BASIC NEEDS OUTCOME MONITORING
FOR VULNERABLE SYRIAN REFUGEES ASSISTED BY WFP

Lebanon | December 2019

Highlights

• WFP assisted 613,479 displaced Syrians in December 2019. 26 percent of households were women-headed and 11 percent had a disabled member.

• Multipurpose cash households recorded the lowest acceptable food consumption score in the last 2 years (57 percent) and continued to accumulate debts. They also resorted to the use of negative coping strategies but less than previous months. Expenditures on fuel and medical needs increased in December.

• Cash for food households recorded a low acceptable food consumption score (64 percent) and a general reduction in food consumption. Cash for food households resorted to reduced coping strategies and reducing expenditures on food in order to meet their basic needs in December.

• Food e-card households also had reduced food consumption recording the lowest acceptable food consumption score in the last 2 years (55 percent). In addition, households resorted to using food based and livelihoods based coping strategies including acquiring new debts in order to meet their basic needs in December.

• Non-assisted households had maintained their food consumption but had to resort to the use of debt as a negative coping strategy in December. The sources of income changed possibly due to the economic situation where a lower percentage was able to resort to unskilled labour as a source of income. This forced households to decrease their overall expenditures in order to continue to meet their needs.

• Overall satisfaction stayed almost the same for all households as compared to July around 8 on average.

Introduction

Since 2016, WFP’s Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM) in Lebanon has measured the outcomes of WFP’s assistance targeting Syrian refugees by monitoring status of both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households regularly.

In December 2019, the FSOM was renamed to “basic needs outcome monitoring for vulnerable syrian refugees assisted by WFP” to reflect the assistance WFP provides, content of the survey and results as it provides information beyond food security. The FSOM covers outcomes for Activity 1 of WFP’s Country Strategic Plan (Unconditional resources transfers to support access to food through cash based transfers).

¹Follow this link to download previous FSOM reports
Monitoring is conducted on four different households groups:

- **Food e-card**: households receive USD 27 per family member. That can be redeemed on food at any of 411 WFP-contracted shops across Lebanon.

- **Cash for food e-card**: households receive USD 27 per family member. They have the choice to redeem it either at a WFP-contracted shop or to withdraw it as cash from ATMs. For 2019, this group also receives a top-up of USD 173.5 per household through UNHCR’s Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance Programme (MCAP).

- **Multipurpose cash for essential needs e-card (MPC)**: households receive USD 27 per family member for their food needs and USD 173.5 per household for their essential needs, that can only be withdrawn from any ATM.

- **Non-assisted households**: registered Syrian refugees not receiving WFP assistance.

Households receiving multipurpose cash are validated and registered/recorded with UNHCR. Using a Proxy Means Testing (PMT) formula, households were selected based on a ranked approach from a list of those living below the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB²). WFP targets the poorest households ranked below the SMEB and ensures that the cash for food beneficiaries are the same as those targeted by UNHCR MCAP to ensure those most vulnerable households receive both the food and other essential needs portion of SMEB as a cash transfer.

WFP assisted 613,479 displaced Syrians in December 2019, table 1 provides the overview of the targeted beneficiaries by modality.

**Methodology**

A random sampling approach was used to select a representative sample of the four different households groups. This report covers an analysis of data collected from a sample of 1,000 households in December 2019 as per below:

- 250 non-assisted households;
- 250 food e-card households;
- 250 cash for food e-card household (CFF);
- 250 multipurpose cash for essential needs e-card households (MPC).

The map below shows a geographical overview of the locations of the sampled households.

Since mid-October 2019, the overall security and economic situation in Lebanon is volatile. This coupled with new banking control measures made it more difficult for beneficiaries to redeem assistance. For WFP to facilitate the redemption process and allow beneficiaries to access the assistance in a safe and dignified manner, WFP began staggering the loading of assistance over several days.

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² The SMEB is an indicator on the cost of food and non-food items needed by a refugee household of five members over a period of one month. It assumes a minimum caloric intake of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) of 2,100 kcal but with lower non-food expenses.
Demographics

**Household size**
By the end of 2019, the average household size was 6 members for food e-card, 7 members for MPC, 8 members for CFF, and 5 members for non-assisted households.

**Gender**
Of the assisted sample, 52 percent were women or girls and 48 percent were men or boys. Among the non-assisted sample, 58 percent were men or boys and 42 percent were women or girls.

**Profile of the head of household**
26 percent of the households are women-headed with an average age of 38. 74 percent of the households are men-headed with an average age of 39.
16 percent of the assisted women-headed households are with no formal education while 19 percent of the men-headed households are with no formal education.

