



WFP / Abeer Etefa

Monitoring & Evaluation

Report
May 2013



Syria Crisis Response

Highlights

- WFP food assistance reached over 2.35 million people in all 14 governorates of Syria. A total of 471,726 family food parcels were distributed during the cycle, amounting to 22,693 mt of mixed food commodities, including 7,135 mt of wheat flour dispatched to support 1.43 million people in rural areas.
- An inter-agency mission to Al Qusayr in Homs governorate found a small number of inhabitants remaining inside the town and recommended continued humanitarian support in places of displacement.
- WFP monitors carried out monitoring activities in Hama governorate for the first time since October 2012.
- WFP staff in Homs were relocated to Tartous due to growing insecurity in the city.





Since October 2011, WFP has been providing food assistance for the Syrian population affected by unrest in the country under the framework of Emergency Operation (EMOP) 200339. With a target of 50,000 beneficiaries at the beginning of the operation, WFP progressively scaled up its activities to reach 2.18 million people in April 2013 and 2.35 million people in May 2013.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) has been WFP's main partner so far. SARC currently receives approximately 300,000 family food rations each month from WFP warehouses, and distributes these to beneficiaries through their branches, sub-branches, or local charities who in turn distribute on their behalf in areas where they have no presence. By partnering with 19 national NGOs or local charities in May, an additional 200,000 families were targeted, bringing the total planned coverage for the month to 500,000 families or 2.5 million people under the General Food Distribution (GFD) activity.

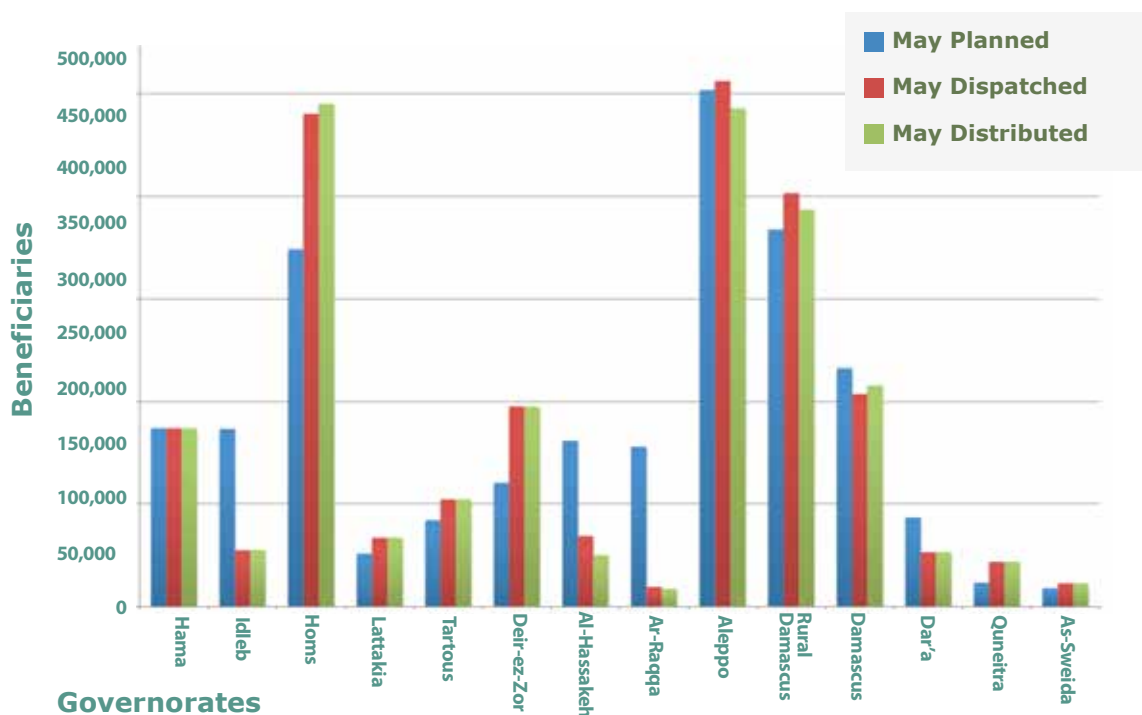
A supplementary feeding programme is also implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and UNICEF. This activity started in March 2013 with the aim of preventing malnutrition among displaced children aged 6-59 months. Distribution is undertaken by MOH through health directorates that support collective centres across the country. WFP plans to reach 100,000 children between July and September of this year, and an additional 200,000 children from October to December 2013.

At this time, monthly distribution cycles are usually completed over the course of approximately one and a half months due to access constraints and extended food dispatches. The May cycle commenced on 3 May and was completed by 16 June. Food distributions take place at Final Distribution Points (FDPs) agreed upon with partners. In some cases, the number of planned FDPs exceeds the actuals based on the fluid situation. WFP undertakes direct monitoring in accessible areas covered by its national and international staff from offices located in Tartous, Qamishly, Homs and Damascus.

