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**Logistics & Telecommunications Augmentation and
Coordination to Support Humanitarian Operations in Syria
Standard Project Report 2017**

World Food Programme in Syrian Arab Republic (SY)



World Food Programme

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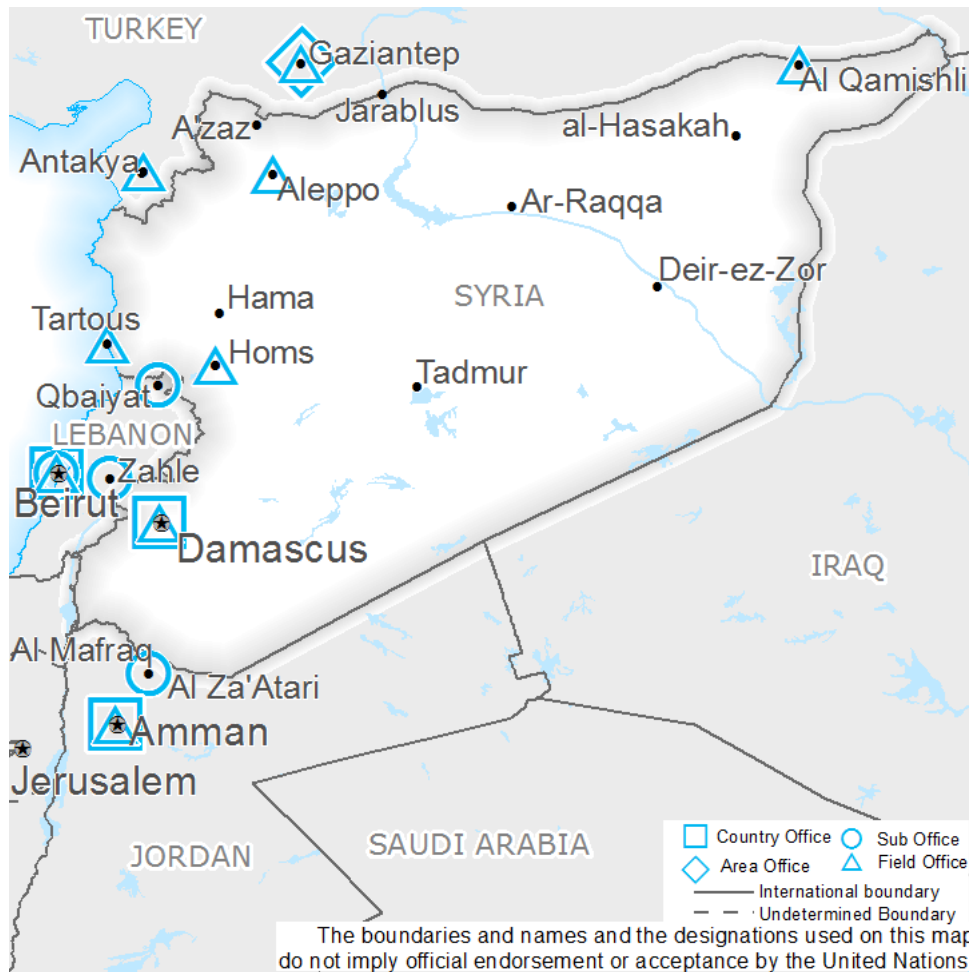
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Country Context and WFP Objectives



Achievements at Country Level

In response to persisting high levels of food insecurity triggered by the prolonged conflict, WFP assisted over 5 million vulnerable people with in-kind food distributions, in line with plans. The assistance was tailored to diverse beneficiaries' needs, and included monthly family food rations, ready-to-eat food parcels to respond to immediate displacement, and wheat flour or fresh bread in areas affected by bread shortages and extensive damage to milling facilities.

Owing continued negotiation and advocacy efforts WFP was able to reach all 14 Syrian governorates for the first time since 2013. This was achieved through multiple delivery modalities, including regular dispatches, cross-line inter-agency convoys, cross-border deliveries, high-altitude airdrops and airlifts. A flexible logistic set up enabled WFP to rapidly switch between modalities whenever required, thus capitalising on emerging access opportunities.

While the ongoing conflict continued to require a large-scale humanitarian response, some geographical areas across the country showed improved stability offering opportunities for more recovery-oriented interventions. WFP expanded its livelihood activities tripling its reach compared to 2016, with more than 100,000 people across nine governorates benefiting from projects aimed at supporting sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance among moderately food insecure households. Almost half of the participants were women, and activities were tailored to different contexts and needs for skills. This was made possible through engagement with local actors who maintained expertise in the technical components of the activities, while capacity strengthening efforts were conducted by WFP to ensure food security outcomes of beneficiaries were met. Moreover, WFP continued to provide a diverse portfolio of education and nutrition support to boys and girls and pregnant and lactating women

and girls across the country, who have specific nutrition requirements and as such are more vulnerable to food insecurity.

As an integral component of its operations, WFP continued to put in place efforts to strengthen local capacity, stimulating the economy and local food production. Efforts aimed at increasing production capacity and quality standards of two local suppliers enabled WFP to fully transition to local procurement for its fortified date bars requirements for the school meals programme in the 2017-18 school year. Complimenting this, efforts to expand local procurement for other commodities are ongoing. Local capacity strengthening efforts also included raising awareness of gender equality issues, and results show increased employment of women among WFP suppliers and contracted retailers.

WFP recorded some significant successes in the use of the cash-based transfer (CBT) modality, despite persisting challenges hindering the implementation at planned scale, including access constraints limiting assessments and implementation capacity and difficulties in identifying areas with functioning markets and favourable conditions offering opportunities for expansion. Transfers through this modality were gradually expanded, and they are currently used across different nutrition, education and livelihoods activities. The transition to an electronic solution through the SCOPECARD, supported by WFP's beneficiary and transfer management platform, and the phase-out of paper vouchers completed over 2017, will improve cost-efficiency and reduce implementation times, supporting a further expansion of this modality in 2018.

Country Context and Response of the Government

Almost seven years of conflict have taken a heavy toll on the Syrian population. In 2017, fighting continued to fuel large-scale population movement, with an average of over 6,000 people moving each day. Since 2011, over half of the pre-crisis population has been forced to leave their homes, including some 6.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 5.5 million who sought refuge outside of Syria. Compounding violence and displacement, factors such as economic recession, infrastructural damage and inadequacy of basic services have all contributed to increasing vulnerability levels among men, women and children. The 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) indicates that 13.1 million people are in need of various forms of humanitarian assistance, of whom more than a third are children.

Between 2011 and 2016, Syria's cumulative gross domestic product (GDP) losses amounted to an estimated USD 254 billion. Losses across all sectors have resulted in growing poverty and unemployment rates, with unemployment reaching up to 75 percent among youth. Approximately 69 percent of the Syrian population is estimated to live in extreme poverty (less than USD 1.90 a day). This led to a severe erosion of households' livelihoods, purchasing power and coping capacities.

The agriculture sector, which represented the main income source for the majority of the population, suffered significant damage, resulting in declining crop production, reduced food availability and higher prices. According to the 2017 Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) jointly conducted by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), wheat and barley production slightly improved in the 2016-2017 cropping season compared to the previous year, mainly as a result of better rainfall and improved access to agricultural land in some areas. However, with the 2016-17 production estimated at 1.8 million metric tons, wheat production remains less than half than the average yearly production between 2002 and 2011. Similarly, the livestock sector has seen substantial reductions, between 47 and 57 percent, in herds and flocks size due to high fodder prices, inadequate veterinary services and insufficient access to grazing lands. Due to the combined effect of decreased production, hyperinflation and subsidy removal, overall food prices have remained considerably above pre-crisis levels, approximately eight times higher, despite marginal improvements observed in some markets in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh and Rural Damascus since the beginning of 2017.