Among the non-assisted cases, 17 percent of the households are women-headed with an average age of 41 while 83 percent of the households are men-headed with an average age of 36. Those with no formal education are: 40 percent of women or girls and 9 percent of men or boys.

**Disabled members in the household**
The percentage of assisted households with at least one member with a disability (household members having physical or mental disability) is 10.6 percent, of which 3.8 percent are the head of household.

**Type of housing**
Of the assisted cases, 48.5 percent of the assisted cases are living in a non-permanent housing and 19.2 percent live in a non-residential housing.

10.6 percent of the non-assisted households live in a non-permanent housing and 28.7 percent live in a non-residential housing.

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1 non-permanent, temporary housing such as tents and prefabs
2 non-residential units, not requiring or providing facilities for people to live on the premises such as collective shelter, garage, construction site, etc.
Compared to July 2019 results, there was a 13 percent reduction in acceptable food consumption score (FCS) in household receiving the multipurpose cash assistance. This recorded the lowest acceptable FCS in the last 2 years (since November 2017). Figure 1 shows the food consumption groups development from November 2018 till December 2019. With many households moving into borderline and poor FCS, poor FCS reached 7 percent in December. This decrease in food consumption score is due to the reduction in consumption of vegetables, meat and dairy as compared to July 2019 which has been met with an increased consumption of the cheaper alternative, such as pulses. The price increase of food commodities in the market could have played a major role in the deterioration of the food consumption score, in addition to reduction in debt as mentioned below.

Percentage of households with debt increased and continued to be high at 95 percent (table 2). Trends for the past three years show that higher percentages of households acquire new debts during the months of November and December. This is probably due to the winter season and the costs associated with heating and schooling. In December 2019, 62 percent of interviewed MPC households continue to acquire new debts. This means households continue to use debts as a coping strategy. However, the average amount of the new debts acquired decreased from 209 in July 2019 to 127 USD in December; indicating that the amount of new debts that they were able to access in December is lower. This could explain why we notice a deterioration in the food consumption score. Average total debt in USD remains the same as compared to July 2019.

Households continue to resort to negative coping strategies, but less than in previous months (table 3). The reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) for MPC assisted households decreased from 11.6 in July to reach 9.7 in December 2019. In February 2019, the livelihood coping strategies index (LCSI) was 3.9, increased to 5.1 in July, and then decreased to reach 4.3 by the end of the year 2019. This indicate an increase in the use of livelihood coping strategies in the second half of the year. 83 percent of households resorted to purchasing food on credit, 67 percent borrowed money, and 6 percent withdrew children from school. The percentage of households withdrawing children from schools tripled from July to December (2 percent to 6 percent). Further analysis indicated that households withdrew children from school because they were unable to cover transportation and school needs.

Main expenditures in December where on food, medicine and rental fees. Expenditures on fuel and medical needs increased between July and December while food expenditures decreased. This means that households decreased consumption of specific foods and bought more food on credit. Results show that 30 percent of the consumed food was bought on credit which also increased compared to July 2019 which was 23 percent. Total expenditure decreased as compared to July 2019 from 702 USD to reach 518 USD December 2019.

Food consumption decreased and households resorted to acquiring new debts but seem to have had difficulties to access large amounts of new debt. Households continue to resort to the use of negative coping strategies but less than previous months. Expenditures on fuel and medical needs increased in December.

Table 1: Table showing figures on food consumption groups among MPC households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 18</th>
<th>Dec 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Table showing figures on debts per MPC households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquired</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1042</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Table showing the rCSI and LCSI for MPC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>rCSI</th>
<th>LCSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb-19</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-19</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-19</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Households that receive multi-purpose cash assistance spent as per the below:

- Food: 39%
- Rent: 7%
- Fuel: 12%
- Medical expenses: 13%
- Other needs: 29%
There was a reduction in acceptable food consumption score (FCS) between July and December 2019 in household receiving the cash for food assistance (CFF) from 68 to 64 percent. The food consumption score for those who received cash for food decreased as well from July to December where it stood at 49.4 in December as compared to July where it stood at 52.7.

With many households moving into borderline and poor food consumption, poor FCS reached 11 percent in December 2019. Similar to results of other modalities, food consumption results show a deterioration specifically in the poor and borderline categories as of the second half of 2019. (figure 2)

Percentage of households with debt slightly decreased between July and December, but continued to be high (91 percent) similar to the same time last year. Average amount of debt has slightly decreased in December 2019 which is also in line with debt repayment trend which slightly increased by 3 percent in December.

