

WFP SYRIA CRISIS RESPONSE **Regional Refugee Response**

SEPTEMBER 2013

The events in the Syria have led hundreds of thousands of Syrians to flee to Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. As a result, starting in July 2012 (and February 2013 in Egypt) WFP began providing food assistance to Syrian families seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. To date, WFP has assisted almost 1.2 million refugees, nearly 90 percent of whom were assisted through a voucher programme. WFP plans to reach 2.6 million refugees by the end of 2013.

access to more diverse foods with greater nutritional value, including fresh fruits, dairy products, meat, chicken, fish and vegetables.

Vouchers also increase women's control within households in coordinating and meeting food needs, as they are fully involved in the selection of food for their famlies. Moreoever, vouchers are a discrete form of food more assistance, allowing for greater protection of beneficiaries who are hence not necessarily visible or



simultaneously allowing other agencies to assist beneficiaries using the same card. Prior to e-cards in Turkey, hot meals provided in camps cost US150 -US\$170/person/month. WFP's E-Food Card Currently, US\$45/ Programme transfers person/month, illustrating the cost effectiveness of electronic vouchers.

E-vouchers in WFP's other refugee operations response will give beneficiaries greater flexibility in products food purchasing and negate the need for them to attend

distributions as the card will be automatically recharged monthly through partner banks. Beneficiaries will also be able to spend the balance of their e-voucher in multiple visits, unlike paper vouchers which must be spent at one time. WFP is working to identify and sign an agreement with a bank in Egypt while a limited launch and pilot of the e-voucher are planned for September and October in

THE BENEFITS OF VOUCHERS

Since Syrian families are accustomed to shopping in commercial market environments, vouchers allow them to continue their regular approach to purchasing food. This helps to return a sense of normalcy to their lives while allowing them to maintain their dignity.

Using vouchers provided by WFP, beneficiaries can select their preferred food items and meet their

individual consumption needs. This is especially important for children, the elderly and those with

specific dietary needs. Vouchers also ensure that beneficiaries have better food

differentiated as a result of WFP assistance.

Food vouchers also help to simulate local economies including the promotion of local production and markets.

ELECTRONIC VOUCHERS

WFP is working to transition all paper vouchers in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq to electronic vouchers, similar to those used in

Turkey. The evoucher **E-vouchers** provide (referred to as beneficiaries greater the e-card in Lebanon) will flexibility in purchasing function like a food products. pre-paid debit card

> beneficiaries can use to purchase from shops, while

that

Lebanon and Jordan respectively.



MONITORING

As part of concerted effort to streamline monitoring and evaluation across WFP's regional refugee response, country offices have agreed on a minimum set of standards, tools and indicators. In addition, WFP is currently setting up a regional database and data analysis services, which will ensure the establishment of an increasingly harmonized regional monitoring and evaluation system.



All countries in the region will now collect data through these recently standardized tools, including postdistribution household level questionnaires, as well as distribution monitoring and shop

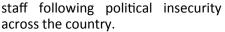
monitoring questionnaires and checklists. In Jordan and Lebanon. shop monitoring activities are complemented currently monitoring with price order activities, in to ensure that shops are not charging beneficiaries higher prices.

CHALLENGES

Security

Security remains a considerable challenge for WFP's regional response. WFP has so far managed to scale-up its assistance in all five countries, but has, on

occasion, been forced to delay or postpone distributions as a result of insecurity. WFP Lebanon has particularly been affected by security concerns, with suspensions and even cancellations of distributions occurring at times. In Egypt, WFP postponed August 2013 voucher distributions in order to ensure the safety of beneficiaries and WFP



Funding

Funding constraints for the provision of food assistance continue to present significant challenges across the region. As a result, WFP has capped its assistance to 14 out of 20 camps in Turkey, despite being requested by the Government to assist refugees in all camps. In Egypt, WFP is responding to 250-325 phone calls each week, over 90 percent of which are related to Syrians requesting to be included in the food voucher distribution list. UNHCR have reported a number of Syrians relocating in an attempt to be eligible for a WFP food voucher.

Despite utilising internal funding mechanisms in order to avoid



pipeline breaks, a lack of sustainable funding creates uncertainty for WFP's operations, making planning with government and NGO partners difficult. Moreover, a lack of consistent funding leaves host countries and beneficiaries in an uncertain position as continued assistance cannot be guaranteed. Host countries and beneficiaries will ultimately bear the extra burden should WFP be unable to provide assistance.

Furthermore, in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, the transition to the e-vouchers will necessitate the availability of WFP resources to the partner bank prior to the beginning of each monthly distribution cycle placing further pressure on the need for sustainable funding.