Loss of livelihoods and reduced household purchasing power contributed to persisting high levels of food insecurity in the country. The 2018 Humanitarian Needs Assessment indicate that some 10.5 million people in Syria are either severely food insecure or at risk of becoming so. While the number of severely food insecure people saw a slight decrease since 2016, from 7 to 6.5 million, the number of people at risk of slipping into food insecurity doubled from 2 to 4 million, as a consequence of the protracted nature of the conflict and the progressive depletion of resources. IDPs and returnees are among the most food insecure, in addition to households headed by women, children and people with disabilities or chronic illness, poor rural households with limited access to markets and farmland and families living in besieged areas.

Once a middle-income country, Syria is now ranked in the low human development category, 149 out of 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Index. Syria had successfully achieved many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including those related to primary education and gender parity in secondary education and had made progress towards achieving decreasing malnutrition and infant mortality rates and increasing access

to improved sanitation. The country's comprehensive social security and protection programmes have significantly diminished in the course of the conflict, and subsidised bread and medicine remain as the government's primary contribution to a social safety net. The education system is overstretched, as many teachers have left, and more than one in three schools have been damaged, destroyed, or used as shelters. The Education Sector estimated that one in three school-aged children in Syria, some 1.75 million, are not in school, and a further 1.35 million children are at risk of dropping out. The Sector also estimates that boys represent a slightly higher percentage of children in need of education assistance than girls, due to their increased involvement in child labour, including child recruitment, to support their families. The lack of safety and security constitutes the greatest barrier to accessing education, followed by child labour and early marriage, lowering the children's chances for a healthy and productive future.

Some 3 million children aged 6-59 months and 1.6 million pregnant and lactating women and girls are at risk of under-nutrition and need preventive and curative nutrition services. While the 2015/2016 Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) surveys indicated acceptable levels of acute and chronic malnutrition (3 and 12.7 percent) among children aged 6-59 months, the nutrition situation among women of child bearing age (CBA) is poor, with acute malnutrition levels of 7.8 percent. The 2017 SMART surveys, which focused on areas with information gaps, highlighted emerging localised pockets of chronic and acute malnutrition, particularly affecting women and children in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Overall, the prevalence of anaemia among women (CBA) (25.9 percent) and children aged 6-59 months (24.5 percent) raises concern over the presence of other serious micronutrient deficiencies.

The Government of Syria's humanitarian response priorities include support to displaced persons and host communities, addressing basic food needs and agricultural support in rural areas. Priorities also include strengthening the response to the particular needs of affected women and girls, provision of health services, and support to educational infrastructure. These priorities are in line with the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which was developed by the humanitarian community in consultation with the Government of Syria.

The Government of Syria is coordinating its humanitarian response through the High Relief Committee, which is the main coordinator of aid delivery among national and international actors, through structures at national and local levels.

WFP Objectives and Strategic Coordination

In 2017, WFP moved from an Emergency Operation to a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200988. In line with the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, activities under the PRRO aimed at achieving Strategic Objective 1: end hunger by protecting access to food; Strategic Objective 2: improve nutrition; and Strategic Objective 4: support sustainable development goals (SDG) implementation.

While maintaining a strong relief focus to respond to immediate needs of the most vulnerable conflict-affected people in Syria, the PRRO marked a shift to a more recovery-oriented approach to lay the foundations for longer-term resilience to shocks through the gradual expansion of activities aimed at supporting the development of sustainable livelihoods for moderately food insecure households, restoring assets and infrastructure, enhancing household and community capacities, revitalising the economy and supporting local food production. Education and nutrition activities targeting infants and children and pregnant and lactating women and girls, who are found to be most in need of nutrition support, addressed most pressing nutrition concerns while supporting a healthy and productive future for the new generations.

Through Special Operation 200788, in its capacity as lead agency of the Logistics Cluster and Emergency Telecommunication Cluster, WFP continued to facilitate essential transport and storage support of humanitarian supplies and coordinate and deliver telecommunication services to other UN and non-governmental organizations (NGO), both from within Syria and from the Turkish and Jordanian corridors.

In Syria, WFP works with multiple actors including United Nations agencies, international and local NGOs, and government entities, and aligns its activities with the strategic direction and priorities identified by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and in consultation with the Government of Syria. This coordination laid ground for a joint strategy towards the achievement of SDG 2 (to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture) and SDG 17 (to revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development). The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) provided the framework for a large-scale inter-sector response with three interlinked strategic objectives: to save lives and alleviate suffering of the most vulnerable, enhance protection, and build resilience among the affected people.

Within this framework, WFP co-leads the Food Security and Agricultural Sector with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ensuring joint strategic and operational planning, needs assessment, information sharing and

harmonised interventions across actors operating from three different hubs (Syria, Turkey and Jordan). Further to this, WFP leads the Logistics Cluster and Emergency Telecommunications Cluster. WFP also actively participates in the education, nutrition and protection sectors, which includes capacity strengthening efforts to the respective line ministries, in the form of policy and technical advisory support. WFP is also a member of the National Steering Committee on Iodine-Deficiency Disorders, the Community Management of Acute Malnutrition Technical Working Group and the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions survey committee. WFP, as part of the Nutrition sector team, is also supporting the development of a national nutrition strategy.

Furthermore, WFP established strategic partnerships with relevant United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for nutrition-specific interventions and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the nutrition sensitive programme for PLW; with UNICEF for education interventions; FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for livelihoods activities and to support resilience of affected population to shocks.

Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority for all agencies under the United Nations System Wide Action Plan for gender equality (UNSWAP), the 2030 Agenda and the World Humanitarian Summit commitments. Joint programmes and actions are being undertaken to improve gender outcomes, for example to raise awareness about gender through the Interagency Gender Working Group under the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, which WFP co-chairs with UNFPA. Through these efforts WFP's operations also contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

The United Nations and the Government of Syria jointly agreed to the 2015-2017 United Nations' Strategic Framework for Cooperation (UNSF), underpinned by three complementary outcomes: enhance the capacities of targeted institutions in terms of policies, plans and resilience programmes; support revival of the basic and social services and infrastructure; and assist households and communities with sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Within the scope of its projects and considering the volatile context, WFP's long-term perspective is to support national ownership and long-term sustainability, including through integrated and systems-oriented capacity strengthening support to key institutions. Accordingly, WFP closely coordinates the delivery of its assistance with several government entities, embedding in this collaboration a range of capacity-strengthening interventions. WFP engages with the High Relief Committee, the Ministries of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Health, and Education, and the Planning and International Cooperation Commission. The Central Bureau of Statistics is a key actor in national food security assessments. WFP's strategic and operational coordination with the Central Bureau of Statistics is underpinned by continued efforts to strengthen local capacities in the field of food security, nutrition and assessments. This is exemplified by the Bureau's involvement and participation in WFP's Food Security Assessment (FSA), the WFP-FAO Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) and the Integrated Phase Classification of Food Security (IPC).

Country Resources and Results

Resources for Results

PRRO 200988 received funds equivalent to 69 percent of its requirements for 2017. This represents a slight increase from 2016 funding levels for the Emergency Operation and is in line with the trends of previous years. Special Operation 200788 was fully funded in 2017, and received the highest level of contributions since the Cluster activation in 2013. Most contributions were directed at the project level, while multilateral contributions accounted for two percent of total funding received. Albeit relatively small, multilateral contributions played a significant role, for example in repaying internal loans, given the high degree of flexibility provided by these grants. Multi-year contributions from Australia, Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom also were key in improving funding predictability and facilitating long-term planning. For instance, a multi-year contribution from Canada will ensure the continuity of the education support programme for out-of-school children across academic years. WFP continued to strengthen its strategic engagement with existing and potential donors, to capitalise on these positive examples and stress the importance of predictability and flexibility of funding.