73 percent of households continue to acquire new debts. Nevertheless, the average amount of new debts acquired decreased.

### Acquired new debts in the last 30 days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 18</th>
<th>Feb 19</th>
<th>Jul 19</th>
<th>Dec 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households that have debts</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Debts in USD</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>1151</td>
<td>1192</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Food consumption groups among CFF households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 18</th>
<th>Feb 19</th>
<th>Jul 19</th>
<th>Dec 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Households continue to resort to food related negative coping strategies. The reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) for CFF assisted households increased from 8.7 in July to reach 9.3 in December 2019.

In February 2019, the livelihood coping strategies index (LCSI) was 6, increased to 6.2 in July, and decreased to reach 5 by the end year December 2019. 83 percent of households resorted to purchasing food on credit, 70 percent borrowed money, 43 percent reduced health expenses and 10 percent withdrew children from school. Households withdrew children from school as they are unable to cover transportation and school needs.

Main expenditures in December where on food, medicine and fuel for heating and cooking, with an increase in percentage of households reporting spending on fuel for heating and cooking (0 percent in July to 8 percent December). Total expenditure remains the same with a reduction in expenditure on food with 29 percent as compared to July (July $ 331-December $ 235).

CFF households resorted to reduced coping strategies and reducing expenditures on food in order to meet their basic needs in December. With the increased need to cover for other non-food basic needs such as fuel for heating during the winter, households changed the type of food consumed and resort to purchasing food on credit to meet these needs.
Food e-card households recorded a 13 percent reduction in acceptable food consumption score (FCS) between July and December 2019 - from 68 to 55 percent. This is the lowest acceptable FCS in the last 2 years (since November 2017). With many households moving into borderline and poor food consumption, poor FCS reached 11 percent in December 2019, which is the highest poor FCS in the last 2 years (since November 2017).

This decrease in food consumption score is due to the reduction in consumption of vegetables, fruits, cereal, meat and dairy as compared to July 2019 which has been met with an increased consumption of the cheaper alternative, pulses. The price increase of food commodities in the market could have played a major role in the deterioration of the food consumption score.

Percentage of households with debts remained the same (92 percent), which has remained stable for the past two years of monitoring. The average total debt remains high as it has been noticed over the previous months of the year, and food e-card households have the highest amount of debt among all modalities. The percentage of households acquiring new debts increased to 78 percent compared to 62 percent in July. Nevertheless, the average amount of the debts decreased. This means households continue to use debts as a coping strategy. However, the amount of new debts they were able to access in December decreased.

Households continue to resort to food based negative coping strategies. The reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) for food e-card assisted households remained almost the same between July (11.3) and December (11.2).

In February 2019, the livelihood coping strategies index (LCSI) was 5.5, increased to 6.6 in July, and decreased to reach 5.7 by the end of the year December 2019. This indicate an increase in use of livelihood coping strategies as of the second half of the year. 86 percent of households resorted to purchasing food on credit, 73 percent borrowed money, 38 percent reduced health expenses and 9 percent withdrew children from school. Households withdrew children from school as they are unable to cover transportation and school needs.

Food e-card household spent less on food and more on fuel for heating and medical needs in December. The overall expenditures slightly decreased between July and December from 585 USD to reach 511 USD. Food e-card households resorted to using food based and livelihoods based coping strategies including acquiring debt in order to meet their basic needs in December.
For the non-assisted households, the food consumption score remained the same between July and December where it stood at 50 and 51 respectively. There was a slight movement of households from acceptable and borderline food consumption score (FCS) between July and December 2019 (from 65 to 63 percent acceptable FCS and 28 to 27 borderline FCS), this was coupled with a slight increase (3%) of households moving into poor food consumption. Household’s diet highly relies on the consumption of cereals, oil and sugar.

The number of households who have debt has increased between July and December from 90 percent to reach 95 percent. Households continue to have accumulate debts and a higher percentage of households accumulated news debts in the last 30 days (85%). The average total amount of debts has slightly decreased but remains very high for these households. It is clear that while households are able to moderate levels of food consumption, they are highly reliant on debts to cover their needs.

Non-assisted households continue to resort to food related negative coping strategies but in lower frequencies than previous month. The reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) for non-assisted households decreased from 11.3 in July to reach 9.61 in December 2019.

Non-assisted households relied on the regular use of Livelihoods coping strategies to deal with their situation. The LCSI slightly reduced between February and July but remained the same in December 2019. 73 percent of households resorted to purchasing food on credit, 69 percent borrowed money, 47 percent reduced health expenses.

