



WFP Syria Proposal to the Government of Belgium Interim Country Strategic Plan (2019-2021)

Country:	Syrian Arab Republic
Executing Agency	World Food Programme
Project Title:	Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP) 2019-2021
Total Budget of Proposal:	EUR 2,000,000
Project sites:	Across all 14 governorates of Syria
Estimated Number of Beneficiaries:	Approximately 270,000 beneficiaries (one month duration)
Project Duration:	01 September 2021 to 31 August 2022

Description of context

After a decade of continuous crisis, the humanitarian situation in Syria has since late 2019 deteriorated to levels not previously seen in Syria's recent history. Fuelled by continued conflict, mass population displacement, the impacts of the financial crisis in neighbouring Lebanon and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, since late 2019 Syria has seen an unprecedented economic downturn. Livelihoods have eroded as the cost of agricultural inputs have increased and income-generating opportunities have become scarce.

During the period when COVID-19 mitigation measures hampered free movement of market actors and consumers (15 March to the end of May 2020), supply chains were disrupted, food prices rose, and food security levels worsened compared to previous years. While the period of lock-down was relatively short, it was sufficient (coupled with other contextual factors) to have important impacts on an already very fragile economy. Impacts were noted both in terms of food market dynamics, and more importantly on livelihoods opportunities, considerably affecting household purchasing power.

Despite concentrated challenges in both the northeast and northwest, relative stability from conflict has been experienced across the rest of the country. This does not, however, necessitate immediate improvement to the humanitarian situation. Instead, the protracted nature of the conflict continues to demand responses that are timely and improve access to relevant basic services. The food security situation in Syria is no longer characterized by dire needs limited to certain geographical areas affected by hostility and displacement. Today, the economic crisis, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, is driving rapidly growing needs across all areas of the country.

Needs analysis

The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Syria in 2016, identified a situation whereby some 8.7 million people were food insecure. By 2018/19, the HNO seemed to indicate a downward trend; lingering around some 6.5 million people facing food insecurity. Today, the 2021 HNO presents a picture where 12.4 million people in Syria are food insecure, including 1.3 million people severely food insecure¹. ***This means an estimated 60 percent of the population now require food assistance, the highest level ever recorded in Syria.***

¹ The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Syria, 2021.

Food insecurity and acute humanitarian needs countrywide have been significantly exacerbated by a combination of factors including protracted violence, the regional economic and banking crisis, crippling inflation, direct and knock-on effects of COVID-19 on agricultural production and market access and climate-induced shocks such as drought conditions. These contextual developments have further depleted the already eroded livelihood of the Syrian people; with more than 90 percent of the population now living below the poverty line².

Implications on food consumption are stark. According to the latest WFP VAM assessment (February 2021), the majority of households (70 percent) borrow food on credit to subsidize lack of income (increase of 11 percent since December 2020), whilst close to half reported poor or borderline food consumption; most prevalent amongst female-headed households. On a national scale this represents an increase by almost 50 percent in a twelve-month period (February 2020-February 2021)³.

Micronutrient deficiencies amongst women and children show relatively high rates at between 27-30 percent whilst poor dietary practices such as the substitution of dairy, fruit and animal protein for cheap staples such as bread and noodles remain common⁴. Consequently, key health indicators such as the prevalence of Anaemia amongst vulnerable groups such as women of childbearing age (29.4 percent) remain a significant concern posing a notable threat to overall public health⁵.

Based on these worsening conditions, it is expected that a period of further economic contraction lies ahead, with reduced production, increased poverty rates and further food security deterioration. Acute and chronic malnutrition, which has rarely affected Syrians so far in the Syrian crisis, is likely to become more widespread, spurred by the inability of families to purchase food of adequate variety, quality and quantity. Furthermore, as the region battles an economic crisis not seen in decades, the prospects for economic self-sufficiency and or significant livelihood recovery among the crisis-affected population remains bleak. In this context humanitarian assistance and general food distributions will continue to serve as a critical lifeline for food insecure families.

Urgency:

The food security situation in Syria remains at critical levels. As highlighted above, over 12 million people require food assistance inside Syria with the demand for WFP assistance the highest on record since the start of the crisis. A devastating combination of an economic standstill, the freefall of the Lebanese economy and COVID-19 lockdown measures, has worsened food security with food prices as of May 2021 twice as high as just six months ago, and 247 percent higher than one year ago (May 2020). In terms of national production, drought conditions caused by erratic rainfall in major crop producing areas in the east (anticipated between September 2021-May 2022), and low water levels in the Euphrates River, could reduce availability for irrigation thus hampering crop yield of essential staples such as wheat.

Irreplaceability:

Since the start of the crisis WFP's emergency programme has provided a lifeline of support to vulnerable Syrian households. However, while humanitarian funding has increased over the years, the needs vastly outpace the means. Based on current projected contributions for 2021, WFP will be unlikely to fully respond to the new food insecurity figures which indicated a record 12.4 million people as food insecure. WFP's current resource-based implementation plan targeting 5.8 million people for General Food Assistance (GFA) each month remains far below the level of the assessed food assistance needs.

² Ibid.

³ [WFP, 2021. mVAM Bulletin Issue No.52. January and February 2021, Syrian Arab Republic.](#)

⁴ Government of Syria, 2019. The Ministry of Health Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART), Nutrition Survey (August 2019),

⁵ UNICEF, 2019. SMART Survey

To stretch available resources and to lessen the gap between those WFP can reach and those that are not reached, WFP was forced to reduce the caloric value of its GFA food rations: As of August, WFP now provides reduced rations of 1,100 kcals per person per day inside Syria and will reduce to 1,300 kcals for beneficiaries in North West Syria starting in October. This reduction in kcals will allow WFP to scale-up the number of people reached under its general food assistance programme from 4.8 million to 5.8 million. **WFP urgently requires USD 445 million to maintain critical lifesaving assistance over the coming six months (August 2021-January 2022).** Assistance from the Government of Belgium will enable the continuation of life-saving and immediate assistance to vulnerable populations mitigating the potential risk of a further deterioration of nutritional and food security indicators.

Description of the Project

Under Strategic Outcome 1 of the ICSP (*Food-insecure populations affected by the crisis, including host communities, internally displaced persons and returnees, in all governorates, have access to life-saving food to meet their basic food needs all year round*), WFP will support severely food-insecure households and populations living in camps as well as moderately food-insecure households with General Food Assistance (GFA) either in the form of regular in-kind or cash-based transfers (CBT) across the 14 governorates of Syria. This specific contribution will enable WFP to reach 270,00 beneficiaries with a monthly food basket equivalent to between 1,100-1,300 Kcals in Syria for a one-month duration.

Description: Vulnerable Syrian households, whether displaced or still living in their communities, will be eligible for WFP assistance. Households in all 14 governorates will be assessed against WFP vulnerability criteria and the most vulnerable will be targeted for assistance. Targeted beneficiaries include woman-headed households, children, elderly people, persons with disabilities and displaced people and information on eligibility for WFP assistance is collected through the operation's beneficiary selection tool. Response to rapid displacements will be analyzed on a case-by-case basis; eligible households will receive support. Beneficiaries under the general food assistance programme are primarily assisted through a nutritionally balanced in-kind food baskets with appropriate fortified commodities. Scale-up in the use of cash-based transfers under the GFA programme is under development, pending market analysis and conditions. In cases of displacement, where people have no access to cooking facilities or an immediate response is needed, WFP may provide read-to-eat (RTE) rations.

Resource constraints have forced WFP to lower the caloric value of the GFA food basket to avoid having to reduce the number of beneficiaries assisted over the past year and to be able to reach more people with food assistance given the record high levels of food insecurity across the country. Starting in August, WFP will provide a reduced ration of assistance with beneficiaries receiving a food basket equivalent to 1,100 kcals inside Syria and 1,300 kcals for beneficiaries in Northwest Syria. This represents a 30 percent reduction compared to the envisaged 1,700 kcal basket. Given the level of needs in the country, WFP does not foresee the restoration of the ration in the near future. The food ration contains dry food items that are staples in the Syrian diet, such as pulses, and rice, oil, and wheat flour.

Programme implementation/Coordination

WFP in Syria operates its GFA programme with the support of 31 local cooperating partners located across the country. Each cooperating partner goes through a due diligence process before being contracted by WFP. WFP regularly provides training to cooperating partners in order to strengthen their capacity to perform.

WFP, as co-lead with FAO of the Food Security and Agriculture sector, continues to coordinate with other food sector members, at central and decentralized levels, to ensure identified gaps are addressed. The Whole of Syria (WoS) approach was adopted in 2014 as a result of UNSCR 2165 and the increased need for coordination among actors resulting from the expansion of the United Nations presence in areas reached through cross-border operations. Through dedicated coordination in Amman, the WoS coordination platform brings together operations led by hubs in Damascus and Turkey into a single framework, in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian activities and ensure greater accountability.

Monitoring and evaluation

WFP will continue to implement regular monitoring of activities to assess programme effectiveness while also supporting evidence-based decision-making. Monitoring systems follow standardized processes, including assessing its implementation and processes against output and outcome indicators, via systematic data collection tools and methodologies.

Outputs are based on quantitative information shared by partners (monthly) and then recorded in WFP's Country Office Tool for Managing Programme Operations Effectively (COMET); comprehensive system to support the design, implementation and monitoring programmes and to improve organisational performance.

At the process monitoring level, on-site monitoring visits are conducted at food and voucher distribution points, schools, health clinics, shops and warehouses using standardized data collection tools to examine the quality of the implementation in targeted areas, partners' compliance with WFP standards and signed agreements and to obtain the perception of beneficiaries on implementation processes, including food distribution mechanisms and sites. Finally, outcomes are measured using data collected through quarterly post-distribution monitoring (PDM) conducted through some 1,300 PDM surveys and interviews with beneficiaries, conducted either at distribution sites or during household visits - via questionnaires - that collect information on food consumption, dietary diversity, consumption and livelihoods-based coping mechanisms, protection issues and beneficiaries' satisfaction.

In Syria, WFP conducts direct monitoring of its activities through its monitoring teams. At present, this represents a total of 31 staff (19 women and 12 men), based across all field offices inside Syria. Where it is possible, WFP attempts to promote a strong gender balance, especially during field visits, to identify gender-specific concerns, recognizing that often beneficiaries feel most comfortable sharing personal information and/or experiences to those of the same gender. It is also worth noting that WFP coordinates with two Third Party Monitoring companies that carry out relevant activities in areas where insecurity or other restrictions prevent direct access by WFP staff.

An operational audit will be conducted by our Headquarters, when necessary, based on WFP's rules and regulations.

Reporting and visibility

WFP publishes an Annual Country Report (ACR) at the beginning of every year. As such, this contribution will be officially reported on in the 2022 ACR, expected to be published in March 2023. The ACR is the principle means of reporting on WFP operations and through which WFP informs donors how resources for given projects were obtained, utilized and accounted for during the preceding year. The report will be available at: <http://www.wfp.org/government-donors>.

WFP also disseminates monthly country briefs, situation reports and emergency dashboards that showcase achievements, improvements, challenges and needs related to WFP's work.

WFP will strive to ensure that the Belgium Government receives due recognition and visibility for its timely contribution to the project. While the use of a donor logo on items (including bag marking) and distribution sites inside Syria is not possible, visibility will be pursued through multiple channels, including social media, public statements, and other methods as appropriate, in line with communication and visibility guidelines

The contribution from the Belgium Government will be referenced in media interviews and relevant communication material while taking into consideration the political realities on the ground inside the country. WFP's communication team will capture and share communication material (photo/video) activities funded by Belgium for Belgium use and WFP's website and social media.

Budget

To be refined at final proposal stage based on allocations from the Belgium Government. All numbers expressed in USD and EUR.

Cost Category	Amount (USD)	Amount EUR:
Transfer	2,008,692	1,689,310
Implementation Costs	129,561	108,960
Direct Support Costs (DSC)	94,725	79,663
Indirect Support Cost (ISC)	145,144	122,066
Grant Total Activities Costs	2,378,121	2,000,000