In early 2017, WFP implemented a resource-based plan to ensure continuity and sustained assistance throughout the year, in line with available and projected funding levels for the operation. Moreover, WFP had initially planned to assist up to one million returnees, however the expected large-scale return movement did not materialise, which also prompted the revision. Accordingly, the number of beneficiaries targeted under its Unconditional Resource Transfer (URT) programme was reduced from 5 to 4 million people, while the planned caloric transfer of the food ration was reduced from 1,700 to 1,500 kcal per person per day. The reduction was in line with the Food Security Sector's recommendations on the estimated energy gap of vulnerable households in Syria.

Long lead times to procure and import food into Syria continued to be a challenge for in-kind food assistance, making timely funding arrival crucial for the continuity of the operations. In 2017, the enforcement of an import ban on all food coming from or through Turkey, affecting 80 percent of WFP's food procurement, further increased the lead times to three-four months, from the previous two-three months. WFP partially averted the issue of lengthy procurement lead times through its advance financing mechanism, which allows for internal loans based on forecasts of donor contributions. Given the long lead times and supply chain disruptions following the import ban on Turkey, the internal loan mechanism was a key in ensuring WFP's resource-based plan was maintained for most of the year.

However, in the latter part of the year, unpredictability of funding arrival and uncertainty over the 2018 funding situation compelled WFP to put in place a prioritization strategy and gradually reduce the URT beneficiaries to 3.3 million between September and December, in order to sustain food assistance until the end of the year and onward in 2018. Reductions focused on geographical areas that have been witnessing increased political, economic and social stability in 2017, offering opportunities for an expansion of more recovery-oriented interventions, while areas where the situation remained highly volatile and food insecurity levels critical were prioritised.

While targets in terms of beneficiaries assisted were largely met, food quantities distributed fell below planned levels. This was due to the combined effect of the reduction of the food ration under the resource-based plan and the scale-down of the URT programme from September on. In addition, it should be noted that not all beneficiaries were reached consistently across all monthly cycles, which further affected the overall quantities distributed. Assistance through the cash-based transfers (CBT) modality was not affected by late funding and the prioritization strategy, however, other challenges such as restrictions in movement and access due to bureaucratic and security issues and the lack of required documentation and licenses by identified retailers, necessary for contracting, hindered the achievement of annual CBT distribution plans.

Under these circumstances, WFP in Syria focused on using its resources in an optimal and results-oriented manner in order to achieve effective programme results. As such, it strived to plan, design, procure, implement, manage and evaluate its interventions to maximise the impact per USD spent.

WFP sought cost savings where possible, particularly for food procurement and Landside Transport Storage and Handling (LTSH) costs, the two main cost drivers of the PRRO. WFP maintained flexibility in the procurement of dry pulses, affected by high price fluctuations in global markets, and was able to distribute a minimum of two types of dry pulses any given month. This was based on the most cost-effective option out of a list of dry pulses assessed to meet local preferences and acceptance. Food supply agreements (FSAs) remained the preferred modality, to mitigate the impact of seasonality of food items such as pulses and sugar and reduce lead times. At the local level, WFP established long-term agreements with food suppliers, ensuring competitive prices for locally procured commodities. FSAs allowed for a 15 percent drop in the price of locally procured date bars, and ensured a healthier food pipeline and quality compliance, as WFP maintained oversight and worked with suppliers on food safety and

quality.

The ban on the import of all food from Turkey prompted a thorough analysis of regional and international markets to identify viable alternatives. WFP identified new sourcing markets with opportunities to further reduce costs, for example for pulses, now procured from some of the largest pulses producers worldwide. To match the advantages provided by the Turkish market, WFP is establishing FSAs in the new countries to reduce lead times and will have a WFP food safety and quality presence in the initial stages to ensure food compliance with the stringent Syrian regulations.

As part of efforts to reduce LTSH costs, following a pilot in late 2016, WFP completed the shift from a tariff system to a competitive process to award transport contracts. Moreover, the LTSH was revised in early 2017 aligning cooperating partner distribution costs with the actual costs incurred. Combined, these measures resulted in savings of USD 13 per metric ton. WFP maintained the flexibility of its logistics network to deal with sudden changes on the ground. This was exemplified by the immediate phasing out of the costly airlift and airdrop operations once land access became available. The changes in transport allowed for a reduction in the overall LTSH costs by almost a third, as reflected in two budget revisions.

Capitalizing on a cost-share mechanism in its United Nations hubs, WFP enhanced its security mitigation measures at WFP premises, which now undergo a regular weekly joint review to ensure effectiveness. Resources were invested in equipment, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and emergency trauma bags (ETB) and security trainings for all staff, which also raised awareness of different gender-related security concerns. Non-security staff were increasingly involved and trained in security mitigation measures, including through an efficient warden system, enhancing security awareness among all staff.

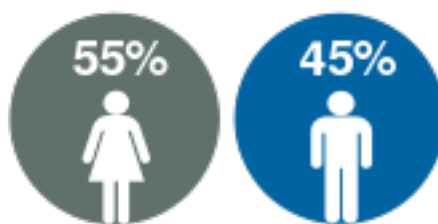
WFP improved its information technology (IT) processes through the installation of VSAT satellite connections in its field offices, optimizing use and performance of corporate online applications and enhancing telephone connectivity of field staff. By establishing more efficient monitoring systems for its fleet, WFP was able better track utilisation and handling, and maintenance of its vehicles. This helped to pre-empt any overuse, further improved safety and security of its vehicles while through the appropriate utilisation, helped prevent additional costs or damage.

WFP also strengthened its employer branding in Syria through transparent, standardized recruitment processes and an enhanced capacity of the recruitment team, all of which had a positive effect on talent acquisition. WFP strived for gender balance among its human resources by promoting employee referrals which proved as a good source of quality women candidates.



Annual Country Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	386,859	462,650	849,509
Children (5-18 years)	1,030,673	1,228,276	2,258,949
Adults (18 years plus)	958,616	1,196,584	2,155,200
Total number of beneficiaries in 2017	2,376,148	2,887,510	5,263,658



Annual Food Distribution in Country (mt)

Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Single Country PRRO	176,267	46,900	60,210	5,991	149,444	438,812
Total Food Distributed in 2017	176,267	46,900	60,210	5,991	149,444	438,812



Cash Based Transfer and Commodity Voucher Distribution (USD)

Project Type	Cash	Value Voucher	Commodity Voucher
Single Country PRRO	-	4,870,728	-
Total Distributed in 2017	-	4,870,728	-

Supply Chain

WFP Syria relied on a complex supply chain set-up utilising a network of corridors, storage and packaging facilities, transport routes, service providers and cooperating partners, which formed the backbone of WFP's large-scale food assistance programme. Food commodities were delivered into Syria through multiple internal and external corridors, including Lattakia and Tartous ports in Syria, Beirut in Lebanon, and three international border crossing points: Bab Al-Salam and Bab Al-Hawa on the border with Turkey and Ar-Ramtha on the border with Jordan.