Distribution Coverage

General Food Distribution

May



WFP provides relief food rations to families affected by the conflict. During the May cycle, WFP dispatched a total of 480,711 family food parcels to support 2.4 million people, achieving 96 percent of the plan. This amounted to 22,693 mt of food, including 7,135 mt of wheat flour. According to partner reports, 471,726 family food parcels were distributed to more than 2.35 million people. Food distributions took place at 333 main FDPs across all 14 governorates of Syria in both government and non-government controlled areas.

Actual dispatches to Idlib, Al-Hasakeh and Dara'a were less than planned during the May cycle, due to access constraints. A change to the SARC management team in Al-Raqqa reduced deliveries and distributions in areas of the governorate covered by SARC.

Significant challenges experienced during the cycle affected logistics and food deliveries to targeted areas. Trucks delivering WFP food, continue to face attacks and looting while in transit. In May, six trucks were attacked while delivering food in the north east provinces and in Aleppo. In other cases, frequent road closures during military activities hampered food dispatches to the main cities of Homs, Tartous, Aleppo and Damascus. However, WFP was able to accelerate food dispatches during the last two weeks of May, and thereby reach 96 percent of the plan by early June.

Supplementary Feeding

During the May cycle, 4.78 mt of Plumpy'doz® was dispatched to MOH centres in 6 governorates of Syria. MOH staff continue to face difficulties in accessing some areas in Rural Damascus and Hama due to ongoing hostilities. However, distributions were able to take place in rural parts of Homs, including Talbisseh, Al Rastan, Ter Maalah and Tel Daw in coordination with SARC and local committees.

Since the start of the supplementary feeding programme in March 2013, WFP has dispatched 144.59 mt of Plumpy'doz® and Nutributter® to prevent malnutrition and address micronutrient gaps for approximately 88,640 children. Nutributter® is specifically provided through SARC to children in north eastern governorates, while MOH covers IDP children in collective shelters hosting IDPs.

Immediate Response to Displaced Populations

The use of ready-to-eat rations enables WFP to rapidly respond to the immediate food needs of newly displaced families. In May, WFP dispatched 17,705 ready-to-eat rations to support 88,525 people affected by renewed clashes in parts of rural Damascus and to families displaced to Hesieh from Al Qusayr in Homs governorate.

The ready-to-eat rations were initially adopted under the framework of Immediate Response Emergency Operation (IR-EMOP) 200536, which was launched in December 2012 to assist Palestinian refugees fleeing the Yarmouk camp in Damascus following heavy fighting. Since December, 179,515 Syrians and Palestinians have benefited from ready-to-eat rations, which are highly appreciated because of the diversity of the items and their suitability for adults and children.



Inter-agency convoys to locations under siege

Certain areas of the country are becoming increasingly difficult to access due to escalating hostilities. For these areas, inter-agency convoys are organized to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to populations caught in the conflict. Humanitarian actors in Syria continue to advocate for access to areas that have not been reached for several months.

On 29 May, an inter-agency mission took place to Hesieh, Homs governorate, bringing food and non-food items for families displaced during events in Al Qusayr.

Also in Homs governorate, two additional inter-agency convoys were fielded to opposition-held areas in Krad Desnieh and in three villages in Al-Houla, which had been inaccessible for ten months. These delivered food and non-food items for 1,000 and 5,000 families respectively.

In Tartous governorate, WFP participated in an inter-agency assessment of Zamreen town on 12 May following the dramatic events in Banias that led to the displacement of thousands of families to neighbouring villages.

Monitoring Coverage

General Food Distribution

May cycle food distributions took place at over 330 main distribution points across the country. Of these, WFP staff were able to monitor food distributions in 26 locations in seven governorates. A combination of multiple factors limited WFP's direct access to distribution points, including insecurity. For instance, monitoring activities in the north eastern part of the country have been limited to Qamishly city since the hijacking of a WFP armoured vehicle (AV) in February 2013. According to UN security regulations, movement beyond the city limits requires two AVs. The recent delivery of additional AVs to WFP's field office in Qamishly is expected to improve the frequency of field visits.

Monitoring activities could not take place in the governorates of Aleppo, Al-Raqqa, Idleb, Deir Ezzor and Dara'a, which were classified as no-go areas by UNDSS. WFP's field office in Aleppo has been closed since December 2012. Ongoing military activities on major routes prevented monitoring activities in Quneitra during the May cycle. In Tartous governorate, four monitoring visits were cancelled due to a new UNDSS regulation requiring two AVs for movement beyond a radius of 20 km from Tartous city.

