Impact of the Crisis on Livelihoods

The ongoing conflict in Syria has resulted in a devastating humanitarian crisis, creating major displacement, damage to vital infrastructure and an increase in people’s vulnerabilities and poverty levels. The crisis has stalled and reversed significant economic and social gains. Syria has lost four decades of human development gains and fallen into extreme poverty since the onset of the conflict, with almost 85 percent of the population living in poverty and 69 percent in extreme poverty. As the crisis shows no signs of abating, its consequences are harshly felt by individuals and communities throughout Syria.

Not only has the conflict had a major humanitarian impact on Syria’s population, but it has also drastically eroded livelihoods and caused increased levels of poverty, unemployment, recurrent displacement, loss of assets and weakened social protection schemes. According to the 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the unemployment rate stood at 53 percent, with peaks of 78 percent amongst youth, and was even higher amongst women, leading to an increasing number of people migrating to seek livelihoods. Syria is also prone to natural hazards, predominantly linked to rainfall levels.

Objectives of WFP’s Livelihood and Resilience Strategy

The WFP Syria Livelihoods and Resilience Strategy aims to protect and restore livelihoods and food security for conflict affected Syrians through support to household livelihoods, rehabilitation of local economy and strengthening resilience to ongoing and future shocks.

The strategy takes a short to medium term view of actions which enable affected Syrian households to protect, sustain and re-establish livelihoods within a longer term resilience building goal.

The strategy envisages three broad programme pillars:

1. Protecting, restoring and promoting household livelihood security through food production, assets rehabilitation and income generation;
2. Strengthening local markets and services through economic recovery projects; and
3. Supporting institutions and building an evidence base for food and nutrition security at all levels.
Livelihood Activities

In 2017-18, WFP will scale up its livelihood activities in more stable parts of the country, prioritizing joint programming opportunities with other UN agencies such as FAO and UNDP.

Since the beginning of 2017, WFP has been implementing nine different livelihood activities, benefitting 68,500 people in eight governorates across the country. These include:

- The multi-activity ‘Road to Food Security’, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), aiming to strengthen local food production and processing systems; targeting almost 1,500 households in rural areas of Hama governorate.
- In Homs city, a project for the rehabilitation of three bakeries, seeking to increase local access to bread as well as providing employment opportunities for 18 participants.
- A cross-border project in Dar’a providing 1,000 vulnerable families with kitchen garden kits and trainings to increase household-level food production; and supporting the rehabilitation of five bakeries, providing employment opportunities for 50 people and increasing local access to bread.
- A nationwide project, jointly implemented with the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Agriculture, providing approximately 3,300 female headed households with kitchen garden kits and trainings to increase household-level production, and establishing five food processing units that enhance income generating activities and create local employment opportunities.
- Two vocational skills training projects: i) In Aleppo, through Ahl Al Kheir Charity, providing more than 300 households headed by women with practical training in sewing, tailoring and entrepreneurship/business skills, as well as post-training tool kits and linkages to established factories; ii) in Rural Damascus governorate, through IECD (Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement), providing 860 participants with trainings in employable skills focusing on mechanics, electricians and construction-related vocations.
- A nationwide ‘Honey Value Chain Enhancement’ project implemented with the Arab Beekeepers Union supporting 1,750 beekeepers impacted by the crisis through the provision of hive colonies equipment and training.
- A joint programme with FAO providing complementary seasonal support to 4,190 food insecure farmers during the 2016/17 planting and harvest season. FAO provides agricultural inputs and training, while WFP provides food assistance until the agricultural assets are productive.

As of May, WFP has completed its first livelihood project in 2017, ‘Retaining and enhancing beekeeping value chain in Syria’, supporting 700 beekeepers in five governorates to establish a long-term and sustainable source of income.

Planned Projects:

- WFP is finalizing a joint pilot programme with UNDP, where food assistance for training (FFT) support is provided to 3,950 vulnerable women participating in a UNDP vocational training in Aleppo, Homs, Lattakia and Rural Damascus governorates.
- Recognizing the vital role that bread plays in the Syrian diet, WFP plans to support the rehabilitation of up to twelve bakeries in eastern Aleppo city and one bakery in Al-Hasakeh governorate, with a plan to further expand this activity to other areas, where feasible.
- Nationally, WFP is enhancing partnerships with other UN agencies through the implementation of joint programmes with UNHCR or labour market assessments with UNFPA/ILO and UNDP. WFP is also looking to start joint livelihood programming with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).
- WFP Field Offices are identifying and developing livelihood opportunities specific to each local context.

Impact of WFP’s Supply Chain Activities on Livelihoods

WFP’s large operation in Syria has a direct impact on livelihoods. Through its packaging and warehouse facilities, WFP has created livelihood opportunities in the five governorates where it maintains warehousing and packaging facilities (Rural Damascus, Homs, Tartous, Lattakia, and Qamishly). Almost 1,900 people are employed by WFP in warehouse management services, including 657 women. Additional jobs are also created through the transport services required to support the large operation.

WFP is also maintaining a bread production project in Aleppo city, where fortified wheat flour is provided directly to ten bakeries contracted by WFP’s cooperating partners. Each bakery employs 15 people in the production process. As part of the school meals project, WFP launched a pilot in Aleppo for fresh, on-site prepared meals for children. The activity currently employs 20 women who prepare the meals. All associated costs, including the salaries of the women are covered by WFP.