Commodities were procured in bulk and assembled into food rations inside Syria prior to being dispatched to partners. For areas covered through cross-border operations, where WFP could not establish its own dedicated facilities, pre-packed rations were procured from Jordan and Turkey and handed over directly to partners. Inside Syria, WFP has eight dedicated storage facilities strategically located in six governorates, with a total storage capacity of over 118,000 mt. Of these, six warehouses include packaging facilities with a total daily production capacity of 45,000 food rations. In 2017, WFP established its first warehouse in Aleppo, now its largest in the country, with 13,600 mt of storage capacity and a daily production capacity of 10,000 food rations. The new warehouse can fully cover the requirements of Aleppo city and surrounding areas, reducing dispatch times and mitigating the impact of any temporary access disruption to the governorate, and has the potential to cover other governorates' requirements should the need arise.

Areas served by each storage hub were selected on the basis of geographical proximity, to reduce transport time and minimise exposure of drivers and cargo to security threats. Accordingly, facilities in Rural Damascus and Homs

serve the southern and central governorates, those in Tartous, Latakia and Aleppo serve the coastal and northern areas, while Qamishly warehouses serve the north-eastern regions. A flexible set up allows each hub to rapidly adjust its operations to cover any gaps, scale-up or disruptions that may arise in other areas. Each month, WFP moved an average 40,000 mt of food using over 4,000 trucks and 15 commercial transport service providers.

Food was delivered to partners through various modalities, including regular deliveries within Syria, cross-line inter-agency convoys to besieged and hard-to-reach areas facilitated by the WFP-led Logistics Cluster, and cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan. In addition, two air operations enabled WFP to provide life-saving assistance to almost half a million people living in areas inaccessible via land in the north-eastern governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir Ezzor, until they were phased out in June and September, once land access to these areas resumed. These included one of the most complex high-altitude airdrop operations WFP has ever carried out. Operated from Amman, Jordan, WFP conducted 309 airdrops over 17 months to the formerly besieged parts of Deir Ezzor City, providing food assistance for over 100,000 people. Using a large aircraft, WFP dropped about 20 mt into a small drop zone (1km x 1.8km) from an altitude of over 5,000 meters at each rotation using 26 pallets fitted with high and low velocity guided parachutes. The discontinuation of the complex airdrop operation resulted in cost savings of USD 3 million each month.

WFP continued to enhance its procurement strategy to meet its food requirements in the most cost-efficient manner. WFP continued to use the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF), an internal mechanism allowing advance purchases based on resource projections, as well as global Food Supply Agreements (FSAs), cutting procurement lead times and costs. However, the enforcement of a food import ban from Turkey heavily impacted the supply chain and resulted in increased lead times, up to four months. A new sourcing strategy was developed, where regional and local purchases are envisioned a greater role once local capacity allows.

Procurement activities in 2017 were in line with initial plans, as exemplified by WFP's pursuit of procurement from local sources. While the majority of the food commodities were procured internationally and regionally, WFP's local procurement more than doubled, from 2.2 percent in 2016 to over 5 percent in 2017. The set target of a 10 percent share of local procurement was adversely impacted when suppliers defaulted several contracts due to the USD depreciation against the Syrian Pound in late 2017. Nonetheless, WFP was able to enhance the capacity of already contracted Syrian suppliers and extended local procurement to include pulses, rice, sugar, and vegetable oil, expanded the shortlist of suppliers and introduced new FSAs, enabling a reliable pipeline for iodized salt, fortified date bars and ready-to-eat rations. Following the completion of capacity enhancement activities in 2016, two local manufacturers of fortified date bars were able to launch new production lines. This increased their total production capacity to 800 mt per month, enabling WFP to fully meet its date bars requirements for the school meals programme from local sources. As part of the capacity enhancement activities, WFP provided onsite food quality and safety training for the staff at the production facilities. In close coordination with the local suppliers, WFP's food technologists formulated a plan to procure and install advanced machinery and equipment that allowed both suppliers to increase their production capacity.

To enhance the network of local suppliers, twelve factories producing vegetable oil, fortified wheat flour, and canned food were assessed and approved according to national and international standards. A pilot production of 500 mt of fortified sunflower oil was successfully concluded, allowing for future local procurement. Moreover, WFP laid the foundation to start local procurement of fortified wheat flour in 2018. To ensure optimum results, WFP provided the approved suppliers with support and guidance including WFP specifications and a list of all WFP approved suppliers for fortification premixes in line with WFP's food quality and safety requirements. The shift to local procurement will increase cost-efficiency, stimulate the local economy and enable WFP to have better quality control over food purchased. In addition, locally-procured food tends to be more compatible with beneficiary preferences.

In an effort to increase the use of the cash-based transfer (CBT) modality in Syria, WFP's supply chain team conducted macro-market and micro-retailer capacity assessments that were crucial to assess market functionality in the targeted areas and ensure that the introduction of the CBT modality would not cause unintended distortions. Assessments were conducted in rural and urban areas of Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Latakia, and Tartous governorates. Furthermore, WFP's supply chain team was involved in the release, reconciliation and processing of the CBT paper vouchers, which were eventually phased out and replaced by the SCOPECARD, the electronic solution supported by WFP's beneficiary and transfer management platform.

In line with the programme activities implemented by WFP Syria, WFP continued to enhance gender equality and promote women's inclusion through its supply chain network, particularly in light of the substantially higher unemployment rates among women. Accordingly, WFP continued to encourage suppliers and commercial service providers to recruit women including for retail shops, warehouses and packaging facilities.

To ensure Post Delivery Losses (PDL) were minimised, WFP maintained its efforts to improve storage conditions and safety at all warehouses, and ensured that all trucks were inspected before approving truck loading. In addition, spot checks were conducted on cooperating partners' warehouses and WFP provided regular trainings for staff from

all partners on warehouse management and storage, pest control and fumigation. Furthermore, a process was implemented whereby the commodity accounting section circulated a Best Before Date (BBD) alert every fortnight to ensure all commodities were distributed well before their BDD and avoid losses and quality issues. Consequently, WFP's PDL amounted to a negligible proportion of overall quantities handled, and decreased by 33 percent compared to 2016. Similarly, the PDL of WFP's partners decreased by over two thirds during the same time period.



Annual Food Purchases for the Country (mt)

Commodity	Local	Regional/International	Total
Beans	-	4,911	4,911
Bulgur Wheat	209	33,206	33,414
Canned Chicken	240	64	304
Canned Fish	-	182	182
Canned Meat	-	51	51
Canned Pulses	328	322	650
Canned Vegetables	94	92	186
Chickpeas	904	9,112	10,016
High Energy Biscuits	2,016	58	2,074
Iodised Salt	8,010	1,619	9,629
Juice	60	101	161
Lentils	3,447	47,653	51,100
Olive Oil	55	54	109
Peas	-	20,226	20,226
Ready To Use Supplementary Food	-	1,736	1,736
Rice	2,593	60,400	62,993
Spices	30	58	88
Split Lentils	233	6,056	6,289
Sugar	853	35,003	35,856
Uht Milk	-	11,737	11,737
Vegetable Oil	781	40,858	41,639
Wheat Flour	877	78,681	79,558
Yeast	-	160	160
Total	20,730	352,338	373,068
Percentage	5.6%	94.4%	

Annual Global Commodity Management Facility Purchases Received in Country (mt)

Commodity	Total
Bulgur Wheat	7,107
Chickpeas	8,720
Lentils	4,318
Peas	1,490
Ready To Use Supplementary Food	655
Rice	19,900
Sugar	7,807
Vegetable Oil	9,907
Wheat Flour	6,907
Total	66,811

Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned

An internal food quality and safety audit was conducted during 2016 and early 2017 with the objective of evaluating and testing the adequacy and effectiveness of WFP's control processes. Observations pertained to the need to enhance internal and partners' capacity in food quality and safety requirements, implement a more systematic handling process of food quality and safety incidents and strengthen oversight at warehouses. In response, WFP conducted trainings, undertook a re-structuring exercise, including the creation of two new positions related to food safety and quality assurance, and developed standard operating procedures to ensure a more efficient handling of incidents. Improved security conditions allowed WFP to enhance oversight and monitoring in its warehouses in Rural Damascus, through the permanent relocation of warehouse staff from the country office premises to the warehouses. In parallel, trainings were conducted for cooperating partners (CPs), ensuring awareness and compliance with WFP's requirements. Other capacity enhancement initiatives are planned for early 2018, including training sessions for CPs on storage and transport of nutrition supplies.