In all visited areas, WFP monitors observed food distributions implemented by SARC and local charities. A total of 98 family interviews were conducted by WFP monitors during 33 field visits to 26 locations. About half of all interviews were conducted in Qamishly. On average, 3 questionnaires were completed during each field visit with a lower performance for Homs and Hama, where intense security conditions limited opportunities for multiple interviews and data collection.

Regular Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) was only possible in Tartous and Rural Damascus in formal and informal collective shelters, as well as in Al-Houla in Homs governorate. PDM allows WFP monitors to verify whether entitled families received the correct food allocation, to assess living conditions and to obtain additional information regarding food utilization.



Supplementary Feeding

WFP staff monitored the Supplementary Feeding activity to ensure accuracy and transparency in its implementation. Five monitoring visits were undertaken in three governorates: two visits took place in Insha'at in Homs, one visit in Adraa Ummaliye in Rural Damascus, and one visit at the Athletic Center collective shelter in Lattakia.

Implementation of the nutrition activity continues to face challenges due to limited capacities of the directorates of health, and a shortage of technical partners in the country.

Monitoring Findings

Overview

The general situation in all visited governorates remained similar to that of the previous month. People were still on the move, and all partners confirmed a growing number of hundreds of people requesting to be registered for relief assistance on a daily basis. The majority of beneficiaries continued to be displaced families, exceeding the proportion of IDPs to hosting families or residents compared to previous months. Support was provided to food insecure residents at a lower scale due to the larger number of IDPs who are prioritised for assistance. These reports confirmed that the current humanitarian response is still far below the needs. Some partners are still obliged to divide food rations, although to a lesser degree in comparison to previous cycles.

Monitoring visits to besieged areas revealed the extremely harsh conditions that people live in. Families interviewed in the semi-rural areas of Al-Houla in Homs governorate, which has been

inaccessible to WFP for the last ten months, reported that they have been relying on rapidly depleting food reserves or *mouneh*, while some had sold part of their land to meet food costs. Respondent families also reported to have limited access to cooking fuel and had resorted to burning the remains of dead animals to cook. Health, water and sanitation were particularly worrying, due to the fact that most of the infrastructure has been destroyed and drinking water is rarely available. Respondents estimated that about 56,000 people were still living in three villages in the Al Houla area with no access to medicines.

A high number of interviewed beneficiaries expressed a decline in their food consumption patterns, opting for lower quality foods and consuming fewer meals per day. Some beneficiaries said they still manage to get bread through organised local committees who collect funds to buy and distribute bread to families in some areas of Homs, Rural Damascus and Qamishly. This system was put in place to reduce the length of time spent queuing for bread at shops or bakeries. Interviewed beneficiaries also cited a decline in services, particularly electricity which is only available for six hours a day in the north eastern part of the country.

Supplementary Feeding

WFP monitors could only visit six locations participating in the nutrition programme. In most cases, WFP staff needed to re-train MOH staff on proper MUAC administration to ensure that measurements were taken correctly. Monitoring findings confirmed that most caregivers or parents of targeted children were aware of the proper way to use the product and its intended age group. However, there was a small number of families who gave the product to older children or gave more than the recommended three tablespoons per child per day. WFP monitors provided on-the-spot sensitisation on the use of the product and advised MOH staff to display product details and instructions for use at all distribution locations.

PDM visits highlighted families' depleting resources, especially for displaced communities living in unofficial shelters with poor access to clean water such as in Adraa Ummalieh in Rural Damascus and in some collective centers in Homs. Families interviewed said they were increasingly dependent on humanitarian food assistance which mainly lacked fruits, vegetables and proteins.

In Lattakia, three cases of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) were identified and referred to the nearest health centre.

Beneficiary demographics

Displaced families remain the main beneficiary group, representing 82 percent of interviewed beneficiaries during the May cycle. Monitoring data confirmed previous reports of an increase in the number of returnees, especially in Al-Hasakeh governorate where 25.5 percent of respondents were returning economic migrants.

Although 81.6 percent of the interviewed beneficiaries were married, the number of female-headed households remains high. Partners have also reported that more than half of registered families are headed by women. This phenomenon is due to the fact that many women are widowed, or their husbands are missing or have simply left to find work elsewhere. In Hesieh, Homs governorate, it was estimated that 85 percent of the people fleeing Al Qusayr were women and children. In Rural Damascus, WFP monitors confirmed that the majority of beneficiaries were women. WFP monitoring found the highest percentage of female-headed households in Tartous, which hosts a large number of IDPs. This has been attributed to the relative safety and stability in the governorate that gives male income-earners a measure of security to leave their family in Tartous while seeking employment elsewhere.

