

2014

**WFP UNHCR Joint Assessment Mission  
Kurdistan Region-Iraq**



### **Acknowledgements**

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Data collected in May 2014.

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## Executive summary

In August 2013 the Kurdistan Region–Iraq (KR-I) received a large influx of Syrian refugees resulting in the establishment and expansion of camps across 3 governorates. The refugee population was well received by the KR-I and provided with residency cards in stages, allowing them access employment. The refugee population either integrated into the host communities, where they were close to family networks and work opportunities, or settled in camps.

This Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) was conducted in May 2014<sup>1</sup> under the existing framework of UNHCR and WFP's Memorandum of Understanding which requires periodic review of all joint operations. The mission used a combination of primary and secondary data from different sources to establish as complete and balanced a picture as possible. The mission visited the 8 camps and 9 sites outside of the camps where it conducted focus group discussions, interviews and trader surveys.

The UNHCR registration unit has registered Syrian 223,113 individuals (79,832 households), with an estimated 44.1% of refugees residing inside of the camps. Currently WFP is targeting a total of 121,000 individuals for food assistance, using both vouchers and individual food aid rations. The majority of these are registered as inside of camp, although it is estimated that 30% of WFP food voucher recipients are residing outside of the camps. WFP has also been distributing High Energy Biscuits (HEB) as part of the school feeding programme.

The mission found that, in general, refugees inside of camps are receiving predictable humanitarian assistance for food and non-food requirements. Refugees located outside of camps are getting food assistance on an ad-hoc basis with all assistance generally being restricted for non-camp populations by the political environment in KRI. As a consequence outside of camp refugees are adopting more severe coping strategies to cover the food needs. The food aid packages inside of the camps are welcomed by the refugees, however many of the food items are sold or traded for more appropriate food products available in the local market. Food vouchers distributed in Domiz camps are highly

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<sup>1</sup> Following the conclusion of the JAM, KRI has been affected by an influx of up to 850,000 IDPs in June and August 2014. The effects of this influx on the food security situation of the refugees are not captured by this report.

appreciated by the community. The refugees have expressed an overwhelming desire to change the food assistance modality from food packages to vouchers or cash.

The support provided to refugees by host communities, UN agencies and NGOs has kept food security and nutrition conditions at stable levels, with levels well within the satisfactory range expected: the global acute malnutrition (GAM) rate stands at about 1.8% among new arrivals (UNICEF/ DoH, October 2013) – which represents the low prevalence of public health concern according to WHO thresholds. Complementary nutrition programmes for pregnant and lactating women were noted, although these are limited to a few locations and irregular support and not linked to any wider government programmes.

Regarding food consumption, the findings show that the majority of households have acceptable food consumption, with a diversified diet. This is specifically linked to the refugees' ability to earn an income and the freedom to access products in the market. All visited camps have a system of on-site shops, including grocers, green grocers, bakeries and non-food shops. Most of the refugees purchase their complementary food from the camp shops. Fresh food items and tinned foods are cheaper inside of the camp than compared to outside of the camps.

The variety of the items available in the local market as well as the wider market conditions, point to the possibility of exploring alternative ways of engaging in local purchase of food assistance or alternative modalities for transferring resources to refugees in the future, but this requires further study.

Refugees inside and outside of the camps are actively seeking employment. Casual labour is the most common form of income earning, however due to the physical nature of the work this is mostly available to men. Contractual work is the most desirable form of income, as it provides a more stable income. Income is mainly used to purchase breakfast items and diversify the diet for refugees inside of the camp. Refugees outside of the camps have to use their income to cover rent and food, resulting in higher level of borrowing and incurred debt. For both inside and outside of camp refugees the household income is the main factor determining the diversity, quality and quantity of the diet. Access to income opportunities varied between and within camps, refugees living in more isolated camps having significantly less income opportunities. Access to income earning opportunities and the number of family members able to gain regular work are considered the main reasons for disparities of wealth between the different camps and households within a camp.

Refugees with the most stable source of income are those employed by NGOs or employed in the manufacturing industry. Refugees have the right to work and are being issued residency cards to facilitate the legitimacy of work; even so the earning opportunities for women are still constrained. Protecting the rights of refugee workers, increasing the availability of work (especially for women) and improving conditions of work were noted as priorities for the refugees.

On average, the refugees inside of camp spend about half of their income on food; vegetables, cereals, fruit, meat and dairy products are among the most purchased commodities. Their most common non-food expenditure is on tobacco, debt repayment, medical expenses and clothes.

The JAM team concluded that although refugees from Syria living in the camps across the 3 governorates continue to rely on humanitarian assistance there is scope to more effectively target assistance based on the differing vulnerabilities faced by the refugees. The further roll-out of the food voucher programme should be explored to meet refugees' food requirements more effectively. Further it should be explored on how to include outside of camp refugees in the provision of assistance, and that there does exist a conducive environment to increase self-reliance, e.g. through placing emphasis on initiatives for livelihood support and income generating activities that will improve the refugees' local integration and provide greater economic stability. It was further noted that the government had provided good leadership for the refugee operations and that opportunities to integrate vulnerable refugees into national safety-nets should be actively explored.

As the emphasis on livelihood development continues to grow by UNHCR, WFP and the government, as well as other key UN partners need to create a common framework for a self-reliance strategy to build on existing potential options UNHCR and WFP are fully aware that any changes in the food assistance to refugees will need to be communicated in a timely manner. UNHCR and WFP, however, also recognize that more effective targeting and diversification of this assistance is required.