WFP continued to implement the recommendations of the 2014 evaluation to assess WFP's response to the Syria Crisis. As part of its efforts to establish a strong evidence-base for its response in Syria, in mid-2017, WFP conducted a household-level Food Security Assessment (FSA), which followed the first FSA from 2015. The assessment was conducted in cooperation with the Syrian Planning and International Cooperation Commission and Central Bureau of Statistics, and relevant staff was trained on data collection and key food security concepts, to further strengthen local assessment capacities. Earlier in 2017, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) conducted the fourth independent Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CSFAM) to evaluate crop production and the impact on the food security situation. In parallel, WFP maintained its food security monitoring system established in 2016. Each month, an average of 1,500 randomly selected households across the country were surveyed through the mobile Vulnerability and Assessment Mapping (mVAM) system and findings were published in monthly Food Security Bulletins. In addition, monthly Market Price Watch Reports informed on food availability and financial access through the regular monitoring of 42 major markets across the country. Ad-hoc Rapid Food Security and Market Assessments were also conducted in besieged and hard-to-reach locations as part of inter-agency convoys and upon onset of sudden emergencies. WFP mainstreams gender across all food security assessments, to assess how gender-related issues impact on the food security situation among the affected population. Accordingly, assessments included sex and age disaggregated data and the gender breakdown of the head of the households, and identified the gender of respondents. These measures were aimed at identifying different experiences and vulnerabilities among the affected population, and ensuring that findings can inform programme design.

In line with other priorities identified through the evaluation, including the strengthening of gender analysis, a dedicated gender specialist position was established in Syria in 2016. Building on efforts to mainstream gender

across all activities, and as part of WFP's global commitment to gender equality, a gender action plan was developed, establishing financial and programmatic obligations for all work areas. Moreover, WFP Syria is among the country offices taking part in WFP's Gender Transformation Programme (GTP), a corporate mechanism to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in all activities and operational areas. The GTP focuses on leadership and accountability, gender-transformative programming and organisational change, and enables country offices to measure achievements against set benchmarks. A second evaluation of WFP's response to the Syria Crisis commenced in late 2017 and will be concluded in 2018. The evaluation will assess WFP's strategic positioning vis-à-vis beneficiaries, governments, and partners, and decision-making and performance, while providing lessons learned for future regional emergency responses.

The 2014 evaluation also recommended strengthening the analysis on the use of cash-based transfers (CBT). Following a 2015 review of the CBT modality, WFP gradually expanded the use of vouchers across nutrition-sensitive, education and livelihoods activities. Vouchers were issued in the name of the beneficiary, so as to ensure targeted beneficiaries are empowered to make their own decisions over the purchase of fresh food items, particularly relevant for the nutrition support programme for pregnant and lactating women and girls.

To support the expansion of the CBT modality, WFP successfully completed the transition from paper vouchers to SCOPECARD, an electronic solution providing an ideal end-to-end payment platform in Syria, where the banking system is disrupted and internet coverage is unstable. The use of SCOPECARD removed cumbersome printing and distribution procedures allowing for a more agile and scalable system. Building on these achievements, WFP expanded the use of CBT from two to five governorates in 2017, through the contracting of 26 retailers, and by the end of the year it had reached 32,775 people through this modality, up from 22,527 in 2016.

During 2017, further evidence for the launch of the CBT modality in new areas was built through expansive macro and micro supply chain and retail capacity assessments, which assessed market functionality and feasibility for the use of CBT, to ensure WFP's assistance is not harming the local markets. These assessments laid the groundwork for the expansion of WFP's retail network, currently consisting of 25 retailers, a threefold increase from 2016.

In parallel, in late 2017, WFP initiated a pilot launch of SCOPE, WFP's beneficiary and transfer management platform, to further strengthen programme implementation, while ensuring the highest data protection standards. Building on lessons learned from this pilot, the transition to SCOPE is planned to be completed over the course of 2018, and will further enhance beneficiary identification and prioritization, minimizing instances of duplication and providing a unified and standardised platform to assess vulnerability levels.

A lessons learned exercise by the WFP-led Global Logistics Cluster provided an opportunity for partners to evaluate performance and identify gaps and potential areas of improvement. In response to the identified need for additional logistical trainings among partner organisations, the Logistics Cluster organised trainings across Syria+5 countries, developing the capacity of 188 logisticians from 53 organisations. The Logistics Cluster also put in place steps for a stable and forward-looking staffing capacity, ensuring continuous coverage for its logistics support to humanitarian partners.

Assisting displaced families in the most challenging parts of Syria

Raneem, a single mother of six, is one of over 300,000 people displaced from Ar-Raqqa since late 2016, when a large-scale campaign to drive the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) out of the governorate began.

Her struggle had commenced earlier in 2016, when shelling killed her husband and destroyed their house in Ratleh, a village south of Ar-Raqqa city, marking the first of a long series of displacements for Raneem and her children. They began an exhausting peregrination looking for shelter and safety, paying prohibitive prices to move across conflict lines and rapidly exhausting their savings. "The last place where we stayed was Ar-Raqqa city" Raneem recalls. "Life there was impossible. We could not get food, the markets were empty, we were skipping meals". Hungry and fearing for their lives, Raneem and her family fled again in the summer of 2017, when fighting reached Ar-Raqqa city.

Throughout their displacements, Raneem relentlessly tried to find a way to earn some money to provide for her family, but as a single mother, with six children, this was not an easy task. Moreover, employment opportunities had shrunk dramatically with the crisis, particularly in urban areas hosting large numbers of internally displaced persons, where an already weakened labour market was not able to absorb the additional pressure of a growing population.

They arrived to Ein Issa camp, in northern Ar-Raqqa, after a perilous journey, with nothing left as they had spent all their savings to pay smugglers. In the camp, income generating opportunities were even harder to find for Raneem. Her son got injured during the journey, and was left with a permanent disability. The camp of Ein Issa, 50 Km north of Ar-Raqqa city, was established in late 2016 to shelter people fleeing the outbreak of violence in Ar-Raqqa and eastern Aleppo countryside. More recently, the camp started receiving arrivals from Deir Ezzor governorate, where an anti-ISIL campaign was launched in August. Currently, Ein Issa camp hosts over 18,000 people, with ongoing incoming and outward movement.

Ar-Raqqa governorate had been largely inaccessible since late 2013 due to the presence of ISIL, leaving thousands of families facing a dire humanitarian situation. Further compounding security restrictions, in late 2015 the entire north-eastern region became inaccessible via land through international and in-country access routes. In response, in mid-2016 WFP launched an emergency airlift operation facilitated by the Logistics Cluster, enabling the transport of humanitarian assistance to the northeastern city of Qamishly, in neighbouring Al-Hasakeh governorate.