Management and Efficiency of Distribution Process

General Food Distribution

WFP's partners have started working on a standardized registration and distribution process at the governorate level. Each partner systematically registers IDPs collecting details on family composition, place of origin and urgent needs. WFP has provided IT equipment to its partners to facilitate distribution, monitoring and reporting activities. Coordination is encouraged among SARC and local charities working in the same area to avoid duplication.

All partners undertake regular verifications to determine the eligibility of beneficiaries based on vulnerability criteria. In areas with a high number of registered families, household level verifications are undertaken on a random basis. Partners also rely on local committees, comprising leaders of the displaced communities, who help identify the most vulnerable families in need of food assistance. The local committees also support food distributions in areas with limited partner capacity to distribute. Door to door distributions also take place in some rural areas with a low number of registered families per FDP (approximately 100 family rations per FDP).



Supplementary Feeding

The distribution of Plumpy'doz is mainly conducted in areas accessible by MOH staff. The process differs between areas, as some collective centres receive a one-month supply (four pots per child), while others receive weekly rations (one pot per child) for four consecutive weeks. However, May cycle distributions were hampered by insecurity and limited access to storage facilities.

Ration Adequacy and Food Utilization

The WFP food basket during the May cycle consisted of 58 kg of mixed food items for a family of five for one month, covering 70 percent of the minimum daily caloric requirement per person. A majority of interviewed beneficiaries were aware of the composition of the food basket. In terms of frequency of receiving food assistance, 70 percent of respondents said they had already received WFP rations at least once, compared to 78 percent of respondents asked the same question the previous month. However, an emerging pattern of concern is that some beneficiaries receive food assistance every 60 days instead of 30 days due to the high number of registered IDP families which exceeds food allocations available for distribution.

A small proportion (13 percent) of respondents complained about the quality of food (mainly bulgur), while a higher number of respondents requested a greater diversity of food items provided, as well as an increase in the vegetable oil and sugar rations.

Wheat flour was particularly welcomed by 92 percent of respondents, who requested that the commodity continue to be distributed on a monthly basis. Beneficiaries in rural areas are able to make bread out of the wheat flour provided, while beneficiaries in other areas use it to make pies and pastries.

Ration Adequacy and Food Utilization

Although not a representative sample, monitoring data from accessible areas point to a decline in the proportion of interviewed beneficiaries selling or swapping part of their food rations to obtain other much needed items. Down from 7 percent during the previous cycle, some 4.3 percent of respondents in May admitted to selling a portion of their food rations to obtain cash to pay rents, and buy baby milk and medicines. Others confirmed swapping some of their food items to obtain fresh food. Some partners are still able to complement WFP food rations with other commodities, depending on their own resources and on the generosity of local communities. However, this is becoming increasingly rare due to growing vulnerabilities, inflation and high food prices.

Coping Strategies

During the May cycle, WFP monitors were able to interview 98 families in seven governorates about adopted strategies for coping with the situation. About 86 percent of respondents stated that their first option was to switch to lower quality foods, which often meant less dietary diversity and fewer fresh foods like fruits and vegetables. This was followed by a decrease in the number of meals per day, although 51 percent of the adults interviewed said they were able to eat three times a day.

Interviewed families also raised concerns about the lack of access to medicine and health services. Of those families who admitted selling part of their food rations, half said they had to do so to cover urgent medical needs. Those who could afford to pay for rented accommodation (51 percent) noted that they had used up all their savings to secure accommodation for the next few months, and had limited resources to meet other living expenses.

About 78 percent confirmed having access to cash, but faced many difficulties in finding occasional employment. Around 17 percent of the interviewed beneficiaries said they received cash assistance from an international organization in Al-Hasakeh and from local charities in Homs and Tartous. Furthermore, 17 percent of respondents said that they rely on one family member who still has a salaried job, but oftentimes had to support more than one family.

The majority of those interviewed had been displaced at least twice, which contributed to their weakened psychological state. The lack of privacy is also a source of stress especially for those living in shelters. Cases of domestic violence have been reported in Tartous, Homs and Rural Damascus. Children are also being taken out of school due to insecurity and an inability to afford the costs of schooling.

Market Price Analysis

WFP retail market price monitoring currently covers 28 urban and rural locations in all 14 governorates of Syria. May and June price monitoring revealed substantial price increases for basic food and non-food items. Notably, average prices of bread and wheat flour have more than doubled since February 2012. Week-on-week data showed a slight increase in the price of subsidized bread during the third week of May, mainly in rural parts of Aleppo and Al-Raqqa governorates where the delivery of wheat flour was disrupted by insecurity. Bread prices have since stabilised but remain at high levels.



Fuel prices have also risen sharply since the fuel subsidy cut and further devaluation of the Syrian Pound. The average price for a cylinder of butane is around 2,000 SYP (US\$17 at the official rate), and is more than double this in Dara'a governorate. Damascus, Aleppo, Al-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh governorates are also experiencing high fuel prices

