March 2013, targets 240,000 children (6-23 months old) in order to prevent acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. WFP uses a preventative approach and distributes specialized nutritious products through blanket supplementary feeding for children 6-23 months old to eligible families that are already assisted through WFP's general food assistance programme.

Treatment of Acute Malnutrition

To address acute malnutrition in children 6-59 months old and pregnant and nursing women, WFP in partnership with UNICEF and WHO, and in close coordination with the Ministry of Health, is implementing a Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) programme. WFP supports treatment of children with moderate acute malnutrition through provision of specialized lipid based nutrient supplements (LNS). Activities including community outreach and awareness are provided with the assistance of government and NGO partners. UNICEF and WHO support the treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition. By the end of 2017, WFP plans to reach 20,000 children and 10,000 pregnant and nursing women using the CMAM approach.

Supporting Diet Diversity for Pregnant and Nursing Women through CBT

The health of a pregnant or nursing woman is directly linked to that of the child. Hence, a poor dietary diversity has a profound impact that reaches far beyond the first vital 1,000 days of a child’s life which establishes the foundation for the future well-being of the child.

There is a high risk of malnutrition amongst pregnant and nursing women in Syria, as food prices have increased and women may not have access to fresh food such as dairy and vegetables. These women may not receive adequate micronutrients needed for their health and that of their unborn or infant child.

To complement the general food assistance and to address the critical needs of this vulnerable group, WFP launched a CBT-based nutrition support to improve the dietary diversity of vulnerable pregnant and nursing women in July 2014. Eligible women receive two vouchers per month, which can be used to purchase only fresh food items (dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables) from designated retailers. At present the programme is implemented in Homs, Lattakia, Rural Damascus and Tartous governorates. Throughout 2017, the programme targets 65,000 pregnant and nursing women, compared to 20,000 in 2016. Monitoring data indicates a vastly improved dietary diversity.

Nutrition Components of GFA Rations

The food basket provided to beneficiaries under WFP’s general food assistance programme is designed in accordance with WFP’s global nutrition policy and contains various fortified commodities such as wheat flour fortified with a vitamin-mineral premix, iodized salt and vegetable oil fortified with vitamins A and D.
To provide enhanced services for pregnant and nursing women, WFP formed a partnership with UNFPA which enables pregnant and nursing women to benefit from services provided at UNFPA’s regular and mobile clinics. These include reproductive health sessions, provision of hygiene kits, referrals for antenatal and postnatal care, vaccinations and family planning. Following the successful initiation of activities in Homs governorate, the partnership has been expanded to Lattakia governorate.

**School Meals Programme**

Pre-primary and primary school children are provided with a daily fortified date bar and 200 ml of milk during the morning sessions. The project aims to encourage enrolment and attendance, and is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF. The programme is currently operational in more than 1,000 schools in ten governorates, and in 2017 WFP is targeting 750,000 school children.

In addition, WFP initiated a pilot project to provide fresh meals in schools in Aleppo city. The meals, consisting of one sandwich and a piece of fruit or vegetable providing over 500 kcal daily meal, are prepared by 20 Syrian women employed in the initiative. The bread used for the sandwiches is produced through contracted local bakeries using fortified wheat flour provided by WFP.

**Policy and Advocacy for Nutrition**

WFP is an active participant in a number of Nutrition Policy and technical entities in the country including the Nutrition Sector composed of UN agencies and NGOs. WFP is a part of the National Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) steering committee and is providing support in assessing existing salt iodization capacity in country as well as supporting the annual national IDD day event.

WFP is also part of the Technical Working Group preparing the national guidelines for CMAM. WFP was a member of the National Technical Steering Committee providing support to the Ministry of Health to conduct the national SMART survey, where WFP was specifically supporting the analysis of food security information.