Thanks to the airbridge, WFP could provide emergency ready-to-eat rations to the thousands of displaced families like Raneem's, who were sheltering in Ein Issa camp and other parts of Ar-Raqqa, when access in the governorate gradually resumed in spring 2017. However, due to high costs and limited cargo capacity of the airplane, airlifts could scarcely support the pre-existing beneficiaries in Al-Hasakeh and did not allow for a sustained scale-up of the assistance in neighbouring governorates. In June 2017, extensive negotiations and advocacy efforts enabled WFP to re-establish road access to the north-east from within Syria and rapidly phased out the airlift operation.

More cost-effective and with greater cargo capacity, trucks now carry family food rations for Raneem's family and some 170,000 people in Ar-Raqqa every month, supporting a diversified and nutritious diet providing a daily transfer of 1,500 calories per person. "You have been generous with us. In Ar-Raqqa we were skipping meals because we could not get any food. We arrived with nothing, now we eat three meals a day. Without this food, we would starve." Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in the camp, every month some 1,200 children aged 6-23 months receive Specialised Nutritious Foods (SNF) to prevent moderate acute malnutrition during this critical life stage.

Like Raneem, some 400,000 people in the northern governorates of Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh and Deir Ezzor receive food and nutrition assistance every month and do not have to worry about their children going to bed hungry. Moreover, across the region, camps like Ein Issa continue to receive thousands of new arrivals every week, as fighting rages in Deir Ezzor. Rapidly mobilising stocks of ready-to-eat rations, consisting of canned food, juice and oil that does not need cooking, WFP and its partners provide critical support to families during the first few days into their displacement, before they get access to cooking facilities.

Families want to return to their normal lives, look for a job and give their children a better future. Until a political solution brings back peace and allows thousands of strong mothers like Raneem to bring back her children to their hometown and rebuild their lives, WFP and its partners strive to ensure that they do not have to go to bed hungry or result to detrimental coping strategies that would cause irreversible health consequences.

Project Results

Activities and Operational Partnerships

WFP, as the lead agency of the Logistics and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, facilitated logistics services and coordination activities, and provided telecommunications support to the humanitarian community in Syria and neighbouring countries.

The Logistics Cluster facilitated access to crucial logistics services for humanitarian organisations responding to the Syria crisis. Through the Whole of Syria approach, the Logistics Cluster brought together over 60 partners, including United Nations agencies, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other humanitarian actors operating in Turkey, Jordan and Syria into a single framework. In Lebanon, where the Logistics Cluster has not been formally activated, coordination took place under the Lebanon Logistics Forum platform.

A key component of the Logistics Cluster's services entailed the coordination and facilitation of inter-agency humanitarian convoys with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Syria-based United Nations agencies and NGOs for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to hard-to-reach and besieged locations inside Syria. In an effort to overcome disrupted land access, the Logistics Cluster facilitated a daily free-to-user airlift operation [1] from Damascus to Qamishly in Al-Hasakeh governorate through a WFP-Aviation contracted aircraft between July 2016 and June 2017. In addition, between April 2016 and August 2017 it provided coordination support for the delivery of inter-agency cargo through WFP's airdrop operation to Deir Ezzor City under siege until early September 2017. Once land deliveries to Al-Hasakeh resumed and the siege on Deir Ezzor City was lifted, the Logistics Cluster provided coordination and information management to seek common solutions to logistic gaps and bottlenecks of humanitarian deliveries. Additionally, free-to-user transport was provided to requesting organisations in order to reach the conflict-affected north-east areas with humanitarian assistance.

The Logistics Cluster also provided support in accessing vulnerable populations and prepositioning relief supplies in areas not reachable from inside Syria. To this end, the Logistics Cluster facilitated coordination and transshipment services for United Nations agencies' cargo that was transported into Syria through border crossings from Jordan and Turkey first authorized under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2165 in July 2014. In Jordan, this involved coordinating convoys that were implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), while at the Turkish-Syrian border, the Logistics Cluster operated transshipment points to facilitate transport for individual agencies.

Free-to-user common warehousing services for inter-agency cargo constituted another component of the Logistics Cluster services to humanitarian partners. Storage hubs were strategically located in Rural Damascus and Homs in central and southern Syria, Tartous and Lattakia in the coastal area, and in Qamishly and Aleppo in northern Syria. Bilateral transport from and to accessible and secure locations was provided to single humanitarian actors, where needed, on a cost-recovery basis [2]. Through WFP procurement and logistics services, fuel was also imported into Syria and made available for Logistics Cluster partners for operational purposes, on a free-to-user basis.

In 2017, the Logistics Cluster also provided coordination, information management and capacity strengthening services. The regional coordination structure was maintained, with hubs operational in Syria, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Strategic and operational meetings were held regularly, providing a platform to strengthen coordination, share knowledge and best practices and avoid gaps or duplication of efforts. To support these efforts, information management products including maps, capacity assessments, logistics snapshots, info-graphics, operational overviews, meeting minutes, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were regularly produced and shared through mailing lists and through the Logistics Cluster website [3] to keep the data easily attainable to all the interested parties.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) aimed to provide coordination and common telecommunications services for humanitarian partners in Syria and neighbouring countries. Much of the telecommunications infrastructure in Syria was either damaged by the conflict or was affected by a lack of electricity and power outages due to the crisis. Accordingly, coordination and delivery of common telecommunications services in Syria were vital to ensure that the humanitarian community could perform essential lifesaving work whilst maintaining the safety of staff and assets in the field.

During 2017, the ETC conducted frequent assessment missions to identify gaps and map evolving needs to ensure the provision of adequate Internet and security telecommunications services to humanitarian actors. In line with the ETC2020 strategy [4], which aims to ensure access to critical communications services for those involved in humanitarian response, including affected populations, the ETC assessed the feasibility of implementing Services

for Communities (S4C) projects in Jordan and Lebanon, contributing to improved coordination and restoration of technological solutions in the field.

In 2017, the ETC provided emergency telecommunications services to humanitarian partners in 14 common United Nations operational areas. These areas include Aleppo, Tartous, Homs, Damascus and Qamishly in Syria, Beirut in Lebanon, Amman and both Al Za'atari and Al Azraq refugees camps in Jordan, and Antakya, Reyhanli, Kilis, Gazientep and Sanliurfa in Turkey.

In light of challenges in importing telecommunications equipment into Syria, the ETC established relationships with local service providers and suppliers to continue service delivery and improve the communication tools available to humanitarian partners working in the hubs. This eliminated the lengthy customs procedures and ensured a quick after-sale service.

Finally, to enhance coordination and information sharing, the ETC conducted monthly global meetings to ensure all partners were updated on activities, plans, implementation, challenges and the outcomes of monthly internal meetings.

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[1] Free to user services are coordinated by the Logistics Cluster and provided free of charge to the requesting organisation by WFP.

[2] Cost-recovery services are coordinated by the Logistics Cluster and provided to the requesting organisation by WFP. All costs related to the provision of such services are covered by the requesting organisation.

[3] <http://www.logcluster.org/ops/syr12a>

[4] <https://www.etcluster.org/about-etc/etc-2020>

Results

The Logistics Cluster facilitated effective humanitarian logistics services, including emergency airlifts, transshipment, warehousing, surface transportation and provision of WFP-procured emergency fuel within Syria as well as into Syria. Most of the total service requests submitted to the Logistics Cluster were either fulfilled or in the process of being fulfilled by the end of the year. For the remaining part, the requests were not fulfilled due to cancellations either by the requesting agency or due to the lack of approval to conduct planned convoys. In both cases, cancellations were not linked to the Logistics Cluster's ability to complete the submitted request.