## Introduction

### Background

The conflict in Syria started in March 2011 and worsened as of 2012 resulting in massive and continued displacement of the Syrian population. Since early 2012, thousands of Syrian Kurds have fled to northern Iraq and have been recognized as prima facie refugees by the Iraqi Government. The 1971 refugee act protects refugees by giving them the right to work and entitling them to health and education services that are available to Iraq nationals.

In April 2012, Domiz camp was opened as the first and only refugee camp in KR-I in response to the increasing numbers of Syrians new arrivals. In May 2013, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) closed the Peshkhabour crossing point which was reopened in August 2013 when KRI received the largest Syrian refugee influx. In response to the massive influx, the KRG and UNHCR established additional camps in Duhok, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah governorates to accommodate the over 50,000 refugees that entered the KRI between 15 August and 6 September 2013, as well as to accommodate the refugees that already resided in the KRI. As of 30 April 2014, the number of refugees living in the KRI reached 223,113.

In close collaboration with the Kurdistan Regional Government, UNHCR and partners are providing essential services and assistance to the 98,309 refugees inside the camps, WFP is distributing food assistance in the form of in-kind and through a voucher programme. Refugees living outside camps are assisted by UNHCR and partners with special emphasis on protection and targeting the highly vulnerable individuals through various sector interventions. The humanitarian response and operational capacity have increased throughout the years and coordination with the other UN entities and humanitarian actors is ensured through sector coordination meetings.

In addition to regular monitoring activities, WFP and UNHCR are committed to assessing the food security situation of refugees every two years. A JAM was launched in May 2014 in order to present an update on the joint operation.

Of increasing concern for both agencies are the significant number of refugees living outside of the camps and the economic and livelihood pressures faced by the refugees.

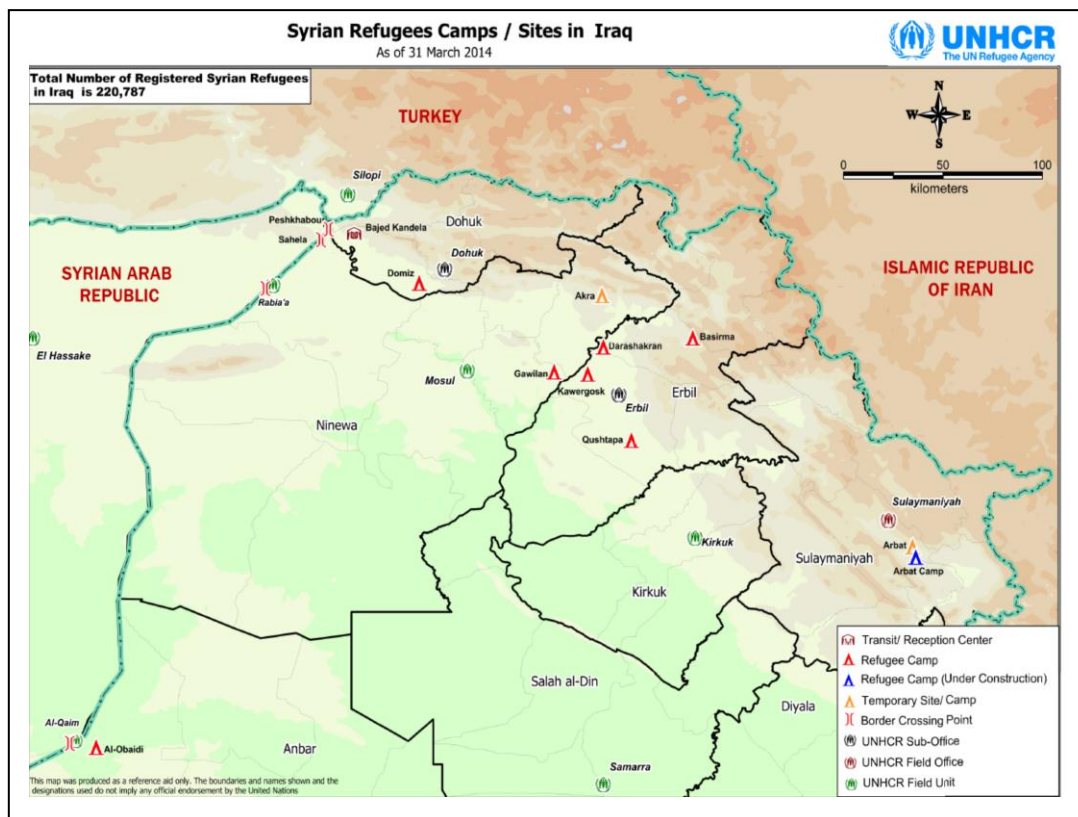


Figure 1. Location of the nine settlements hosting refugees from Syria.

## Objectives

The main objective of a JAM mission is to assess the food security and nutrition status of refugees.

The specific objectives of the JAM are:

- Assess the food security situation of the Syrian refugees living inside and outside the camps (access, availability and utilization of food) and identify main causes of food insecurity.
- Review the on-going food assistance programs and provision of related complementary assistance and services by WFP, UNHCR and their partners, identifying good practices, principle constraints, lessons learned and areas for improvement.
- Assess the potential for targeted food assistance and associated risks, and identify potential target groups and criteria.

## Methodology

The JAM is largely based on secondary data review complemented by a field visit. The JAM team reviewed in particular: UNHCR and WFP monthly monitoring reports, the 2013 nutrition survey on new arrivals, UNHCR and WFP project documents, the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) for non-camp (REACH, April 2014), and the outputs of the household (HH) interviews.



The field visit is based on qualitative participatory tools, including focus group discussions and key informants interviews. To complement the qualitative data, UNHCR-WFP contracted the services of REACH to conduct an in-depth household questionnaire to conduct an MSNA for refugees in camps. REACH interviewed 785 HHs randomly selected across the 9 camps on variety of food security indicators including food consumption, expenditure patterns and coping strategies as well as other sectors. The sample size had a statistical confidence level of 90% and has been compared to the data gathered during the MSNA for non-camp populations and triangulated with existing information and field visits in order to build a complete picture of the refugee food security and nutrition situation inside and outside of camps.

The field visit took place from the 6<sup>th</sup> May to the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and included:

- Visits to the camps (Basirma, Darashakran, Kawergosk and Qushtapa camps in Erbil Governorate, Arbat transit camp in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, and Domiz, Gawilan and Akre in Duhok Governorate), including visits to refugee households, schools, market areas, food distribution points, health facilities, livelihood and income generating projects
- Interviews with refugee council representatives and camp leaders
- Focus group discussions with refugees inside and outside of the camps on access and availability of food, livelihood opportunities, food assistance and coping strategies.
- Sectorial interviews with teachers, health practitioners, specialists from the water sector and traders
- Market visits and traders' interviews
- HH interviews
- Meetings with NGOs representatives and partners.

Location	KI	KI	FDG (women)	FDG (men)	FGD (women)	FGD (men)
	(camp)	(non-camp)	Camp	Camp	Non-camp	Non-camp
<b>Suleimaniya</b>	1	3	1	0	3	3
<b>Erbil</b>	4	4	4	3	1	1
<b>Dohuk</b>	7	4	6	7	5	5

Figure 2: Total number of interviews in addition to household surveys<sup>2</sup>

## Limitations

The JAM is largely based on secondary data analysis and the field visits primarily collected qualitative data. Some secondary data was not accessible, which may result in some contradictions in the findings.

The release of the UN Women report “We just keep silent” delayed the start of the assessment and resulted in some of the responses to gender questions being answered either with hostility or bias.

More recently, since the finalization of the report the influx of over 850,000 IDPs into KR-I will have changed the context of the humanitarian response and affected resource allocation by the humanitarian actors as well as the availability of income for refugees living outside of the camps.

## Findings

### Overall characteristics of the refugee population

#### Refugee profiles and origin

The majority of the Syrian refugees in KR-I come from Al-Hasakeh (61.73%), Aleppo (17.79%) and Damascus (10.05%)<sup>3</sup>. There has been a continual influx of refugees from Syria to KR-I and the number of refugees expected by the end of the year is estimated to be 250,000. At the time of the JAM mission there were 223,113 registered refugees in total (living inside and outside of camp).

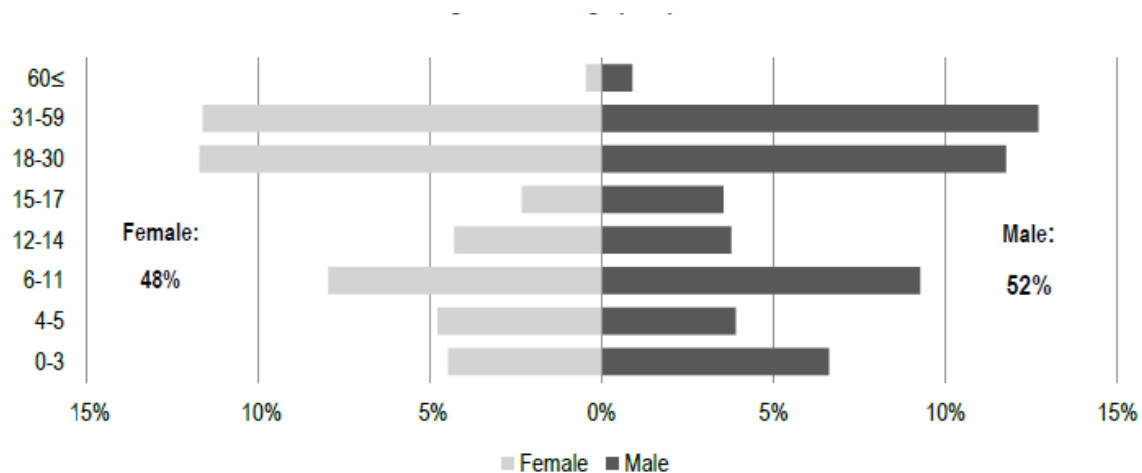
<sup>2</sup> KI: Key Informant Interview; FGD: Focus Group Discussion

<sup>3</sup> Monthly information kit April 2014.

Many of the Syrian refugees from Al-Hasakeh actually lived and worked in other areas of Syria prior to the conflict. The main cities for stable employment were not in the Kurdish region of Syria, thus even before the conflict people (families/single men) sought income in cities such as Damascus or Aleppo.

The Kurdistan region of Syria is an agricultural region, with few job opportunities outside of farming. During the 1960's the Syrian regime removed the land and property rights of Kurds and restricted their travel outside of Syria. As a result many Kurds looked for work, outside of their home cities in large urban centres. Once the conflict began, work opportunities decreased, prices of basic food and non-food items went up and social services collapsed. In addition, the real threat of violence, fear of abuses by the warring parties and increased risk of youth conscription into the military drove the population to take refuge in the Kurdish region of Iraq.

The population of refugees inside of the camp is 98,309 (44.1%) with 124,804 (55.9%) registered as outside of the camp<sup>4</sup>. The average household size of refugees outside of the camp was found to be 4.3, whilst inside of the camps the average household was a little bigger at 5.1. Across the assessed camps, 95% of households were male-headed while the remaining 5% were female-headed, as compared to 93% male headed household in non-camp populations.



**Figure 3: Household composition refugees in camps**

During focus group discussions with refugees living outside of the camps, the main reasons commonly raised for not going to camps were given as safety concerns, women dignity and quality of services. Even so, the economic pressures of rent, cost of utilities and food, combined with the

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR refugee statistics 30.04.2014

instability on the income market have many refugees considering the option of entering into the camps. During the meeting with the authorities in Sulaymaniyah it was noted that local Mayors have already been advocating on behalf of refugee families in their areas to be selected to enter into Arbat camp, once the new camp opens. Additionally it was reported that less than 5% of the families living in camps have at least one member of the family living outside of the camp. The most common reason given for this was availability of work (80%) followed by marriage (19%) and schooling (1%).

### **Registration and residency**

The bio-metric registration process will be completed by the end of year and will give a clearer indication of the number of refugees living inside and outside of the camps. The system will also be placed online, which will assist with identifying duplication.

At the time of the JAM the issuance of residency cards had been halted until after the announcement of the election results. The MSNA of refugees outside of camps conducted in April across all three governorates found that 41% of refugee households had at least one member holding a residency card. The highest incidence of refugees outside of the camps with residency cards was in Duhok (89%) and the lowest was in Sulaymaniyah (5%), whilst in Erbil, a total of 34% of respondents reported having a residency card. The reason for this disparity was found to be dependent on individual Governorates policy towards issuance of residency cards to the Syrian refugees. For example in Erbil, Residency cards were initially issued to the heads of each household, thus mostly men were issued with residency cards. The plan is to give all individuals above the age of 15 a residency card. The cost of issuing a residency card was 8000 Iraqi Dinar, but it was free to the refugees in Erbil. In Sulaymaniyah the refugees had to pay for their own residency cards, thus less were accessing them.

The situation is somewhat different for refugees in the camps. Across the 4 camps in Erbil the coverage is between 78% and 99%, much higher than the outside of camp population. This could be due to the greater pressure by the government to place refugees in camps, thus non-camp refugees are not as keen to be identified. In Arbat camp in Sulaymaniyah 12% of refugees households have at least one member holding a KRI residency card, which is also more than the percentage of refugees outside of the camps. For Duhok Governorate, Domiz camp has good coverage that is close to 100%, however Akre and Gawilan have very few households with residency; 1% and 16% respectively.

Those without residency cards are able to freely move within the Governorate in which they are registered, however movement between Governorates is difficult. This was noted as most problematic for refugees in Gawilan camp, who are physically closest to the urban centres of Erbil Governorate, where they could potentially seek work opportunities. However, without a residency card they are unable to leave Duhok. The lack of residency cards was also cited as a problem for refugees seeking regular employment, as employers were reluctant to hire refugees without the proper permissions. Ensuring a greater coverage and access of residency cards for men and women would improve the wellbeing of the refugee population inside and outside of the camps.

## Food security of the refugee population

### Markets

A diverse supply of food items are readily available inside and outside of the camps. Shops, both inside and outside of the camp have a wide variety of dry food items, including rice, pasta, sugar, oil, tea, milk, water, juice, eggs, biscuits, canned food (fish/vegetables, etc), fresh fruit and vegetables, and non-food items such as baby products, various kinds of soap and detergent.

One major difference between the food available in Syria prior to the conflict and the food available in KR-I is the source of the food. In Syria, food items were locally produced, whilst in KR-I food items are mainly imported. Imported food items were noted by the refugees to be more expensive compared to similar items available to Syria.

Each camp has a functional bakery that operates in the morning. Some of them are large, and the bakery in Domiz camp provided bread far beyond the confines of the camp and at the time of the JAM. Other bakeries are smaller, producing bread for the camp based refugees.

It was noted that in all camps, bread was previously provided by the government. The 'project' ended due to budget constraints and is not likely to be reactivated. The provision of bread was reported as an important form of support for the vulnerable households in Basirma and Gawilan camps, however in other camps key informants stated bread was going to waste and ended up being fed to livestock.

Seasonal fruits and vegetables are also widely available (tomatoes, bananas, potatoes, onions, carrots, green peppers) in different varieties. These are bought, usually on a weekly basis, from the wholesale markets by the camp based retailers for cash. The capacity of the markets to meet the additional needs of the refugees does vary from camp to camp, whilst demand is highly dependent

on the income of the refugees. The markets that offered the least variety of goods and services are the markets of Gawilan and Basirma camps. Interviews with retailers revealed that the limited purchasing power of refugees and access to the wholesale markets outside of the camp were stifling the growth of the markets in camps.

Non-food items are also available in good variety, including items such as baby nappies and wet wipes. WFP food was not observed in the markets, although the sale of WFP food packages was regularly reported as a means to purchase more appropriate food.

The mission visited the market areas in the camps, assessing several income generating activities (i.e. bakeries, skilled trades, general stores, market activity). A number of camps have designated market areas, such as Darashakran and the new sites of Gawilan and Arbat, which are livelihood initiatives supported by IOM. In some camps the shops have been constructed randomly, without much site planning while others followed a planned site allocation. Retailers used their own resources to construct and depending on the management process within the camp they have to register their business and are subject to inspection and quality standards. Refugees reportedly do move around to find the stores with cheaper and better quality goods, however the prime locations for the shops are along the main streets and access points to the camp.

Traders interviewed did not report on any particular seasonality issue, other than the summer makes it harder to store fresh foods. During FGDs it was noted that prices of fresh foods vary almost daily and generally refugees shop around to find the best prices on that day.

From January to May the prices of basic staples have remained stable, although vegetables and fruits vary in price almost daily. The prices of goods and services in the camps are significantly cheaper than outside of the camp. This is due to several reasons. The first is that shops in the camps are owned by the refugees and they are not being charged tax, rent, electricity or any additional overheads. The main expense is the cost of going to the wholesale markets to purchase their stock. The other main reason is that profit is not a primary driver for opening the shop in a camp, thus the profit margins are not as significant as for traders outside of the camps. Several shop owners stated they did not want to push profit margins given the vulnerability of the camp population. Quality was not considered any different between the goods and services found inside the camps as compared to outside.

A small grocery store in the camps will over a course of a day have 40-50 customers, who usually purchases 2,000-4,000 IQD of fruit and vegetables per visit. The shopping habits of the customers

do vary, although in general they tend to buy a wide selection of vegetables, but in small quantities, whilst fruit are bought less frequently.

The team focused its attention on the food markets specifically. In general food shops can be divided into three types:

- Large shops, which you can walk into and have a wide selection of (fresh, dry and tinned items) items and refrigeration.
- Small grocery stores that have very basic products, but still a formal structure.
- Small grocery stands - basic extension from the living space.

The functionality of the food market systems in the camps is very dependent on the proximity of local towns and the earning capacity of refugee population. For example, the markets in Domiz camp in Duhok and Qushtapa camp in Erbil do have a wide range of services available to the refugee population. Whilst in Basirma camp in Erbil and Gawilan camp in Duhok the limited purchasing power of refugees is reflected in the low level of the market development.

In general, shop owners go up to several times a week to closest governorate capital to purchase the products they need. Shop owners in the camps are not able to purchase their goods on credit from the suppliers and only use cash to purchase stock.

In most cases road between the camps and main towns are in good condition, although Gawilan camp is a little more isolated as it is 2.5 km from the main road and not close to any major towns in Dohuk. It is closer to the towns in Erbil, but lack of residency cards prevents refugees from freely moving between the two governorates

The constraints to market development do vary between camps. In some camps, as already mentioned, it is the lack of cash circulating within the camp that is constraining the growth of the markets, whilst in two sites (Arbat and Gawilan) the issues were physical, as the refugees were preparing to vacate the transit camp for the permanent camps.

## **Sources of income and food expenditure**

According to the MSNA, 88% of households in camp population and 84% of the non-camp households have at least one family member earning an income. The high percentage of working refugees in camps can be explained by the open nature of most camps which allows refugees to

easily leave to seek employment. Furthermore various organizations hire refugees within the different camps. Although the assessment reported a higher percentage of households in camps with at least one member in work, households in non-camp settings received a higher average monthly income (MSNA).

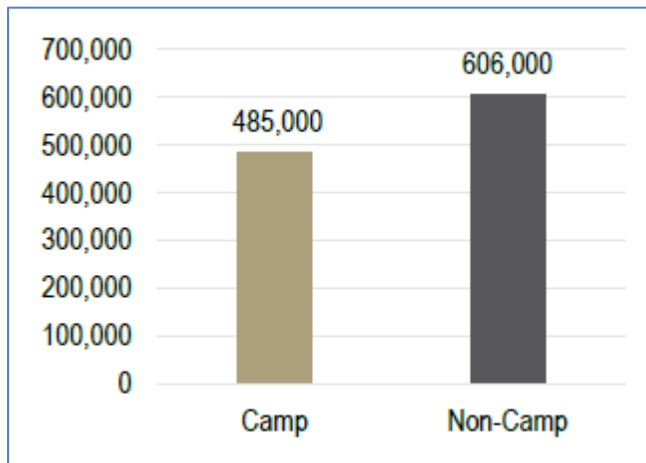


Figure 4: average monthly income (MSNA)

The top source of income for refugees inside and outside of the camps is daily waged or unskilled non-agricultural labour (factories, construction and restaurants), whilst NGOs and informal trade are the two other main sources of income. This was also reflected in the focus group discussions with men and women as well as being documented in a recent UNWOMEN report<sup>5</sup>, which reported over half (58%) of the 392 refugee men interviewed derived their income from daily ‘cash in hand’ work and a quarter (26%) from contracted labour. In general it was reported during the JAM that refugee families outside of camps that arrived before the August influx, were able to find work relatively easily and options for renting were easier. Overall, women’s involvement in labour force is much more limited than that of men, even if they have skills such as knitting and sewing clothes.

During the JAM, many refugees reported diminishing job opportunities due to competition with the increasing refugee population as well as the local population, lesser wages as compared to the Iraqis and highlighted the lack of residency permit as a key constraint for finding employment. There was also a request for organizations to facilitate refugees’ access to income.

<sup>5</sup> We just keep silent, April 2014



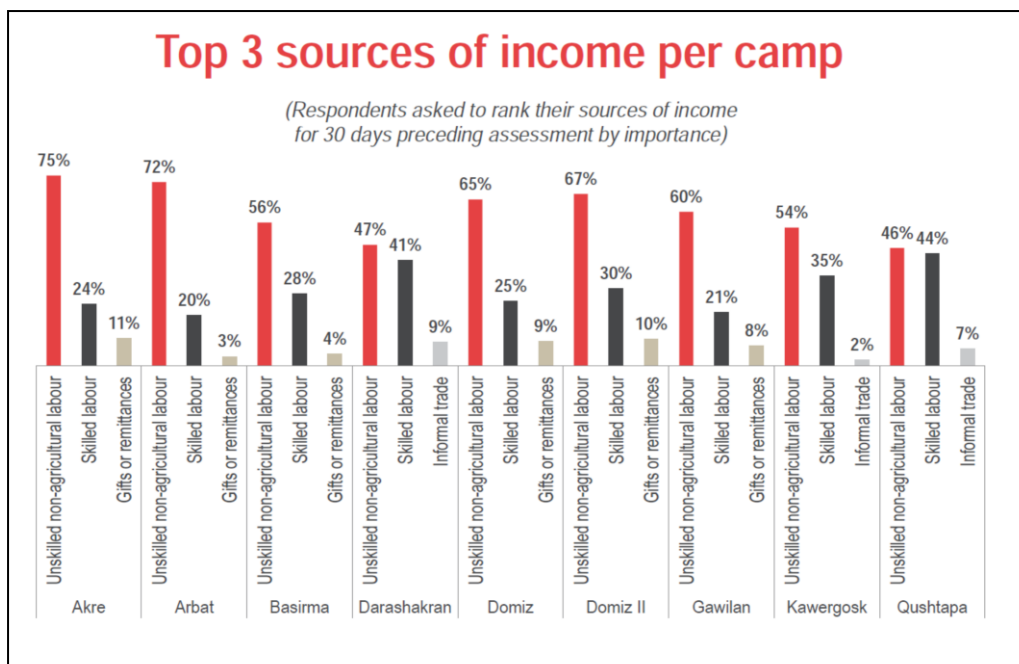


Figure 5: Top sources of income in the camps

Expenditure on food is related to work availability and income. When the refugees get an income they will spend it on additional food items, if not they will cope with the ration they are getting. The instability of the income and higher competition for work is of high concern for the refugees. It was noted that since August 2013 the daily waged labour has decreased to an average of 22,500 dinar a day per person for refugees living in camps. The average is a little higher for skilled labour (26,500 dinar p/p/d) and lower for agricultural labour (18,300 dinar p/p/d). The average daily wage also varies between the lowest average being reported in Arbat camp (20,474) and the highest in Basirma camp (26,007). Even though Basirma camp reported the highest average daily wage it is still one of the worst off camps, with families also reporting only having worked 16 days in the past month compared to the average across camps being 22 days and the highest being 25 days out of 30 reported in Akre. Basirma camp was also one of the worst camps for people reporting earning no income in the past 30 days, with only Gawilan in a significantly worse position. This lack of earning potential and thus purchasing power was clearly reflected in the status of the refugees who were significantly worse off in both Gawilan and Basirma camps and reported having more difficulty meeting their basic food need.

The prices of items are more expensive than the refugees are used to from Syria, but there is no obvious increase in the costs of basic food items. Analysis of food expenditure data in the camps

shows that spending on vegetables (73,310 dinar) and cereals (57,842 dinar) is higher than spending on other types of foods.

The level of indebtedness of people inside and outside of the camp is very high. 52% of households reported having borrowed money since arrival. While the percentage of families borrowing money is similar for camp and non-camp populations, the amount of debt varies greatly with an average of 675,000 IQD in camp versus 1,045,000 IQD in non-camp populations (MSNA). In the camp setting shop owners tend to give food on credit to known vulnerable households in their block, although credit is not extended to those not known by the shop keeper. Refugees outside of the camp reported various forms of debt, of which the most concerning was the borrowing against future labour. This unsustainable practice can entrap refugees and make it hard for them to exit.

### Food assistance

The main source of dry food comes from the WFP food assistance, although refugee households still purchase a good proportion of the food they consume. In May, 33,496 out of the estimated target 35,000 refugees in camps (96%) received food assistance in the form of in-kind food aid, while 73,655 of the targeted 76,000 refugees (97%) received food assistance in the form of vouchers. In total, 31% of WFP targeted refugee population in camps received in-kind food assistance and 69% received food vouchers.

The individual food basket includes:

Item	Commodity	Weight in kg
1	Pasta	4.00
2	Bulgur	3.00
3	Rice	4.00
4	Sugar	1.5
5	Lentils	1.8
6	Vegetable oil	0.91
7	Salt	0.25
8	Tomato paste	0.83
	Total	16.29

The table below shows the approximate size of the daily ration in grams, with the energy, lipid and protein contribution as compared to recommendations.



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2014

RATION CONTENTS	(Kg/person/month)	g/person/day	ENERGY kcal	PROTEIN g	FAT g
BULGUR WHEAT	3.0	100	350	11.0	1.5
RICE, POLISHED	4.0	133	480	9.3	0.7
PASTA, MACARONI	4.0	133	464	16.0	2.4
LENTILS	1.8	60	203	16.9	0.6
OIL, VEGETABLE (WFP SPECS.)	0.9	30	268	0.0	30.3
SUGAR	1.5	50	200	0.0	0.0
SALT, IODISED (WFP SPECS.)	0.3	8	0	0.0	0.0
TOMATO PASTE	0.8	28	23	1.2	0.1
Ration total		<b>543</b>	<b>1,988</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>35.6</b>
Beneficiaries			<b>2,100</b>	52.5	40.0
% of requirements supplied by ration			<b>95%</b>	<b>104%</b>	<b>89%</b>
% of energy supplied by protein or fat				<b>10.9%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>

The analysis of the food voucher is as per table below

Commodity	Kcal	Ration (kg)	Average Price of 1 KG/IQD	Average Cost of the ration IQD	Average Cost of the ration US\$
Rice	720	0.2	1,750	350	0.29
Bulgur	455	0.13	1,250	162.5	0.13
Pasta	174	0.05	850	42.5	0.03
pulses	169	0.05	1,700	85	0.07
Sugar	200	0.05	1,500	75	0.06
Sunflower Oil	292	0.033	1,810	59.73	0.05
Iodized Salt	0	0.005	750	3.75	0.00
Canned Meat	84	0.038	12,000	456	0.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>2094</b>		<b>total daily value in IQD</b>		1,234
<b>% fr. protein</b>	<b>10.8</b>		<b>total daily value in US\$</b>		1.01
<b>% fr. fat</b>	<b>18.5</b>		<b>Monthly value US\$</b>		30.23
<b>Total voucher cost for this operation US\$</b>					<b>1,209,287</b>

\* exchange rate 1 USD = 1,225 IQD

According to the Camp MSNA data cross checked in focus group discussions, of those getting food parcels between 60-70% are regularly selling 4 of the 7 items. Of the items sold, rice (68%) was the highest traded commodity followed by pasta (65%), lentils (58%) and bulgur (61%). The reasons frequently given for the selling the food items include; inappropriate food basket, the poor quality of rice, the large volumes of cereals, lentils are a winter food and 'breakfast items', such as yogurt, bread, cheese, chickpea and tea, are missing from the food package. Rice is not traditionally consumed by the Syrian Kurds whose main staple is bread. Even though there is a relatively high volume of WFP food being resold, the evidence shows that the food is being sold to purchase other food items that are preferred by the refugees, thus still contributing to the food security of the refugees.

In terms of the voucher programme, there is some re-selling of food, although this is negligible and it is usually for the purchase of fresh items that are not available in the WFP shops.

One of the findings of the MSNA in camps was the perceived value of the WFP food parcels and the voucher. The per-person 'market value' of the ration was calculated to be \$31 (37,830 IQD), however when asked to ascribe a value to the ration the refugees on average valued the ration at 10,429 IQD, with the lowest value of 6,230 IQD. For the refugees receiving the voucher, when asked to ascribe a value, they placed much more value on the ration, valuing the food at 31,415 IQD. This is still lower than the value of ration, because they felt that they could get the same items for cheaper if they were given the cash. This finding was also supported by FGDs, where both the men and women reported selling the ration parcel for 6,500 IQD.

Even though the food items were not completely to the satisfaction of the population, there was a general appreciation for the inclusion of tomato paste and the move away from family to individual rations. Overall however, there was an overwhelming consensus that the voucher programme would be more appropriate for the refugees than the current in-kind food aid parcel.

Unfortunately the JAM team was not able to participate in food distribution but people interviewed reported that in general, distributions were generally timely. However, distribution sites were regularly overcrowded, the distribution dates were not effectively communicated and the implication of the refugees' representatives in the distributions was not sufficient. The ACTED distribution monitoring reports showed that 98% of families received food regularly, but the great majority was unsatisfied with the quality and diversity of the food commodities. In almost all the

interviews with refugees not receiving vouchers there was a strong request to introduce the voucher intervention to replace in-kind food or to replace less desired items with cash. Focus groups also voiced complaints about the fact that disabled are not assisted with the distribution anymore and required to be physically present during the distribution.

Since November 2012, WFP started its food voucher programme in partnership with Islamic Relief Worldwide, in Domiz camp with one retail shop. As the number of refugees increased, WFP expanded and improved the programme to meet the evolving needs of Syrians refugees. Notable improvements included the opening of additional retail shops for voucher redemption in order to reduce overcrowding and contribute to greater market competition. Furthermore, in an effort to ease the financial burden on beneficiaries, all three participating retail shops now provide free transportation to and from the camp. Plans are underway to establish shops within the camp by August 2014 to further reduce this burden. Since November 2013, beneficiaries have also been issued with two vouchers each month which are redeemable simultaneously or twice a month at any participating retail shops. Splitting the voucher value provides beneficiaries with greater flexibility when shopping, allowing them to purchase items that require refrigeration, such as fresh produce, more often.

### **Food consumption and cooking**

Inside the camp, 99% of HHs interviewed had an acceptable food consumption score (FCS) and only 1% had a borderline food consumption score, whilst outside of camp the MSNA found that 92% of refugees have acceptable levels of food consumption and 2% have poor food consumption. The main difference between the two situations lies in the ability of some households to access acceptable levels of labour, which allows them to purchase more diverse foods more regularly. The other key difference is the fact that households outside of the camp have additional costs of rent and utilities. When comparing the situation across the camps, the two camps that stand out with poorer food consumption are Gawilan (95% acceptable FCS) and Basirma (93% acceptable FCS), which further demonstrates the importance of access to livelihood and income generation for improved food access. A more significant difference in food consumption can be seen when comparing the governorates of Duhok and Sulaymaniyah. A high portion of the refugees outside of the camp are accessing food assistance in Duhok through their registration as residents of Domiz camp, which will explain the 98% acceptable food consumption score, whilst in Sulaymaniyah refugees do not get systematic access to WFP food assistance and as a result 16% of refugees have a food consumption score of poor or borderline. In addition to the food consumption score refugees

were asked whether they lacked food at any time during the last 7 days before the assessment. In both camp and non-camp setting a portion did respond that this was the case, with twice as many (12% compared to 6%) outside of the camp stating they lacked food. This finding does show that refugees in camps are adequately having their food needs met through the food distributions and the additional complementarity food purchased with their own income. It also shows that refugees outside of the camp are more vulnerable to food insecurity, although a majority is still able to meet their food needs without the WFP food assistance.

Despite the difference in percentage values, both indicators show a direr situation among refugees outside of the camps than inside the camps. Of note is also the slight contradiction in the data, with food consumption score showing acceptable food consumption while households report a lack of food. Given the food habits of the Syrian population (traditionally a diversified diet including plenty of fresh foods), the high rate of acceptable food consumption score may mask cultural preferences and a decrease in diet quality.

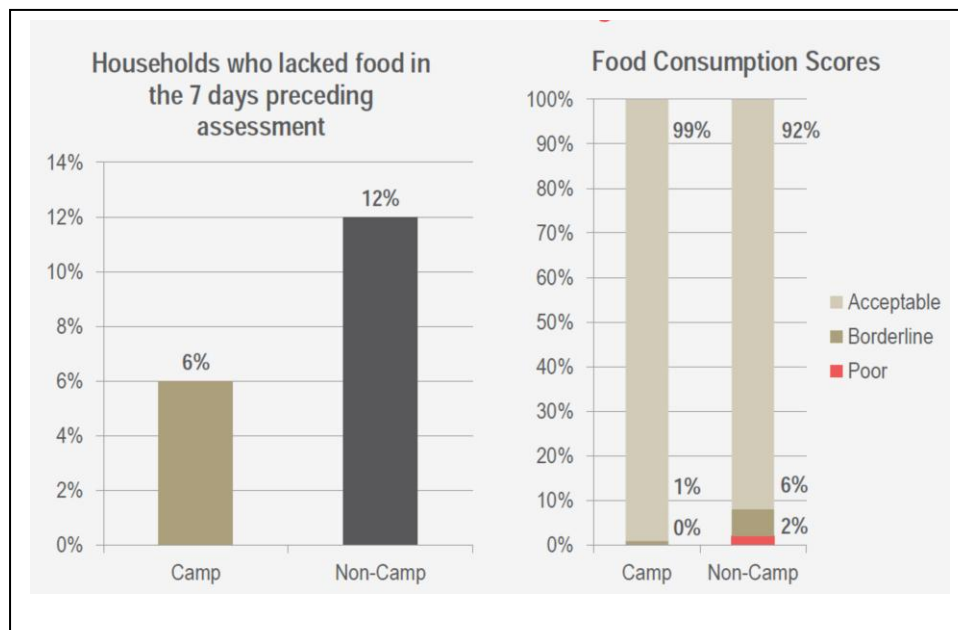


Figure 6: Lack of food and food consumption scores inside and outside of the camps

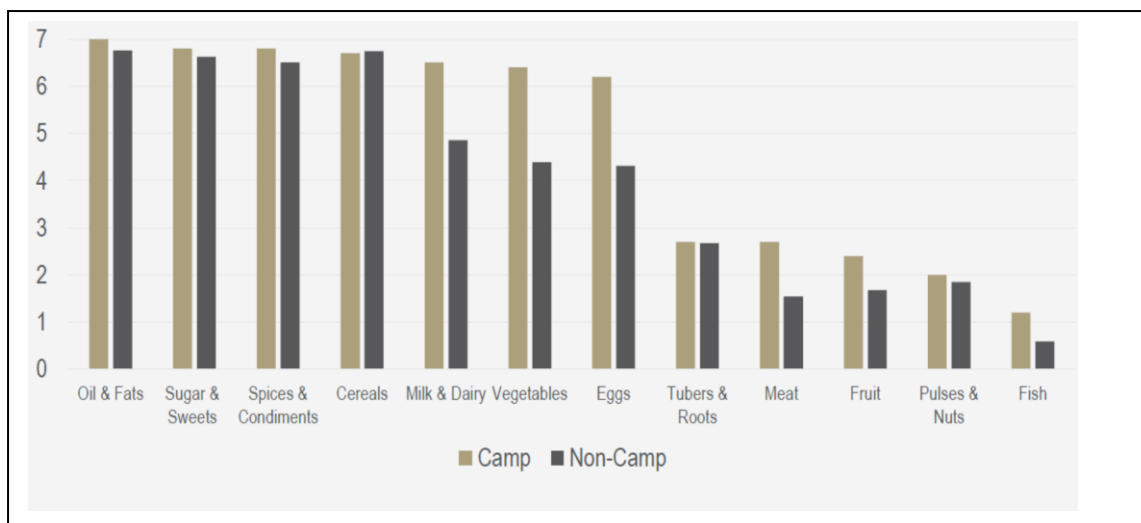


Figure 7: Average weekly consumption of food groups by number of days

Insufficient fuel was also a frequently reported reason for not using the full food package. