



# IMPACT REVIEW

JANUARY 2016

## SYRIA CRISIS REGIONAL RESPONSE



For information on WFP's Syria Crisis Response in 2013 - 2016, please use the **QR Code** or access through the link: [wfp.org/syriainfo](http://wfp.org/syriainfo)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- As the crisis transitions to one of a protracted nature, **outcome monitoring** is becoming evermore essential to better understand the overall humanitarian impact.
- Monitoring findings confirm that a **reduction in food assistance negatively impacts** not only the **food security** of Syrian refugee families but also their **education, livelihoods and protection**.
- WFP shared and sought advice on its **five year strategy for the region** with key stakeholders in order to strengthen efforts joint programming.
- Since the start of operations, WFP has injected USD 1.28 billion into regional economies.

WFP/Mohammad Batah



World Food Programme

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# MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CHANGE IN ASSISTANCE OVER TIME THROUGH OUTCOME MONITORING

Now entering its sixth year, the Syria crisis continues to impact the lives of millions of civilians inside Syria and beyond. An estimated 6.5 million people are internally displaced and 4.6 million refugees are registered across the region. Programming must remain relevant and respond to the evolving needs of beneficiaries. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions is key to inform better programming that reflects the protracted nature of the crisis.

At the onset of the conflict, WFP focused on **monitoring activity outputs** (e.g. number of food parcels distributed). In simpler terms WFP **described** and **counted** its activities and the number of people who benefited from them.

As the conflict developed, however, the focus shifted towards indicators which could monitor the quality of the assistance provided (process indicators) and ensure that **beneficiaries' level of satisfaction** was consistently measured and informed programming. Establishing and maintaining **beneficiary feedback channels** (i.e. surveys, hotlines, help desks) has strengthened WFP's **accountability**, not only to its beneficiaries but also to its donors and partners.

While these mechanisms remain relevant, WFP is adapting its tools to understand: **"What difference does WFP make?"** It aims to **measure the outcomes** of its humanitarian assistance. **Outcomes** serve to guide **longer-term programming** as they measure not only the **results** of a programme, but also the **overall (direct and indirect) impact of an intervention over time**. Measuring outcomes over time allows key stakeholders (UN agencies, NGOs, governments, donors) to assess which programmes are the 'most effective' and provide greater 'value for their money' – two critical components particularly in a protracted setting – while continuing to support the most vulnerable.

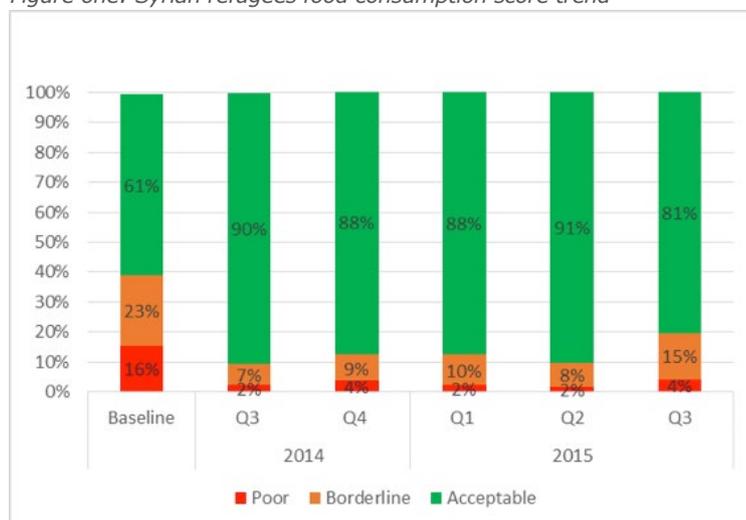
While WFP has conducted **outcome monitoring** in the countries neighboring Syria since 2013, findings within the last year have brought to light key trends in **food security** and its linkages to other key sectors, such as **education, livelihoods, and protection**. Results from this type of monitoring indicate that Food Security underpins other vital sectors. The cross-sectoral nature of humanitarian assistance as a whole and the complementarity of its various sectors suggests that inter-sectoral monitoring and evaluation would be evermore useful for the international community.

## FINDINGS TO DATE

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, WFP has conducted monthly monitoring activities. Findings from these activities feed into quarterly analysis and reporting which serve to refine programming.

WFP's monitoring to date indicates that food security levels in countries hosting Syrian refugees remained relatively stable from the start of the crisis till mid-2015; however, in the latter part of the year there was a downward shift as **the proportion of refugees vulnerable to food insecurity<sup>1</sup> almost doubled** (see figure one). This marked the **biggest deterioration in refugees' food consumption** since the start of the Syria crisis in 2011. This outcome is directly correlated to the timing of WFP's **cuts in assistance** – both a reduction in the number of families receiving assistance as well as the amount of assistance provided.

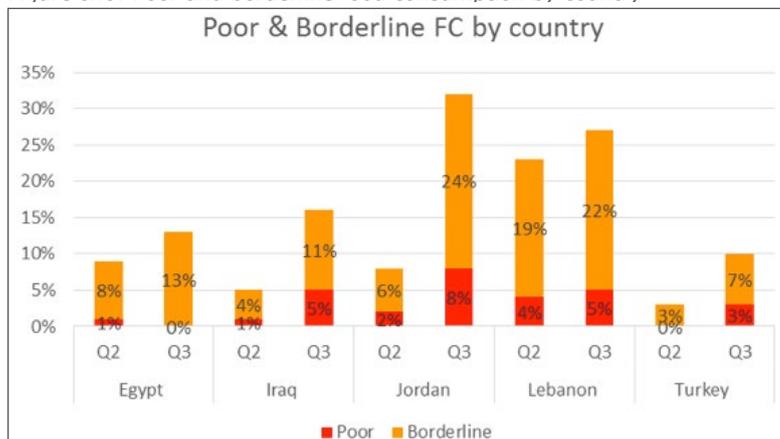
Figure one: Syrian refugees food consumption score trend



1 Poor or borderline food consumption increased from 10 to 19 percent. WFP Regional Syrian Refugee M&E Report – Quarter 3 2015.

The most drastic cuts in assistance took place in **Jordan** and **Lebanon** after the second half of 2015, where the proportion of Syrian refugees vulnerable to food insecurity rose by 24 and 4 percent respectively. This resulted in both countries having the **lowest food consumption** out of those neighbouring Syria during the reporting period (see figure two). Low food consumption means refugees are less frequently consuming food, and eating less diverse and nutritious foods.

Figure two: Poor and borderline food consumption by country



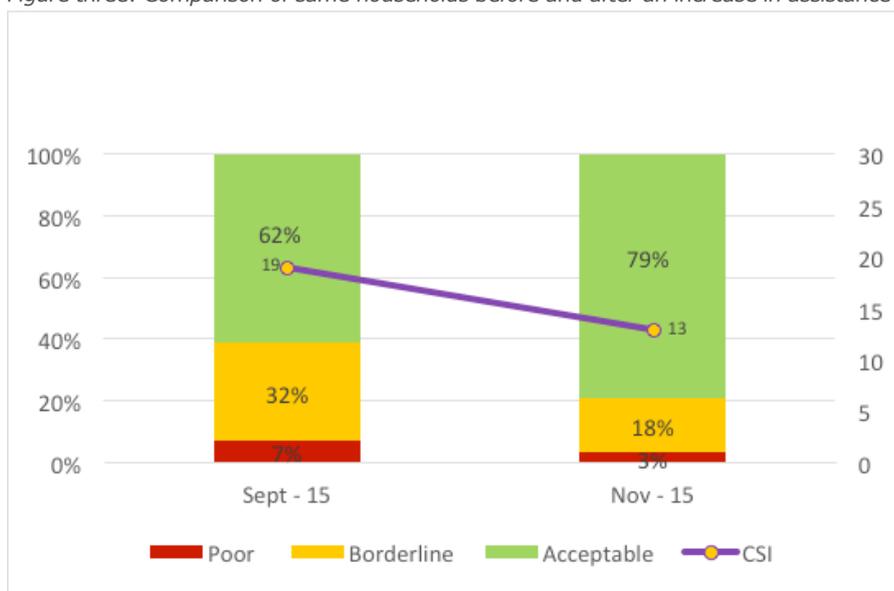
## RAPID PANEL ASSESSMENTS- MEASURING REAL-TIME IMPACT ON FOOD AND OTHER SECTORS

To compliment regular monitoring, WFP conducted two **rapid panel assessments** in the second half of the year in Jordan and Lebanon. These assessments were carried out to better gauge the added value of WFP's assistance and the difference it makes on the lives of vulnerable Syrian refugee families. This type of monitoring provides a quick snap shot of the current situation before and after a change in assistance<sup>2</sup> by assessing the same group of people.

In **Jordan**, the same vulnerable households in communities who temporarily (month of September) did not benefit from assistance were interviewed before and during the cuts. The results demonstrated that **over 80 percent of refugee households decreased their food consumption and 75 percent resorted to more frequent and severe strategies** to cope with no longer receiving assistance.<sup>3</sup> These strategies included withdrawing children from school, having children enter the work force, begging, borrowing money to purchase food, and reducing the amount of food consumed by adults daily to meet the food needs of their children.<sup>4</sup>

In **Lebanon**, a rapid panel study *Figure three: Comparison of same households before and after an increase in assistance*

was conducted to capture the **impact of an increase in assistance** following a sharp reduction in the third quarter. During the time of reductions, half of the refugee families interviewed stated to have relied on **negative coping strategies** such as reducing essential non-food expenditures (for example on health and education), as well as withdrawing children from school. Fortunately, after assistance levels increased by eight USD, families reduced their reliance on these mechanisms significantly (by 32 percent<sup>5</sup>). Moreover, the proportion of refugees with **acceptable food consumption increased** (by 17 percent)<sup>6</sup> (see figure three).<sup>6</sup>



2 The time period for these assessment refers to data collected in May (prior to the cuts), which in the context of Jordan was compared with data collected in September (during the cuts). While in Lebanon data collected in May (prior to the cuts) was compared with data collected in October (following an increase in the assistance level).

3 WFP Rapid Panel Survey - Jordan October 2015.

4 Ibid.

5 A reduction in the coping strategy index score from 19 to 13.

6 WFP Regional Syrian Refugee M&E Report - Quarter 3 2015.

The findings in Jordan and Lebanon indicate how the amount of food assistance received greatly impacts the daily lives and decisions of refugee families. The results from both assessments underscore that **food assistance continues to remain a vital tool to improve and stabilise the food security of refugees;** and to mitigate the harmful impact of the severe measures refugee families adopt. In essence, if food assistance were to remain at a reduced level, the overall wellbeing of Syrian refugees, particularly children, would be severely affected in the short and long-term, painting a grim picture for the future generation of Syria.

The impact of the programmatic changes observed in the final quarter of 2015, such as the reinstatement of the vulnerable group in Jordan’s communities (229,000 refugees) and the increase in assistance levels in both Jordan and Lebanon, will be shortly analyzed to better understand the longer-term variation in refugees’ vulnerability.

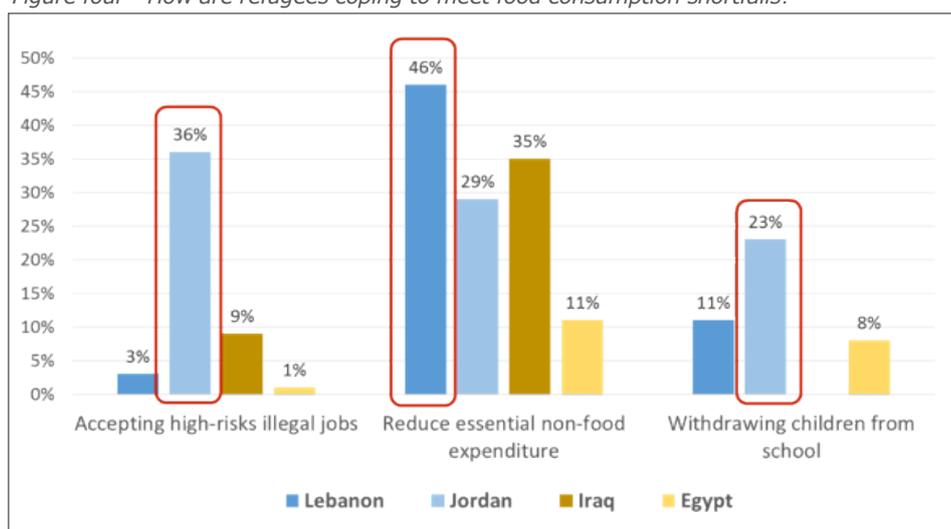
## REDUCED ASSISTANCE LEVELS IMPACTS OTHER SECTORS

In addition to rapid panel assessments, results from regular monitoring supports the argument that **cuts in food assistance negatively impact the livelihoods, education, and protection of Syrian refugees.**

In terms of refugees’ livelihoods and protection, in **Jordan, over one third** (36 percent) of surveyed households reported that they **accepted high risk/exploitative jobs** to meet their food needs in the third quarter of the year – a **17 percentage point increase** from the previous quarter.<sup>7</sup> In **Iraq**, nine percent of refugee families employed this coping strategy – an 8 percent increase from the prior quarter.<sup>8</sup> Findings from focus group discussions indicate that these jobs are mainly in the agriculture, construction and textile industries. Given that working in Jordan remains illegal for the majority of Syrian refugees, without sponsorship, there are substantial risks involved, including exploitation. The fact that more refugee households must expose themselves to such security and protection risks reflects the desperate measures families are resorting to compensate for limited legal employment opportunities.

The education of Syrian refugees has also been severely disrupted by the reductions in food assistance. In **Jordan**, almost a quarter of refugee families – **24 percent** – (95 surveyed households<sup>9</sup>) **withdrew their children from school**, a nine percent increase from the previous quarter, while **Egypt** observed an 8 percent increase<sup>10, 11</sup>. The withdrawal of children from school to secure families’ food needs highlights the inherent linkages between education, food security and protection. Further confirming these linkages, in **Lebanon** almost half of refugee households – 46 percent – **reduced expenditures on education and health to meet their food needs** (see figure four).<sup>12</sup> The reduction in education and health expenditures can refer to the withdrawal of children from school and/or the avoidance of seeking medical attention to save on transportation costs. With regards to shelter, refugee families have opted to share housing with others in order to pool their resources together, thereby reducing their overall expenditure on rent and utilities.

Figure four - How are refugees coping to meet food consumption shortfalls?



7 Ibid.  
 8 Ibid.  
 9 With a statistically representative sample size (95 percent confidence level and a +/- 5 percent margin of error) this would suggest that some 31,241 HHS (almost 1 in every 4 HHS) on the national level (both camps and communities) have withdrawn their children from schools.  
 10 WFP Monitoring and Evaluation Report Quarter 3. From 0 to 8 percent.  
 11 WFP Regional Syrian Refugee M&E Report – Quarter 3 2015.  
 12 Ibid.

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Monitoring revealed a startling finding linked to the **education, livelihoods, and protection** of Syrian refugee children. In the third quarter of 2015, more refugee families in Jordan and Egypt<sup>13</sup> stated their **children (ages 0-18) were involved in income generation activities**, such as organized begging, harvesting, street vending and assisting shop keepers and bakers. This finding suggests that children are not attending school regularly, if at all. In addition, having children work, sometimes long hours and at night, raises huge protection implications for refugee families, as children and youth are forced into unsafe and precarious situations.

In addition to WFP monitoring, data collected by other humanitarian actors further highlights the **cross-sectoral nature of food assistance**. This year, UNICEF Jordan launched an **unrestricted<sup>14</sup> and unconditional<sup>15</sup> Child Cash Grant (CCG)** programme, which **targeted<sup>16</sup> 56,000 girls and boys** from 15,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugee families living in communities.<sup>17</sup> The CCG programme granted each targeted child with JOD 20 (USD 28) on a monthly basis (from February to August); with the aim of covering their basic needs and relieving their families from external stress.

Monitoring findings from UNICEF's programme emphasized that **the gradual reduction—and for some families the suspension—of WFP vouchers** was the most significant factor limiting the success of the CCG programme. Of the families that said they did not experience an improvement in their overall wellbeing from the programme, **60 percent attributed this to the reduced level of WFP assistance.**<sup>18</sup> Statements made by focus group discussion participants indicate how families altered their spending of UNICEF's CCG due to a reduction in WFP assistance:<sup>19</sup>

*"Stopping the food coupons affected how we use the UNICEF cash grant. We are now more pressured than before. We can't work, actually we are forbidden to work. The value of the coupons that I used to receive was JD 140, and then it got reduced to JD 90 and then it became JD 60 and now they stopped it. Our situation now is very difficult."*<sup>20</sup>

*"The main problem almost all Syrians are facing today is the reduction in food coupons. The coupons were of big help to Syrian families. For example, at the beginning we used to receive JD 24 per person, then JD 15 and then JD 10, and now it stopped. Those receiving from UNHCR and UNICEF are now using the UNICEF cash grant to pay for things that are not related to their children."*<sup>21</sup>

Overall, regular monitoring, coupled with rapid panel surveys and focus group discussions conducted by UNICEF, highlight **the difference WFP assistance makes in the lives of vulnerable Syrian refugees**, not only with regards to their food security but also in terms of their education, livelihoods, and protection.

## COORDINATED SECTOR MONITORING

Through key coordination structures for both inside Syria (the Humanitarian Response Plan-HRP) and the neighboring countries (the Regional Refugee Resilience Plan-3RP), Food Security actors are working to ensure vulnerable households inside Syria and the region receive assistance to meet their basic food and livelihood needs.

According to the **2016 HRP**, the overall people in need inside Syria for the Food Security sector is at least 8.7 million people. Out of these 8.7 million people, **6.3 million** are categorized as **food insecure** and **2.4 million** are at **risk of becoming food insecure**. In 2016, the Whole of Syria Food Security sector will target assistance to 7.5 million people in need.

According to the **2016-2017 3RP**, the Food Security sector plans to target a total of 3,007,900 vulnerable refugees - 2,702,000 through **food assistance** via the most appropriate modality (cash, voucher or in-kind) and 305,900 through **food and agriculture livelihoods projects**. The sector will also **expand its resilience and livelihood-based programmes** in an effort to adapt to the evolving needs of assisted

13 Ibid. Jordan and Egypt – a 6 percent (from 11 to 17 percent) and 7 percent (from 2 to 9 percent) increase.

14 'Unrestricted cash transfers' - Beneficiaries decide how to use the cash received. 10 COMMON PRINCIPLES FOR MULTI-PURPOSE CASH-BASED ASSISTANCE TO RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN NEEDS, March 2015 ECHO. P.6

15 'Unconditional cash transfers' Unconditional assistance is given to beneficiaries or households without the recipient of having to do anything in return. Ibid.

16 Based on the Inter-agency Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF)

17 A Window of Hope: UNICEF Child Cash Grant Programme in Jordan, Post Distribution Monitoring Report, February-August 2015, p.2

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. p.29

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

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families. While the 3RP remains largely focused on monitoring activity outputs, sectors have also been requested to **incorporate and strengthen their outcome indicators** to facilitate greater accountability of their respective programmes.

At the country level, the **inter-agency Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF)** in Jordan –planned to begin in Turkey– serves as a vital tool to guide humanitarian programming. The VAF has two main objectives: 1) **inform the targeting of assistance** at the refugee household (case) level, by providing a vulnerability ranking for each household and 2) provide a **vulnerability profile of refugee households** by welfare and sector models.<sup>22</sup> The VAF is able to achieve the three objectives through the following:

- 1) **Common tools** for the collection of data: the VAF Questionnaire
- 2) **Data collection** by VAF partners, using the VAF Questionnaire
  - 50,000 home visits to date (UNHCR and WFP)
  - Recorded in a common database
- 3) **Common models** for interpreting data: by welfare and by sector

WFP is a member of the inter-agency VAF steering committee comprised of five NGOs, five UN agencies, the Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration and ECHO. The VAF will continue to inform WFP's targeting in 2016, particularly through the coordinated appeals process.

While the VAF has paved the way for greater cross-sectoral coordination with regards to targeting, it also serves as a platform for closer collaboration amongst response organizations. At this point in the crisis, it is becoming evermore imperative that humanitarian actors, in support of host government priorities and in close consultation with donors, plan their programmes jointly.

This would include an agreed understanding of the needs, essentially a common baseline that would provide the main elements against which **integrated programmes** could be **designed and implemented**. Joint programming would not only facilitate a more **harmonized and cost efficient response**, but would also ensure comprehensive **monitoring and evaluation of multi-sectoral outcomes**. These outcomes would provide a greater understanding of our overall impact on our beneficiaries and the communities in which they live.

## WFP'S OUTCOME MONITORING MOVING FORWARD

- In 2016, WFP will implement **Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM)** across the five regional countries. The FSOM was recently piloted in Jordan, and the other countries have plans to roll it out in the coming months.
- This type of monitoring will enable WFP to: **compare the food security levels of different vulnerable groups alongside non-beneficiaries over time; monitor the impacts in cuts in assistance; and validate targeting criteria** among other objectives.
- The quantitative **FSOM tool will build from the current post-distribution monitoring questionnaire**, to ensure outcome monitoring will be more comprehensive.
- As WFP introduces **corporate unrestricted cash assistance** into its regional programming, the FSOM tool will provide the **flexibility to monitor this new modality** and draw comparisons with prior voucher data to show different impacts from the change in delivery mechanisms.
- In addition, to better understand the impact of unrestricted cash assistance, **qualitative data collection tools** such as **focus group discussions (FGDs)** will continue to be a key component in our monitoring to triangulate findings from our quantitative household level surveys.
- Monthly FGDs held with **targeted demographic groups**, such as female heads of household, male heads of household, etc., will allow the agency to further **contextualise how this modality is positively or negatively impacting families over time**.
- In 2016, WFP seeks to **enhance its partnerships** with sister UN agencies and NGOs with an aim to gain a better understanding of the **multi-sectoral needs in the region**. The FSOM will also facilitate cross-sectoral monitoring as indicators from other sectors will be mainstreamed into the tool.



## WFP'S PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSE 2016 AND BEYOND

Monitoring findings from both internal and external sources continue to verify that food security underpins other key sectors. WFP therefore recognises that **stronger and more strategic partnerships** with stakeholders must be forged. This would provide a more holistic response to support vulnerable families in this protracted crisis.

In this vein, WFP held a consultative meeting with Senior Advisors, under Chatham House rule, on the 17th of January 2016 in Amman, Jordan. Participants included host governments, donors, sister UN agencies and NGOs who were invited to feed into and advise on WFP's five year strategy for the region.

Alongside the recognition that relief assistance must continue at adequate levels, the five-year strategy will focus on **results-based sustainable solutions for Syrians and vulnerable host communities, both within and outside Syria.**

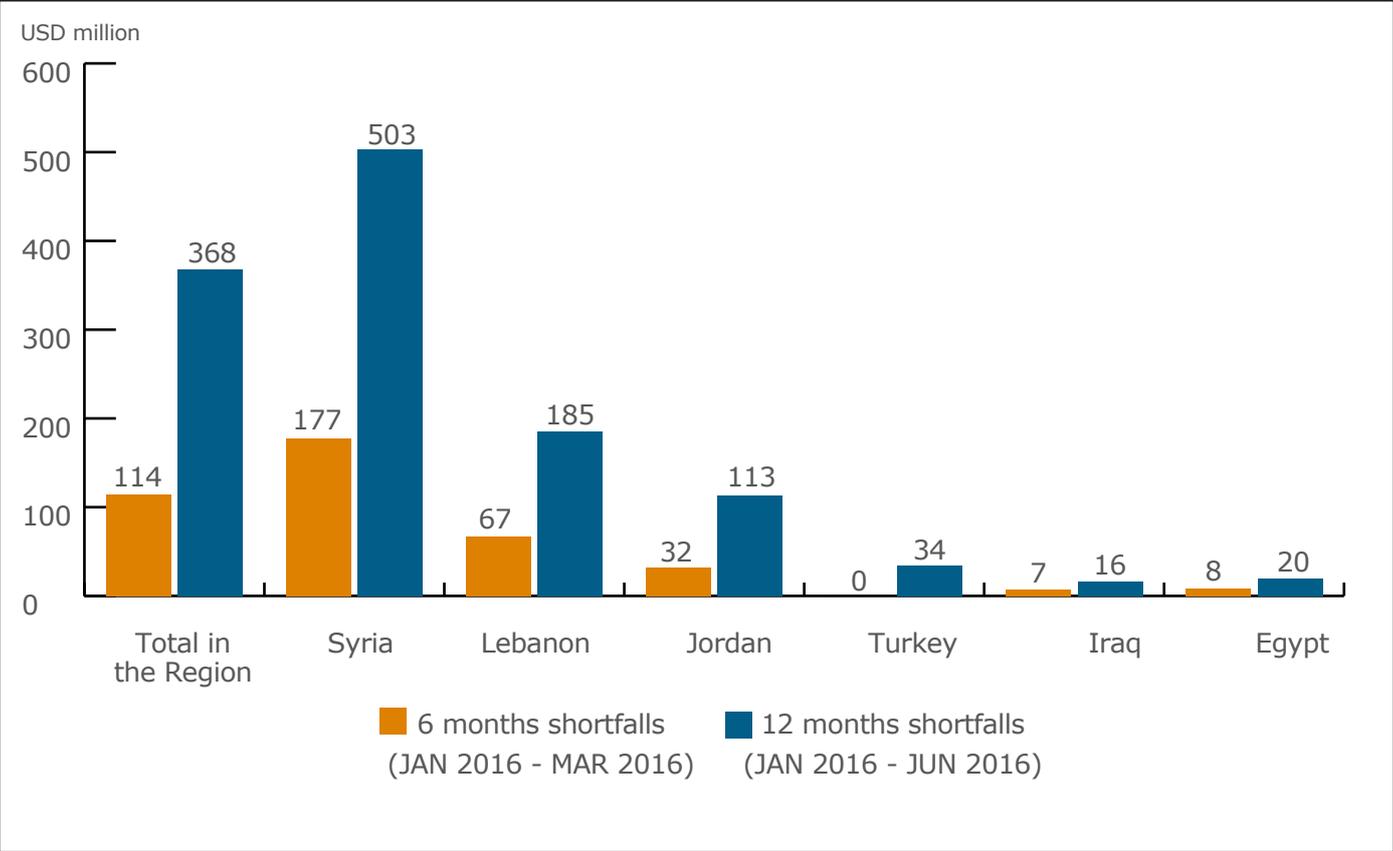
**Going forward, in 2016, WFP's strategy aims to:**

- 1) **Maintain life-saving food and nutrition interventions** for the most vulnerable people. Activities will include building up WFP's cash based programmes which can, over time, evolve and merge into social safety net systems. As such, these interventions would gradually reduce in scale as other vision objectives expand.
- 2) **Invest in people** by harnessing the knowledge, talents and skills of displaced Syrians and host communities. WFP's activities will support programmes that create access to informal and formal education for children; transfer skills between displaced populations and host communities; and provide vocational training for youth, in line with the **No Lost Generation initiative** (ages 0-24).
- 3) **Restore livelihoods and create economic opportunities** inside Syria and in host countries. These activities will target **urban** and **rural** livelihoods, including **micro-credit finance** to support the startup of new businesses and **agricultural production** inside and outside camps. WFP will also support food processing and other production and service provision opportunities.
- 4) **Build national capacities** in neighbouring countries and, as conditions allow, in Syria; and devolve WFP's operations to national and local institutions and partners.

# FUNDING REQUIREMENTS (in USD million)

WFP net funding requirements for Syria operation for the next six months (January-June 2016) stand at **USD 291 million; USD 177 million** for inside Syria and **USD 114 million** for the region.

For the next twelve months (January-December 2016), WFP requires **USD 872 million; USD 503 million** for inside Syria and **USD 368 million** for the region.



WFP is grateful for the critical support provided by multilateral donors in response to the Syria crisis, as well as that of Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and private donors.

*Donors are represented in alphabetical order.*

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