The Logistics Cluster's coordination and facilitation of inter-agency convoys provided the humanitarian community with logistics solutions to access hard-to-reach and besieged locations in Syria with critical life-saving humanitarian supplies. In 2017, changes in the security conditions, conflict lines and access patterns on the ground meant that some areas previously affected by access restrictions became reachable through regular deliveries. At the same time, active conflict and delays in obtaining the necessary approvals from the relevant authorities continued to affect humanitarian access in 2017. These challenges affected access, resulting in a decreased number of joint humanitarian deliveries implemented on a monthly basis and throughout the year. In 2017, the Logistics Cluster facilitated up to eight inter-agency convoys in one single month, compared to up to 18 in 2016. Overall, 55 inter-agency humanitarian convoys were facilitated to access hard-to-reach and besieged areas within Syria, approximately half of the number of convoys in 2016.

All convoys were planned and implemented in close coordination with the SARC and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Through these inter-agency humanitarian convoys, the Logistics Cluster facilitated free-to-user transport of over 38,380 m³ of relief items on behalf of partners across Syria. This included health kits, shelter, WASH, education materials, and protection items, among others, enabling partners to implement comprehensive inter-sectoral assistance plans for people in need in the worst affected areas. Moreover, the inter-agency humanitarian convoys were increasingly used as a mechanism to increase trust between parties responding to humanitarian needs and related authorities, to build operational momentum, and ultimately increase access. The success of these convoys has been increasingly used as an important lever to advocate for unimpeded access to areas not permissible to the humanitarian community.

To further strengthen these efforts, through funds secured under WFP's Special Operation, the Logistics Cluster procured 26 Volvo trucks, which were donated to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), to be used for inter-agency humanitarian convoys and other humanitarian supply deliveries. The whole humanitarian community benefitted from this enhanced capacity of the SARC fleet, as the national red crescent society plays a major role in the last-mile delivery to areas where commercial trucks refuse to move due to the volatile situation on the ground.

Through a WFP-Aviation contracted aircraft, the Logistics Cluster facilitated a free-to-user airlift operation that was phased out in June. Since the inception of the airlift operation in July 2016, a total of 533 flights were carried out enabling the delivery of 42,739 m³ of much needed humanitarian supplies. During 2017, over 23,770 m³ of food, WASH, health, nutrition, shelter and education supplies were airlifted from Damascus to Qamishly on behalf of nine humanitarian organisations: The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East (GOPA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WFP and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

These airlifts facilitated by the Logistics Cluster supported the emergency delivery of humanitarian assistance for the nine agencies to areas of north-eastern Syria that would otherwise have been inaccessible. They were instrumental in allowing pre-positioning and emergency deliveries of relief items to Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ezzor and Al-Hasakeh governorates, which saw deteriorating humanitarian conditions in 2017, enabling humanitarian partners to provide a timely emergency response. The number of executed flights was higher than the planned number as the operation was maintained as long as required to respond to the unpredictable situation on the ground. Air operations are always a last resort, therefore, as land access to Al-Hasakeh governorate resumed in June 2017, sectoral needs for logistics support shifted from air operations to land access and Logistics Cluster support shifted accordingly.

Overall in 2017, 66,896 m³ of humanitarian cargo was transported through airlifts, inter-agency humanitarian convoys and common road transport services provided by WFP to humanitarian agencies and facilitated through the Logistics Cluster. Capitalizing on a flexible approach that enabled the Logistics Cluster to adapt as needed to the evolving requirements and security situation on the ground, either airlift rotations or inter-agency humanitarian convoys were conducted. The higher than planned volume of cargo delivered through the Logistics Cluster is due to the fact that access continued to be restricted to UN declared hard-to-reach and besieged locations, requiring the Logistics Cluster to continue facilitating either air operations or inter-agency convoys to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Moreover, WFP, on behalf of the Logistics Cluster stored over 17,383 m³ of relief cargo in common warehousing facilities, in Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Homs, Lattakia, Qamishly, and Tartous, supporting partners in the implementation of their regular activities in Syria. This storage capacity allowed key pre-positioning, as the ability to respond to emergencies in a timely and cost effective manner is often a great challenge due to insecurity and access restrictions. On behalf of the Logistics Cluster, WFP provided 29,550 litres of diesel as a donation to three organisations, while 116,700 litres of diesel were provided to seven organisations on a cost-recovery basis for operational purposes. Further to transport and storage services, the Logistics Cluster provided transshipment and coordination services for United Nations agencies' cross-border operations through the United Nations Security Council Resolution-mandated border crossings of Bab Al-Hawa and Bab Al-Salam in Turkey, and Ar-Ramtha crossing in Jordan, facilitating the transshipment of a total of 4,656 trucks from Turkey and 1,403 trucks from Jordan during 2017.

The Logistics Cluster, in line with the Whole of Syria approach, maintained a robust logistics coordination and information platform that encompassed several countries in the region. A total of 30 meetings were held in Gaziantep and Antakya (Turkey), Amman (Jordan), Beirut (Lebanon), Aleppo and Damascus (Syria). These meetings served as a platform to discuss common logistics bottlenecks, find joint solutions, and facilitate information sharing. Logistics information management products were produced and shared regularly and whenever a need arose, including maps, capacity assessments, logistics snapshots, info-graphics, operational overviews, meeting minutes, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and real-time updates uploaded on the dedicated Logistics Cluster webpage and shared among Logistics Cluster's partners so that the humanitarian actors engaged in aid provision are kept up to date with the latest information available.

Moreover, the Logistics Cluster fulfilled its goal of strengthening logistical expertise across the Whole of Syria, as 188 logisticians from 53 different organisations attended trainings organised by the Logistics Cluster in Syria, Turkey and Lebanon on Shipping and Warehouse Management. Humanitarian organisations were able to benefit from Logistics Cluster coordination and logistics services, through the meetings held, the information management products shared, the trainings organised, and through the common logistics services available at their disposal.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) continued to provide common security communications services to humanitarian actors operating across Syria and surrounding countries. The ETC team enhanced the security telecommunications network in Aleppo, Homs and Qamishly, by installing new Very High Frequency (VHF) repeaters in each hub. To ensure the services remained uninterrupted, the ETC installed solar panels to power the VHF repeaters deployed in Damascus, Qamishly and Aleppo, while solar panels are scheduled to be installed in Homs in early 2018. VHF and High Frequency (HF) radio network coverage is also available in Tartous. In Reyhanli, Turkey, the ETC also installed an Ultra High Frequency (UHF) repeater. In Jordan, the ETC maintained provision of

common Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) services to the United Nations agencies in north-eastern Jordan. In Lebanon, the ETC maintained storage facilities to continue to provide a corridor for the shipment of ETC equipment to Syria.

The ETC provided common data connectivity services in five United Nations operational hubs, namely Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Qamishly and Tartous in Syria and Al Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, by installing a VSAT connection in each location. In support of the United Nations business continuity plan in Syria, the ETC set up data connectivity and voice services in the common United Nations hub of Homs. Based on successful service installation in previous years, no additional requirements were foreseen at this stage for Aleppo and Damascus in 2017.

The ETC continued to provide cluster coordination and information management services in support of the Syria operation. A dedicated Syria ETC platform for information sharing and coordination with secure member access provided access to regular updates, including maps, situation reports, factsheets, training and upcoming events. [1] The ETC Information Management Officer, based in Dubai, supported the production and distribution of operational information and products with partners and the wider response community. Operational information management products developed and distributed in 2017 include monthly IT Task Forces minutes, quarterly situation reports and factsheets. Global ETC meetings and Internal WFP IT Task Forces were held once a month to share updates, identify gaps and challenges and avoid duplication of efforts. Minutes were also shared with partners.