The main source of income for non-assisted households changed as compared to July 2019- in July the main sources of income were unskilled labour (56%) and borrowing (21%) while in December the order and percentage of households reporting them as main income sources decreased to borrowing (38%) and unskilled labour (36%). Similar to previous months, main expenditures in December where on food, rent and medical expenses. Average of total expenditure in December 2019 (430$) decreased as compared to February (613$) and July (568$) 2019.

Non-assisted households had maintained their food consumption but had to resort to the use of debt as a negative coping strategy in December. The sources of income changed as compared to previous months possibly due to the economic situation where a lower percentage was able to resort to unskilled labour as a source of income. This forced households to decrease their overall expenditures in order to continue to meet their needs.
Satisfaction

Beneficiaries rated their satisfaction with WFP assistance on a scale of 1-10. Overall satisfaction stayed almost the same as compared to July around 8.05 on average.

Accountability and protection

All assisted households reported receiving assistance without facing any safety challenges in December 2019. All the assisted households reported that the WFP programme is dignifying. This means that they feel respected and empowered by WFP and cooperating partner staff. The programme sites are in good condition, accessible, and provide proper facilities.

Decision-making

Households were asked about the person in charge of making decisions regarding the use of assistance received. The majority of the households agreed that men and women decide together on how the assistance should be spent.

Communication

WFP regularly communicates with beneficiaries and explains the food and basic needs programming at distributions and help desks. WFP also informs beneficiaries by SMS and through the hotline about their inclusion and discontinuation status.

For December, families receiving WFP cash and food assistance received their assistance on different days from the 4th to 7th. Beneficiaries were informed by SMS on different days of when their assistance was available to withdraw and they were asked to only go to the ATM once they have received the SMS confirming the upload as their assistance was not available prior to this date.

In December, a total of 72,350 (22,880 for MPC and 49,470 for Food ecard) text messages were sent by WFP to explain for households the loading amount and date. CFF beneficiaries also received this SMS (a total of 30,167) but through UNHCR since they also receive MCAP beneficiaries. On the other hand, around 76 percent of all households know how to contact WFP through the hotline. Targeting criteria remains unclear to beneficiaries due to the complexity of Proxy-Means Testing.
Redemption Monitoring

The below section details some of the process monitoring results captured in the December data collection that give some insight into the beneficiary access situation to the ATMs. Following the political and economic turmoil that took place since mid-October and continued throughout November and December 2019, there was a need to understand in more details how this has impacted the beneficiaries and households access to assistance. Below some findings.

**ATM Access**

When analysing who goes to the ATM to withdraw assistance, results indicate that in 49% of the households the male members go to withdraw assistance, 29% of the households females go to withdraw and 16% go together.

As reported in the survey, the main contributors to male members visiting the ATMs more frequently is because of knowledge of how to use the ATM and care-giving at the household.

**Banks Access:**

The majority of households were able to access and redeem their assistance from ATMs (99%) in December. Out of those, 81 percent visited the Banque Libano-Française (BLF) bank ATMs which is the financial service provider for the one card of WFP, UNHCR, and UNICEF. The majority of households went to this bank to redeem their assistance as many other banks have restricted the usage of their ATMs to their own customers since mid-October 2019.

**Additional costs linked to redemption:**

Households who redeemed their assistance reported some additional costs linked to withdrawing their assistance, namely transportation costs (34 percent) to the ATM as they had to travel further to reach an ATM or visit more than one to be able to redeem. Households had to visit on average 2 ATMs to be able to withdraw their assistance. This was exacerbated in some areas such as the Bekaa and Akkar where ATM coverage is low and beneficiaries had to travel long distances to reach. On average, households had to pay 11.5 USD as additional costs to reach the ATM.

Notwithstanding some of the difficulties faced to reach, the majority of households successfully redeemed their assistance in full (97%) in December. The remaining 3 percent of the households that redeemed their assistance partially was because the ATM had limited the beneficiary redemption to a certain amount per day (2.5 percent) or that beneficiaries wanted to save that money in their account for later use (0.5 percent).

**Family Dynamics:**

The cash assistance received by the households did not cause any disagreements between family members.

**Upcoming**

- WFP will collect outcome monitoring to measure syrian refugees’ basic needs in February, July and December 2020
- WFP will reactivate the ATM monitoring in 2020 to understand and have a better image on the redemption process
- Follow this link to download FSOM reports  http://vam.wfp.org/CountryPage_assessments.aspx?iso3=LBN