



**World Food  
Programme**

**Executive Board  
Annual Session**

**Rome, 25–28 May 2015**

## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

*Agenda item 7*

*For consideration*

# **E**

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## **SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT ON WFP'S RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS (2011–2014)**

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's Website (<http://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Ms H. Wedgwood  
Director  
Office of Evaluation  
tel.: 066513-2030

Ms E. Benoit  
Evaluation Officer  
Office of Evaluation  
tel.: 066513-3802

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2011 led to a major humanitarian crisis in the region, which was declared a United Nations Level 3 emergency in January 2013. WFP's responses to the crisis are among the largest and most complex operations it has ever undertaken. From 2011 to 2014, the number of refugees increased to 3 million and at least 4.5 million displaced people became food-insecure in Syria. WFP's responses were implemented in challenging circumstances as needs inside and outside the country quickly increased, and as WFP strove to manage impartial and neutral relationships with national governments, donors, other humanitarian actors and affected populations.

The evaluation assessed four main elements of WFP's response: i) strategic direction and positioning; ii) organizational effectiveness; iii) programme strategy; and iv) operational performance and results. Fieldwork was undertaken in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey; information on Egypt, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic was collected remotely.

The evaluation concluded that WFP responded to a fast-evolving, complex crisis and helped to improve and stabilize food security among the people it reached. The response was scaled up quickly, assisting 4.25 million people in Syria and 2 million refugees across the region in 2014, and accounting for 26 percent (in US dollar terms) of WFP's global operations. WFP funding requirements comprised 23 percent of the Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan and 42 percent of the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan in 2014, WFP's logistics and procurement operations for the regional response were particularly commended. With markets operating normally in surrounding countries, WFP quickly scaled up its electronic voucher programmes to levels unprecedented in a humanitarian emergency, collaborating effectively with the private sector. The regional emergency coordination structure generally worked well, particularly in supporting the operation in Syria. WFP coordinated effectively with other United Nations agencies and structures.

However, there were also challenges. Initial choices were not based on detailed analysis of conflict, gender or – crucially – the costs and benefits of different delivery modalities, including cash. More could have been done to manage the widely held perception that WFP was too close to the Syrian Government. Contingency plans for shortfalls in donor funding should have been developed earlier, and medium-term transition plans are urgently needed for countries hosting refugees, given the protracted nature of the crisis and anticipated funding limitations. WFP did not gather timely baseline data for measuring results, maintain consistent staffing in key

positions or adequately linking field staff with up-to-date guidance as they rolled out relatively new delivery modalities. The evaluation also raised concerns about voucher encashment, which poses a challenge for cost-efficiency.

The evaluation makes recommendations on transition and evidence-based programming, including deeper analysis of gender, conflict and context dynamics; humanitarian access and principles, and managing perceptions of WFP's role; Headquarters and the Regional Emergency Coordinator office's support for programming and operations, including human resources; and selecting delivery modalities, targeting and measuring results.

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## **DRAFT DECISION<sup>\*</sup>**