The ETC continued to strengthen the technical capacity of humanitarian partners operating in Syria and surrounding countries by conducting a security communications training in Dubai in November. A total of 11 humanitarian staff members from Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan were trained on radio communications to support the provision of security communications services. In addition, the ETC delivered a technical "Let's Comm Digital" training to 11 inter-agency participants from six humanitarian organisations, including WFP, UNICEF, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), UNHCR and UNFPA, supporting ETC operations in Syria and surrounding countries. This training enhanced the skills of IT responders on the deployment and maintenance of digital radio technology, which includes advanced features such as tracking of staff over VHF network and private calls, among others, enabling a safer humanitarian response. Inter-agency trainings on security telecommunications procedures were also conducted for more than 200 humanitarian professionals in Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Qamishly and Tartous.

Finally, the ETC deployed three new fully equipped radio rooms at the United Nations hubs in Aleppo, Homs and Qamishly, in addition to the radio room previously deployed in Damascus and 13 United Nations radio operators were employed and trained by the ETC. The ETC was not able to deploy a radio room and install radio equipment in Tartous, due to the lack of the necessary approvals from the relevant authorities. The ETC performed regular maintenance of the United Nations radio communication infrastructure, including mobile communication systems on a quarterly basis, in addition to programming any new additional radio equipment when requested.

[1] www.ETCluster.org

Performance Monitoring

WFP maintained a systematic output monitoring system, tracking data on the tonnage and volume of cargo transported and stored, the number of organisations supported, the number of convoys conducted and flights operated. All information was tracked and recorded through a centralised online system, the Logistics Cluster Relief Items Tracking Application (RITA), ensuring accuracy and consistency across different hubs. Through RITA, the Logistics Cluster was able to monitor the services facilitated, the locations served, and keep track of dates, times and size of the consignments. Moreover, Monthly Operations Overviews, including progress reports and quarterly info-graphics covering the activities for the Whole of Syria across all hubs, were produced by the Logistics Cluster.

Through the use of RITA, the Syria Logistics Cluster regularly provided the Global Logistics Cluster with detailed data pertaining to convoys conducted, common transport and storage facilitated, cargo airlifted and inter-agency cargo delivered through WFP's high altitude airdrops. This exercise was conducted in order to ensure consistency across all reporting and communication products.

To further strengthen transparency and accountability, a lessons-learned exercise organised by the Global Logistics Cluster was conducted in July and August. The exercise provided an opportunity to identify additional needs and capacity gaps among partners. Key findings included the need for additional logistics trainings and for improved coverage through dedicated staff in place. In response to that, the Logistics Cluster organised additional trainings across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, contributing to develop the capacity of 188 logisticians from 53 different organisations.

In 2017, the ETC monitored the progress of its project activities through a set of established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) complemented by a user satisfaction survey conducted among humanitarians in Syria and surrounding countries to evaluate the quality of the services provided by the ETC. These KPIs included the number of operational areas where the ETC provided Internet connectivity and security telecommunications services; number of information management items produced and timely disseminated; number of global and local ETC meetings conducted; number of capacity building activities carried out; and the user satisfaction rate of humanitarians among others. The ETC user satisfaction survey was launched at the end of December 2017 and it will remain open during early 2018. The preliminary results gathered from the responses received so far indicate a very positive feedback on the Internet and security telecommunications services as well as radio programming and training and customer support activities provided by the ETC in Syria and surrounding countries.

Resumption of Land Deliveries to Qamishli and Deir Ezzor

Prior to the opening of the route linking Aleppo to the eastern parts of Syria in June 2017, land deliveries to the north-eastern governorate of Al-Hasakeh had been suspended since December 2015 due to interrupted access through Nusaybin/Qamishly crossing point on the Turkish-Syrian border. Land access from inside Syria had been previously cut-off in mid-2013, due to the presence of radical armed groups controlling the access routes.

In response to the protracted access interruption, WFP established the emergency airlift operation that started in July 2016, operating two airlifts per day, six days a week, in order to deliver life-saving food assistance from Damascus airport to Qamishly for people who were otherwise cut off from support. In light of the evolving security situation on the ground and shifts in the access patterns, WFP sent a request to the Government of Syria to obtain approval for humanitarian deliveries to Al-Hasakeh governorate using the road connecting Aleppo to Qamishly via Menbij. Following a positive response from the relevant authorities in early June, WFP promptly conducted a first trial convoy to assess the road conditions and the security situation along the route, which safely reached Qamishly city on 16 June.

Following the first successful trial, WFP was able to rapidly transition from air to land deliveries as regular land access to Al-Hasakeh through this route was secured. Accordingly, the airlift operation was phased out on 26 June 2017, after successfully completing 533 rotations and delivering over 18,300 mt of humanitarian supplies. The resumption of regular land deliveries not only provided a more cost-efficient modality to deliver assistance to the north-eastern provinces, but also significantly increased the cargo delivery capacity.

On 5 September, government forces managed to break the siege on Deir Ezzor City, which had been encircled by radical armed groups since mid-2014, paving the way for the resumption of land deliveries to the city. Accordingly, WFP rapidly arranged to discontinue its high-altitude airdrop operation, which had provided life-saving humanitarian assistance for over 100,000 people living under siege. Between April 2016 and August 2017, 309 airdrop rotations were completed, delivering over 6,000 mt of food and humanitarian supplies on behalf of other actors.

Following the end of the siege in September, several agencies were able to reach Deir Ezzor successfully, thanks to the coordination between the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), the Logistics Cluster, and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Trucks were dispatched from different locations in Tartous, Damascus, Latakia, Homs and Rural Damascus and delivered food, health, WASH, shelter and education commodities. After a first round of single-agency deliveries, the Logistics Cluster facilitated the first inter-agency delivery of humanitarian assistance. A total of 32 trucks carrying nutrition, WASH, protection, health and shelter items left Homs in the early morning of 27 September and safely reached Deir Ezzor City in the evening of the same day.

The opening of the land routes is an important development to secure critical humanitarian assistance to the north-east of the country, where humanitarian conditions are dire. Consequently, these changes have affected the operation in Syria positively as the new delivery capacity enabled the introduction of new commodities to the area, while the air operations necessitated some prioritization due to the high costs and limited aircraft loading capacity compared to trucks. These developments represent a significant achievement for the humanitarian community as a whole, and a necessary step towards securing a steady supply of humanitarian assistance to Qamishly and Deir Ezzor City. The resumption of land access came at a crucial time and continues to enable humanitarian actors to provide multi-sectoral assistance for thousands of families in a predictable and sustained manner.

Figures and Indicators

Data Notes

Cover page photo © WFP/Hussam Al Saleh.

Convoys to hard-to-reach and besieged areas are organised by the WFP-led Logistics Cluster, in close coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, OCHA and other participating United Nations agencies.

Project Indicators

Output Indicators

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
SO1: Special Operation (Cluster) and Special Operation (Logistics)				
Number of ETC meetings conducted on local and global levels	instance	18	9	50.0%
Number of IM products (sitreps, factsheets, maps and other ETC information) produced and shared via email, information management platform, task force and ETC website	item	50	36	72.0%
Number of agencies and organizations using coordination and logistics services	agency/organization	20	60	300.0%
Number of flights operated	flight	100	285	285.0%
Percentage of service requests to handle, store and/or transport cargo fulfilled	%	95	93	97.9%
Volume (m3) of cargo moved through logistics common services	m3	25,000	66,896	267.6%
Number of information management products produced and shared, including bulletins, maps, guidance documents, and other logistics information	item	50	78	156.0%
Number of operational areas where common ETC services are deployed	operational area	5	12	240.0%
Number of training sessions / workshops organized	training session	3	3	100.0%