Operational Context

The Islamic Republic of Iran, an upper middle-income country with a population of 83 million, is hosting the world’s fourth largest refugee community. The Government of Iran has generously hosted approximately 1 million refugees for the past 30 years. The majority, which mainly came from Afghanistan and Iraq, live in urban areas. Approximately 31,000 of the most vulnerable refugees live in 20 settlements located throughout the country.

WFP Iran works under its Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018-2020) extended until end of 2022 to align it with both the United Nations development assistance framework (2017–2021), which will be extended for one additional year, and the National Development Plan (2016–2022). The New ICSP for 2023-2025 is also under development.

WFP assists 31,000 beneficiaries yearly through unconditional food assistance, in addition to the provision of a girls’ education cash incentive, and a school feeding initiative consisting of nutritious school snacks.

Moreover, WFP continues to support refugees’ livelihoods through activities aiming to provide them with complementary skills in view of a sustainable repatriation to their country of origin once the situation is conducive. WFP has been present in Iran since 1987.

Operational Updates

• In February, WFP successfully reached 31,251 refugees as per the target, of whom 8,763 were women, 9,013 men, 6,431 girls, and 7,044 boys. The assisted people received 378.6 mt of fortified wheat flour, lentils, vegetable oil, date bars, milk and digestive biscuits.

• Due to the COVID-19 situation, schools are continuing their work either online or in person depending on the situation in their respective provinces. School snacks distribution continued during the month of February amongst 7,980 refugee students.

• As part of WFP Iran efforts to promote education for refugee girls through providing them with cash incentives of Iranian Rials (IRR) 500,000 (USD 2) for each month of regular attendance in school, 2,794 refugee girls received cash in their bank accounts in February.

• To overcome the inflation rate, the students’ incentive was increased from IRR 300,000 (USD 1.1) to IRR 500,000 (USD 2) as of February 2022.

• By providing supplementary rations and maintaining monthly assistance to the refugees through a combination of cash and food, WFP is reducing the economic impact caused by the pandemic, such as surging inflation and rising food prices, on beneficiaries.

• General food distributions in refugee settlements are ongoing with increased health and safety measures due to COVID-19. Cash-based transfers are also operational.
refugee situation and discuss appropriate response actions.

• WFP has a long-standing partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), given the nature of WFP operations in Iran in refugee settlements. In this context, Joint Assessment Missions (JAM), joint distribution and joint post-distribution monitoring take place regularly.

Donors

Japan, Germany, Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, United Kingdom, multilateral funds, and private donors.

Monitoring

Remote monitoring calls are ongoing. Every month, 2.5 percent of refugee households are selected randomly and contacted via phone. During the calls, personal and household information is confirmed, and refugees are asked whether they have received their monthly cash and food entitlements. Furthermore, quality and quantity of assistance received are also verified.

Challenges

To minimize the health risk of WFP staff, a work from home modality is in place at the country office in Tehran. As more than 70 percent of the population has been vaccinated against COVID-19, a maximum of 75 percent of staff presence has been allowed at the office on any given day.

Partnerships

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) are the main cooperating partners of WFP in Iran. BAFIA is responsible for coordinating all matters related to refugees and international agencies. Bi-annual meetings take place between BAFIA, UNHCR and WFP. Monthly operational coordination meetings are also held to monitor the