The Board takes notes of “Summary Evaluation Report on WFP’s Response to the Syrian Crisis (2011–2014)” (WFP/EB.A/2015/7-C) and the management response in WFP/EB.A/2015/7-C/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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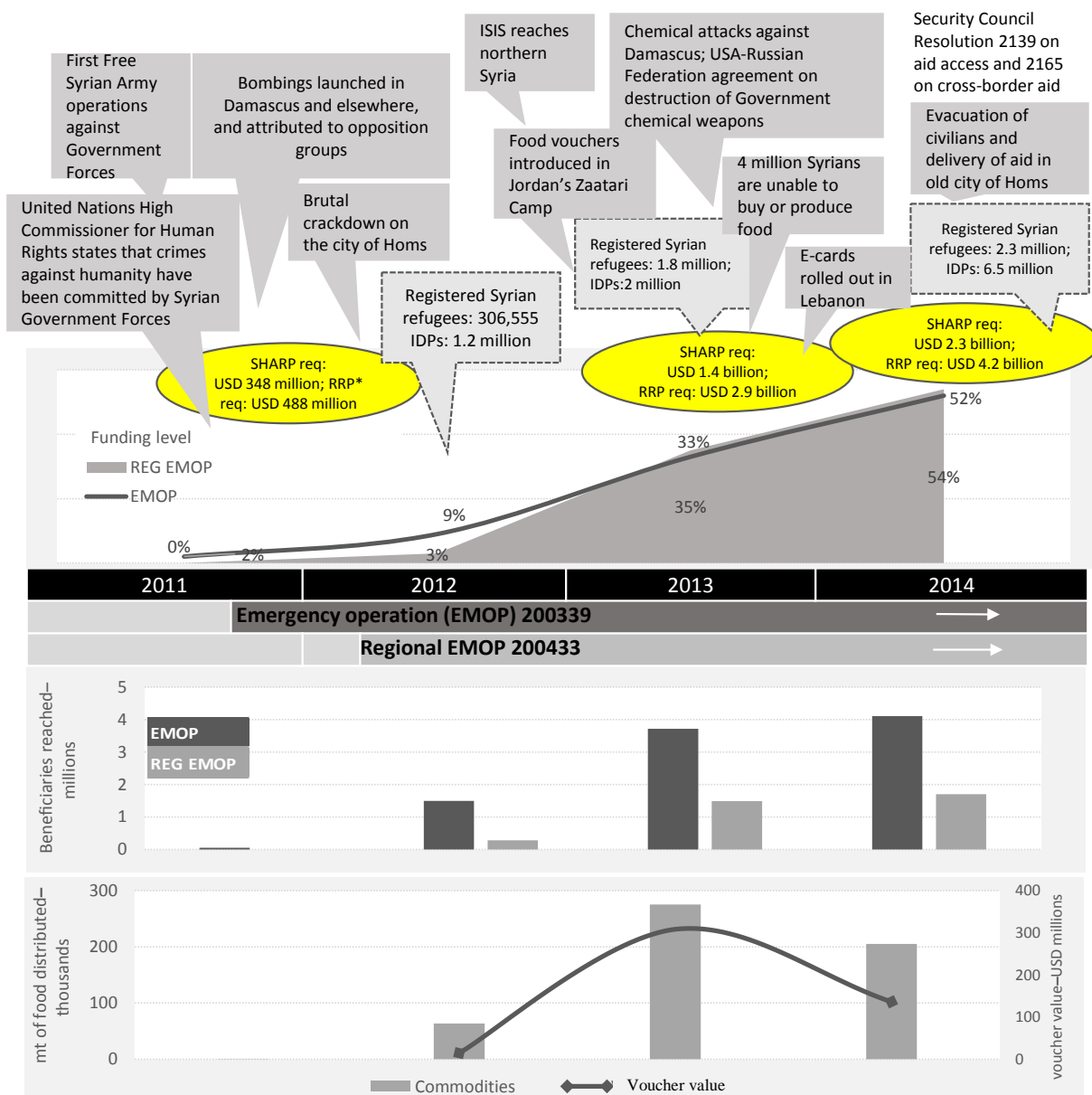
\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. WFP's responses to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and the surrounding region are among the largest and most complex operations it has ever undertaken. Civil unrest began in March 2011, soon leading to a major humanitarian crisis within the country and a refugee emergency throughout the region. The United Nations reported that 10.8 million people in Syria required humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 500,000 Palestinian refugees. An October 2014 WFP assessment found that 4.5 million people required food assistance in 10 of the 14 Syrian governorates that it assessed.
2. By late October 2014, there were about 3 million registered Syrian refugees and 75,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria. While some refugees reside in camps in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey, the vast majority live in cities and host communities, where rising tensions have been reported. Data from WFP and other agencies indicate food insecurity among refugees, although food consumption scores (FCS) and the coping strategy index (CSI) are less severe than those commonly found in emergencies. Overall, 88 percent of Syrian refugees receiving WFP assistance had an acceptable FCS in the second quarter of 2014.
3. The international response to this crisis has involved many actors. WFP is a major stakeholder, comprising 23 percent of requirements for the Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan and 42 percent for the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) in 2014. The United Nations system declared the crisis a Level 3 (L3) emergency on 15 January 2013, a month after WFP made a similar declaration.
4. By 2014, WFP was targeting 4.25 million people in Syria and 2 million refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In US dollar terms, the response accounted for 26 percent of WFP's global operations in 2014, up from 16 percent in 2013. The response is significant for its magnitude, its concentration in middle-income countries, the United Nations' determination to stay and deliver assistance in a major conflict, and WFP's widespread use of electronic food vouchers (e-vouchers) in countries hosting refugees. To facilitate its L3 response, WFP established the Regional Emergency Coordinator office (REC) in Amman.
5. WFP responded to this fast-evolving, complex emergency with large-scale tailored programmes that helped to improve and stabilize food security indicators for more than 6 million Syrians. Figure 1 summarizes major events, WFP responses and funding levels over time.

**Figure 1: Timeline of events, funding/beneficiary levels and activities**



\* Refugee Response Plan

Sources: Office of Evaluation, reconstructed from WFP Standard Project Reports 2011–2013 for EMOPs 200339 and 200433; the Regional Emergency Coordinator office (REC) output report; the United Nations Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan and Regional Response Plan; and Slim, H. and Trombetta, L. 2014. *Syria Crisis Common Context Analysis*. New York, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

### Evaluation Features

6. The evaluation, conducted between July and October 2014, contributes to accountability and learning, and assesses two emergency operations (EMOPs) for 2011–2014: EMOP 200339 in Syria and EMOP 200433 in refugee host countries. The evaluation terms of reference included data collection and analysis on: i) strategic direction and positioning; ii) organizational effectiveness; iii) programme strategy; and iv) operational performance and results. The evaluation also considered relevance, coherence, coverage, efficiency, effectiveness and connectedness within these focus areas.

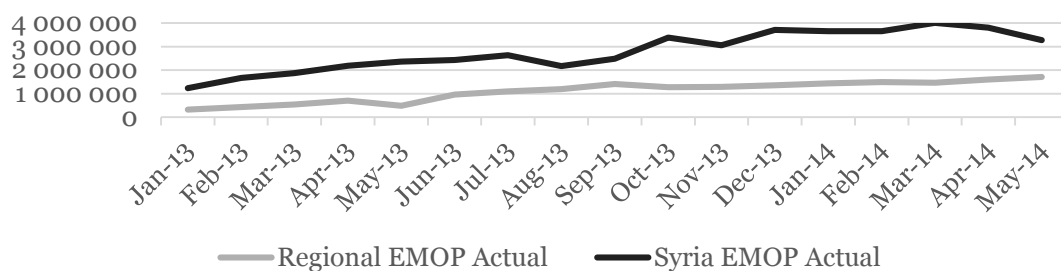
7. The evaluation included extensive document review, and interviews and discussions with 560 stakeholders at WFP Headquarters, the REC and throughout the region, including WFP staff, partners, officials, service providers, donors and 250 beneficiaries from affected communities. Fieldwork was conducted in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Information on Egypt, Iraq and Syria was collected remotely.
8. Data collection in Syria was challenging. To mitigate this, the team interviewed current and former staff from WFP operations in Syria, used an online questionnaire,<sup>1</sup> and interviewed refugees in host countries about assistance received from WFP while they were displaced in Syria. The evaluation drew on WFP data that the evaluation team was often unable to validate independently, and robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data were also sometimes unavailable, including baselines, and voucher encashment figures. Despite these limitations, the information gathered from stakeholders, documents and existing data allowed the evaluation team to triangulate information for its findings.

### **WFP Portfolio**

9. WFP's response to the Syrian crisis is complex and diverse across the six countries. In September 2014, WFP reached nearly 6 million people through the two EMOPs compared with 3 million registered refugees in host countries and more than 4.5 million people in Syria assessed as food-insecure. Including the latest budget revision – the fourteenth – WFP aims to have provided 1.85 million mt of food in Syria and nearly USD 2 billion in vouchers in refugee host countries between 2011 and 2015.
10. The Syria EMOP started in 2011 with 50,000 beneficiaries, growing to 1.5 million in 2012, nearly 4 million in 2013 (Figure 2) and 4.2 million in 2014, when the Syrian Government relaxed restrictions on “cross-line” deliveries to territories controlled by opposition groups. WFP targets IDPs and poor communities hosting significant numbers of IDPs identified as vulnerable in case-by-case assessments. WFP distributes primarily food, through partnerships with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) selected from a list provided by the Government. WFP seeks permission from the Government for individual food shipments; trucks require government-issued facilitation letters, often leading to negotiation over access, especially in areas outside government control. WFP staff monitor the situation when feasible, but most monitoring is conducted by partners and a third-party monitoring firm, which also has limited direct access to beneficiaries.

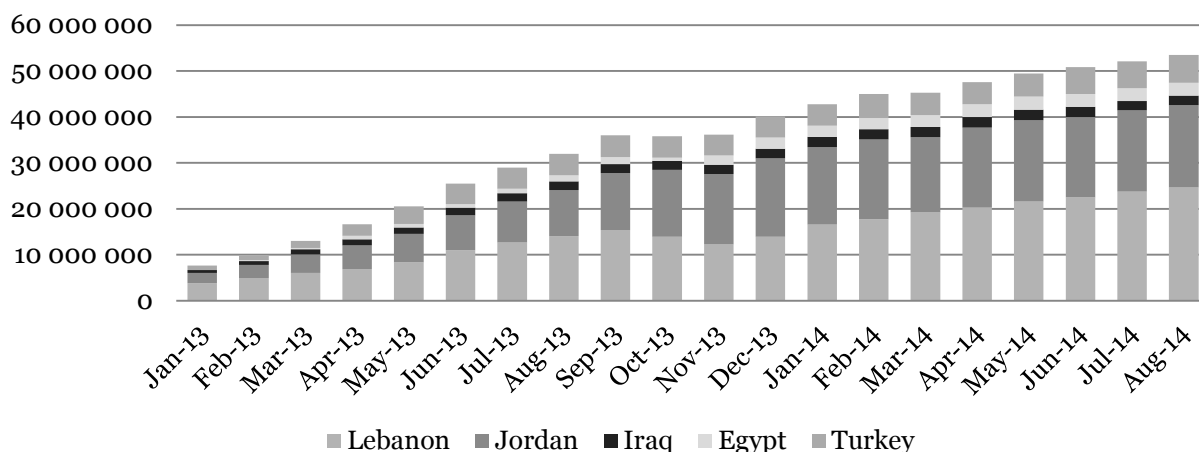
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<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire was distributed among WFP staff members across the region and to NGO cooperating partners (32 respondents).

**Figure 2: Beneficiary numbers: regional and Syria EMOPs**

Source: Consolidated output data from the REC.<sup>2</sup>

11. In countries hosting refugees since 2012 WFP provided limited food distributions including one-off parcels for new arrivals in Jordan and Lebanon, and food parcels for most camps in Iraq. The main mechanism has been vouchers (Figure 3), beginning with paper vouchers and gradually transitioning to electronic e-vouchers since the second half of 2013. Refugees use vouchers to purchase food from shops contracted by WFP or established for refugees in camps. This is WFP's largest voucher programme anywhere and draws on its global partnership with MasterCard and on country-level relationships with banks and retailers.

**Figure 3: Values of vouchers redeemed, by month and country (USD)**

Source: Consolidated output data from REC.

12. Some Syrian refugees were excluded from WFP's portfolio. The governments of Iraq and Turkey obliged United Nations agencies to work only with refugees in camps, despite the fact that 80 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey and 58 percent in Iraq are now living outside camps.<sup>3</sup> WFP assisted 70 percent of refugees in Lebanon following a vulnerability-based targeting process that began in late 2013. Targeting in Egypt and Jordan was scheduled to begin in late 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation team requested that data be exported from the REC M&E database. Figures 2 and 3 are based on those data rather than any WFP publication.

<sup>3</sup> Some coverage of refugees outside camps has been reported in one governorate of northern Iraq and in Turkey since September 2014, after the period covered by the evaluation.

13. These programmes have been supported by a range of donors: the United States of America is the largest contributor, followed by the United Kingdom and the European Commission. Five donors funded 80 percent of WFP's refugee response, and six funded 80 percent of its activities in Syria.

## FINDINGS

14. The evaluation made 20 main findings.

### Strategic Direction and Positioning

15. *Finding 1: Initial response and analysis.* WFP recognized the mounting crisis in Syria and the region in 2011, and responded quickly at scale based on its general understanding of humanitarian needs; its awareness of the context from its programmes in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria; and the opportunities it identified for market-based responses outside Syria. While this led to broadly appropriate programmes, specific design decisions, including on targeting and distribution modality – for example between cash and vouchers – were based on insufficient analysis of markets, gender, food insecurity, contexts, conflict dynamics and cost-effectiveness. Some deeper analysis was done later, but after important decisions had been made. This absence of analysis in Syria is understandable given the volatile situation.
16. *Finding 2: Coordination.* WFP participated positively in regional appeals and planning. It coordinated effectively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and built positive working relationships with governments in the region. WFP's role in the emergency telecommunications, food security and nutrition sectors – through working groups or clusters – was also positive, and its logistics cluster leadership was characterized as exemplary. The evaluation identified some instances of duplication or overlap, primarily concerning WFP's cross-border and expanded cross-line operations in Syria, which started in July 2014 following United Nations Security Council Resolution 2165 and resulted in overlap with NGOs. This issue is being addressed through the Whole of Syria<sup>4</sup> approach.
17. *Finding 3: Alignment and trade-offs.* WFP faces complex and competing pressures, particularly acute in Syria, from: i) its commitment to humanitarian principles, including humanity, impartiality and neutrality;<sup>5</sup> ii) its mandate to assist the most vulnerable and food-insecure people; iii) the limitations on its operations set by national governments; iv) its obligation to work with the United Nations Country Team; and v) the priorities of different donors. At times, Syrian authorities and opposition groups prevented WFP from reaching parts of the country. WFP had to choose its partners in Syria from a government list, but could assess them before selection.
18. With the L3 declaration in late 2012, WFP's Executive Director set up a strategic task force to provide senior-level engagement in strategic and operational issues. The task force monitored operations, but the evaluation found less evidence of strategic direction or monitoring of progress on agreed actions. Senior managers acknowledged that until recently, not all task force decisions had been clearly recorded. Given the pace and complexity of the crisis, the task force was more tactical than strategic. Management stated that as a

<sup>4</sup> Started in July 2014, this initiative of the United Nations system aims to improve coordination, minimizing gaps and overlaps by using cross-line and cross-border deliveries to maximize the ability to reach needy populations in Syria.

<sup>5</sup> WFP/EB.1/2004/4-C Policy issues: Humanitarian Principles.



United Nations agency, WFP's role in delivering food to the maximum number of people in need was best served by maintaining relations with the Syrian Government and negotiating access. WFP reports that this approach, which includes lobbying by senior staff, has maximized access to affected populations.

19. Syrian refugees, some United Nations officials, donors and NGOs expressed concern that WFP is seen as having a close relationship with the Syrian Government and not making sufficient use of the influence its large-scale contribution should bring to advocate for humanitarian space and unhindered access. The perception that WFP is too closely aligned with the Syrian Government has implications for its reputation.
20. Until recently, government policies prevented WFP from implementing needs-based targeting or assessing conditions among non-camp refugees in Iraq and Turkey. While the gap in assessment is understandable, WFP could have used studies by other agencies to argue for assisting refugees outside camps in Turkey. WFP recognizes this issue and progress is being made in both countries.

## Organizational Effectiveness

21. *Finding 4: REC establishment.* Overall, establishment in 2012–2013<sup>6</sup> of the REC headed by a regional emergency coordinator was appropriate given: i) the Transformative Agenda's focus on empowered leadership and coordination; ii) the regional and highly political nature of the crisis; and iii) the presence in Amman of other regional United Nations offices responding to the crisis. The REC provided a close link between WFP's top management and operations, and helped to adapt WFP's new L3 emergency response protocol to the unfolding crisis. The REC was particularly useful in Syria, enabling field staff to focus on programming and operations while staff in Amman handled much of the administration, reporting and donor relations.
22. *Finding 5: Staffing.* The REC scaled up quickly but faced difficulty in maintaining adequate staffing levels. According to WFP staff in all six countries, the numbers, profiles and tenures of staff mobilized for the emergency were often inadequate, leading to overburdening of other staff and high turnover in core positions; for example, there were six heads of office in two years in Lebanon. The head of programme post in Turkey was often vacant, and some REC positions remained unfilled for months. This is an institution-wide challenge in emergency settings.
23. *Finding 6: REC support to programming and operations.* The REC's administrative support to country operations was effective, particularly on finance issues. The REC's support to country offices' programming included 50 field missions in 2014. However, many WFP country office and sub-office staff reported that REC support to programming and operations did not meet their main needs, particularly in late 2012 and 2013 during establishment of large-scale voucher programmes. Programme and operations staff reported limited knowledge of each other's approaches to issues such as selecting, managing and monitoring partner shops, cancelling contracts with shopkeepers, and preventing fraud and encashment of vouchers. Such challenges are common among institutions under pressure and with dispersed responsibilities.
24. *Finding 7: Linking operations to expertise.* WFP's effectiveness was influenced by a lack of up-to-date guidance, and challenges in linking field-based staff to relevant expertise. Some staff in country and sub-offices were unaware of guidance available within WFP and

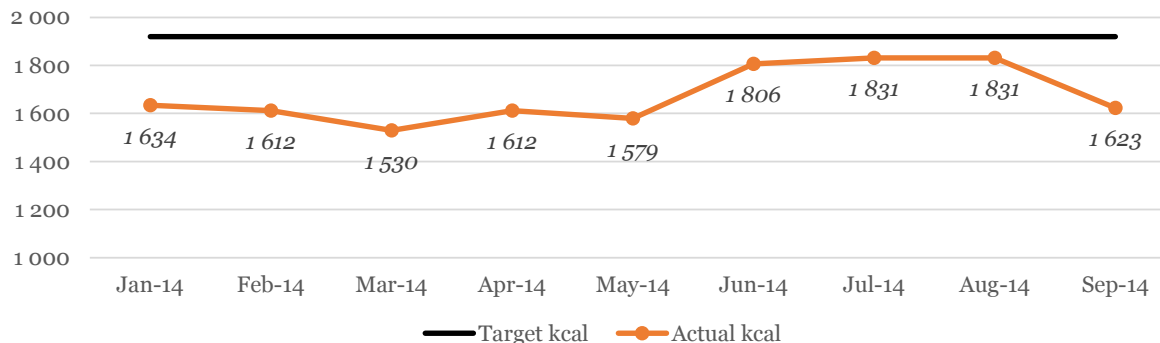
<sup>6</sup> The post of Regional Emergency Coordinator was approved in late 2012. The REC office was established in 2013.

reported recreating existing materials. WFP should establish demand-driven systems to link time-pressed staff in emergencies – many of whom are short-term consultants – to guidance and expertise.

## Programme Strategy

25. *Finding 8: Coverage.* WFP’s initial response, particularly during peak periods of new displacement, understandably focused on breadth over depth, including supporting all registered refugees in Egypt and Jordan, and those permitted by governments in Iraq and Turkey. Targeting work started in late 2013 in Lebanon and more recently in Egypt and Jordan. This was later than appropriate given that: i) assessments showed varied levels of food insecurity among beneficiaries; and ii) WFP knew that donor support would not continue on the same scale in the medium to long term. Delays in targeting were also heavily influenced by governments, some of which opposed targeting, and by WFP’s desire for harmonization with other United Nations agencies.
26. *Finding 9: Transition planning.*<sup>7</sup> It is increasingly clear that the Syrian crisis and its impacts will be long term and that donor funding will be limited. As the first financial pipeline break approached in September 2014, WFP focused on short-term contingency plans such as cutting rations (Figure 4).<sup>8</sup> Longer-term plans for transitioning to a more sustainable assistance model have yet to emerge, although they have been discussed by WFP and other actors, including within the United Nations Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan.

**Figure 4: WFP rations in Syria: target versus achieved, January–September 2014**



Source: “Ration scale fluctuations”, WFP Syrian country office. Updated October 2014.

## Operational Performance and Results

27. *Finding 10: M&E systems and programme uptake.* The evaluation found gaps in data, which complicated the systematic measurement of results. Some gaps were related to context: data for Syria were understandably sparse, and the Turkish authorities limited data collection in refugee camps, ceasing monitoring for three months. Other factors were under WFP’s control: the REC began systematic monitoring only in mid-2013 for the regional EMOP, did not prioritize important indicators such as encashment of assistance, and used systems with methodological shortcomings, such as an absence of baselines, which

<sup>7</sup> “Transition” refers to a range of options, from closing operations, handing over to national authorities or other actors and scaling down assistance through enhanced targeting or reduced transfer values, to exploring alternative cost-effective approaches for improving the food security of vulnerable populations.

<sup>8</sup> This planned ration cut was ultimately implemented in January 2015.

weakened the measurement of results. Credible baseline data were not gathered until 2014. Despite the constraints (such as the challenging operational environment, and the change in WFP's Strategic Results Framework), best practice dictates that systematic monitoring should start quickly, even in EMOPs. WFP staff noted that monitoring was primarily for reporting purposes, but doubted that it had led to programme adjustments other than in response to findings on voucher encashment. Monitoring was not structured or managed to inform programming.

28. *Finding 11: Scale.* WFP covered an impressive number of beneficiaries and scaled up its interventions quickly amid rising demand, particularly where vouchers, especially e-vouchers, were used (Figure 1). In 2013, WFP reached 88 percent of targeted refugees in Egypt and 98 percent of all registered refugees in Jordan. In 2014, in Syria it served 4.25 million beneficiaries out of an estimated 4.5 million people in need of food assistance.
29. *Finding 12: Food security.* The evaluation found that WFP's food assistance improved and stabilized beneficiaries' levels of food consumption. Data from the third quarter of 2014 in Jordan and Lebanon show that 12 and 16 percent respectively of newly arrived refugees had poor FCS, compared with 4 and 3 percent of refugees receiving assistance. This suggests that WFP assistance had a role in improving food consumption among beneficiaries, but further analysis is needed to account for contextual factors such as moving from a war zone to a relatively stable host country with informal livelihood opportunities.
30. It is clearer that WFP assistance helped to stabilize refugees' FCS. Post-distribution monitoring from the first three quarters of 2014 revealed that the proportion of assisted Syrian households with acceptable FCS was stable in each of the host countries. More than 90 percent of recipient households had an acceptable FCS – rising to 98 percent in Turkey – in all countries except Lebanon, with 78 percent. Beneficiary focus groups acknowledged the importance of food assistance in stabilizing food consumption and noted that WFP assistance was the main source of income for purchasing food.
31. *Finding 13: Local economies.* WFP also had beneficial impacts on local traders involved in voucher programmes and on their employees and suppliers, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon. Several WFP partner shopkeepers reported monthly revenues from WFP's voucher programmes ranging from USD 70,000 to USD 700,000. Studies conducted by WFP found that its vouchers had created 1,300 jobs in Lebanon and led to significant capital investments among shopkeepers, of USD 2.5 million in Jordan and USD 3 million in Lebanon. The multiplier values of WFP assistance were up to 1.23 in the food products sector in Jordan and 1.51 in Lebanon. These economic benefits have led some in the private-sector to view the broader humanitarian community and Syrian refugees in a more positive light.
32. *Finding 14: Relations with host communities.* Tensions have been partly mitigated by the switch to vouchers, especially e-vouchers. Distributions of food and paper vouchers are highly visible and contributed to host communities' sense of exclusion. The use of e-vouchers in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and – to a lesser extent – Turkey helped maintain a low profile for WFP assistance by avoiding the regular visible distributions associated with paper vouchers.
33. *Finding 15: Timeliness.* WFP generally achieved a timely response with its in-kind food assistance, but its vouchers were subject to delays resulting from slow UNHCR registration processes, particularly in Lebanon, where refugees could not apply to receive WFP vouchers until they had completed UNHCR registration. With the massive influx of refugees, registration in Lebanon required several months during much of 2013 and early 2014.

Beneficiaries described waiting two to six months to register with UNHCR and another two months to receive WFP vouchers.

34. *Finding 16: Operational efficiency in Syria.* Within the Syria EMOP, several good-practice approaches were developed to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness while mitigating risks. WFP built a complex transport and logistics network across the country, working with trucking firms in Syria, negotiating reduced costs for ground transport, and preventing companies or drivers from establishing inappropriate relationships with armed groups or others by rotating companies, drivers and routes. WFP deserves credit for implementing new approaches in a difficult environment.
35. Other efficiency issues, including diversion of aid, are difficult to assess given the major challenges to direct monitoring.<sup>9</sup> WFP data indicate that 97 percent of food rations dispatched were distributed among beneficiaries, suggesting a very low level of loss for an operation of this complexity. However, WFP staff were able to undertake only one-quarter of planned field visits between July 2013 and March 2014 because of security conditions. In 2013, 21 percent of randomly selected final distribution points were monitored by WFP, rising to 45 percent in 2014. This makes it difficult to measure WFP's efficiency in Syria – a common challenge for agencies in that country.
36. *Finding 17: Operational efficiency in the regional operation.* Measuring efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the regional EMOP is difficult as WFP cannot provide data for comparing the per-beneficiary costs of the three delivery modalities used: food, paper vouchers and e-vouchers. The exception is in Iraq, where WFP indicated that even when delivery costs are factored in, vouchers cost more than food, at USD 40.30 per beneficiary per month versus USD 33.56. There are trade-offs between cost and effectiveness, but the rationale for delivery modality selection would be clearer with better data on effectiveness and per-beneficiary costs for each modality, which WFP should be able to calculate.
37. *Finding 18: Encashment of assistance.* Efficiency was also affected by the conversion of WFP assistance into cash. In Iraq, between 60 and 70 percent of WFP beneficiary households reportedly sold 52 to 66 percent of their bulgur, pasta, rice and lentils to obtain cash.
38. The conversion of vouchers to cash was also described as a persistent challenge, but monitoring of encashment was not standardized despite being a recurring issue. Existing WFP figures are not based on representative samples and should be approached with caution as beneficiaries know that WFP forbids the encashment of vouchers. Discussions with WFP staff, partners and beneficiaries in Jordan and Lebanon suggest a significant incidence of voucher–cash conversion, at a cost of between 7 and 25 percent of the voucher value and presenting a threat to efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The high rate of encashment suggests that WFP should have piloted cash transfers earlier.
39. *Finding 19: Market dynamics and cost control.* WFP adopted vouchers based on its awareness that markets outside Syria functioned normally and applied the good humanitarian practice of working with markets in humanitarian action. However, market-based assistance in middle-income countries is generally more expensive than in low-income settings given the higher market prices and beneficiaries' dietary preferences. Vouchers periodically resulted in beneficiaries paying higher than normal market prices. In Lebanon, WFP's economic impact study found that beneficiaries faced 6 percent higher prices in contracted

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<sup>9</sup> As opposed to monitoring by partners or a third party.

shops that WFP classified as “non-competitive”.<sup>10</sup> WFP encountered similar challenges in camps in Jordan and Turkey, and has taken steps to address them.

40. *Finding 20: Gender and protection.* WFP staff demonstrated an understanding of gender and protection issues in field locations. In refugee host countries, staff viewed vouchers as expanding women’s access to assistance. Senior staff at the regional and country levels demonstrated awareness of the protection challenges facing women and girls. WFP analysis and assessments included gender-disaggregated data on outputs and some outcomes; in Jordan, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender marker tool was applied by WFP and other agencies. However, WFP did not analyse gender- or protection-specific dimensions of food assistance in the EMOP countries.
41. Gender analysis was poorly or not integrated into programme design, implementation, M&E and risk analysis. Although gender-disaggregated data were collected, there was little analysis of gender-related trends, and the evaluation did not find evidence of gender analysis being used to adapt programmes. Data consolidated from WFP’s own reporting show that in 2013, WFP had no women food monitors in Egypt and only one in Iraq. Women were under-represented on food management committees in all regional EMOP countries; in Iraq, for example, there were 56 men versus 5 women members. Food voucher cards also tended to be issued to men members of households, although the evaluation did not examine whether WFP could have influenced this practice.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

42. Through the two EMOPs, WFP has delivered a large-scale humanitarian response to a major emergency. The operations were scaled up quickly, and the voucher approach in the regional EMOP reflected the functioning markets and banking systems in host countries. Intervention costs mirror the higher costs necessary to approximate normal family eating practices and the higher cost of living in middle-income countries. In Syria, WFP responded rapidly and on a large scale, delivering food assistance through local partners in a highly politicized conflict. WFP established good logistics practices that will serve the programme as it remains vital for millions of Syrians for the foreseeable future.
43. Under the regional EMOP, e-voucher programming was scaled up to a new level for a humanitarian operation, expanding WFP’s collaboration with the private sector. WFP’s partnerships with small and medium-sized shops in Lebanon represented a useful adjustment to a well-established system of using vouchers. WFP is considering further innovations for its e-vouchers, including iris-scanning technology to reduce misuse, automated fraud detection, and remote electronic monitoring of beneficiary purchases. WFP will rarely have a better opportunity to refine these systems, and should invest in developing them and the OneCard platform, which would allow other humanitarian agencies to provide cash and voucher assistance via WFP e-vouchers.
44. However, the analysis underlying WFP’s response was limited, particularly for the regional EMOP. While this is understandable in the initial phase of a crisis, WFP did not follow up with analysis to address such questions as: i) whether high FCS scores were attributable to WFP assistance or contextual factors such as the availability of informal livelihoods; ii) how effectiveness and cost-effectiveness compared among delivery

<sup>10</sup> “Non-competitive” conditions arise when the top three shops in a given area capture more than 50 percent of e-voucher sales. See Bauer, J.M., Sandström, S. and Audi, H. 2014. *Economic Impact Study: Direct and Indirect Effects of the WFP Value-Based Food Voucher Programme in Lebanon*. Rome, WFP.

modalities; and iii) how food security compared among WFP-assisted and non-assisted refugees in Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. While political considerations often limited action, WFP's focus on evidence and data did not lead to well-staffed vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and M&E units, which often had only one individual per country, and staff focused on gathering data rather than analysing them to inform programming.

45. The protracted nature of the crisis requires that WFP increase its attention to strategic issues including: i) management of humanitarian principles and the reputational risk of working with the Syrian Government; ii) ensuring that vulnerable refugees living outside camps in Iraq, including Kurdistan, and Turkey are assisted; iii) targeting assistance to a Syrian refugee population with much better food-security levels than normally seen in humanitarian emergencies; and iv) transition planning to ensure sustained assistance for the most vulnerable Syrians.

46. As WFP assistance continues, the development of medium-term transition strategies and expansion of vulnerability-based targeting will become a major priority, particularly in refugee hosting countries. Reducing the value of refugee food rations and vouchers in Syria, as envisaged in October 2014 and enacted in January 2015, is not the most appropriate strategy when resource breaks are foreseeable and beneficiaries have varied levels of vulnerability.

RECOMMENDATIONS				
No.	Issue	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
1	Transition ( <i>overarching recommendation</i> )	Findings 4, 8 and 9. Resource constraints and the protracted nature of the crisis mean that a more sustainable approach is needed.	<p>1a) Prepare country-specific transition strategies and consider significant scaling down of assistance using a systematic vulnerability-based targeting process. Changes should be introduced through a new EMOP or protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) rather than further budget revisions. Where authorities have financial and delivery capacity, as in Turkey, prepare for hand-over of responsibility for food assistance, with WFP providing technical assistance to the authorities.</p> <p>1b) In future crises, ensure early development and introduction of short-term contingency plans based on vulnerability analysis. These plans should be regularly updated and communicated to partners and beneficiaries to manage oscillations in donor funding.</p> <p>1c) Develop scenario-based, long-term transition plans that cover the spectrum from maintaining/expanding the response to a country-by-country exit strategy.</p>	<p>Country offices and REC with Policy and Programme Division (OSZ) support – within six months</p> <p>Operations Services Department (OS)</p> <p>OS</p>
2	Evidence-based programming	Findings 1 and 20. Appropriate analysis to underpin programme design and implementation is needed.	2) Undertake further analysis on cash and vouchers, gender, host community relations and conflict dynamics to inform country-specific programme strategies and decision-making.	REC with OSZ support – within six months: immediate

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility and timing</b>
3	Humanitarian access and principles	Finding 3. It is important to assess and manage competing pressures and perceptions.	<p>3a) Monitor application of the humanitarian principles in Syria; develop and monitor implementation of a strategy for managing perceptions of WFP's relationship with the Syrian Government and its assistance in opposition-held areas.</p> <p>3b) In future crises where a strategic task force is required, articulate, monitor and record strategies for balancing competing pressures on WFP and managing perceptions about WFP's role.</p>	<p>Office of the Executive Director (OED), REC and Syria country office – immediate</p> <p>OED</p>
4	Support to programmes and operations	Findings 6 and 7. There seems to be a disconnect between REC support and needs of country offices/sub-offices; access to corporate guidance and expertise for emergency field staff is inadequate.	<p>4a) At the country and sub-office levels, increase attention to: i) lesson-learning and information-sharing opportunities; ii) capturing lessons from innovation; and iii) early consideration of country office specific transition and exit strategies.</p> <p>4b) Develop a flexible system for linking WFP operations staff to corporate guidance, expertise and documents, such as through better use of WFP's intranet, connecting staff facing similar programme challenges around the world and maintaining a help desk.</p> <p>4c) Make greater use of anonymous surveys and other tools for eliciting staff views and ideas on support and other issues that may not be communicated to line managers.</p>	<p>REC with regional bureaux and OSZ support – immediate</p> <p>Executive Management Group (EMG): OS; Resource Management Division (RM); Partnership, Governance and Advocacy Department (PG)</p> <p>EMG: OS; RM; PG; Human Resources Division (HRM)</p>
5	Human resources	Finding 5. Adequate types and numbers of staff are not consistently available in the L3 structure, including in critical areas.	<p>5a) Conduct an internal review to ascertain why the REC offices for this crisis lacked staff with skills and experience in conflict analysis and negotiations, cash and vouchers, working with the private sector, M&amp;E and vulnerability analysis.</p> <p>5b) Develop a responsive staffing model alongside the emergency roster to ensure that technical experts are deployed to support emergency operations for a minimum period, such as three or six months.</p>	<p>HRM with support from OSZ and the Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE)</p> <p>OS, RM, HRM</p>

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6	Targeting	Findings 8, 9 and 11. The breadth of assistance is neither appropriate nor sustainable given the diverse vulnerability levels and resource constraints.	<p>6a) As an immediate step towards transition, gather and consolidate food security data on affected populations to inform vulnerability-based targeting of WFP food assistance.</p> <p>6b) In future EMOPs, systematically prepare for timely food security-based targeting by gathering household-level vulnerability information, including pre-assistance baselines, as early as possible and shift promptly from category or status targeting.</p>	<p>REC, country offices with OSZ support: immediate</p> <p>OSZ</p>
7	Measuring results	Findings 7 and 10. There is a need to assess vulnerability levels of those not assisted to improve measurement of results attributable to WFP assistance, and to use these data for advocacy and programme adjustment.	<p>7a) Use existing data or conduct needs assessments among populations currently excluded from programmes, particularly non-camp refugees in Iraq and Turkey, and refugees deemed ineligible for assistance in Lebanon.</p> <p>7b) Support governments in assessing conditions among host communities, but avoid raising expectations of WFP assistance.</p>	REC with OSZ support
8	Modality selection	Findings 13, 14, 17 and 18. Analysis of alternative modalities is insufficient.	<p>8a) Ensure that WFP systems are able to report transparently, routinely and consistently on costs per beneficiary by delivery modality for use in modality selection, project approval and review.</p> <p>8b) Ensure that all delivery modalities, including cash, are considered in future responses, based on a rigorous assessment of their appropriateness, to ensure that modality selection is based on context-specific and clearly recorded technical evidence.</p>	<p>EMG</p> <p>OSZ</p>
9	Evidence and accountability	Findings 9, 10, 12, 17 and 18. There is limited impact on programming of evidence and data from VAM and M&E; and lack of food security data for targeting.	9) Assign extra medium- to long-term staff for M&E and VAM – particularly in country offices – for systematic monitoring and measurement of results and outcomes, and to analyse information and feed it into programme management and operational decisions.	REC with OSZ and support from the Resource Management Department (RM)
10	Operational efficiency	Findings 18 and 19. Food vouchers are being encashed; WFP-contracted shops are charging above-market rates.	10) Assess the reasons for voucher encashment and differing prices among WFP partner shops; improve monitoring of encashment and minimize efficiency losses; and strike the appropriate balance between accountability and the number of shops contracted for voucher programming.	REC with OSZ and RM support



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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

EMG	Executive Management Group
EMOP	emergency operation
FCS	food consumption score
HRM	Human Resources Division
IDP	internally displaced person
L3	Level 3
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-governmental organization
OED	Office of the Executive Director
OS	Operations Services Department
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
PG	Partnership, Governance and Advocacy Department
REC	Regional Emergency Coordinator office
RM	Resource Management Department
RRP	Refugee Response Plan
SHARP	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping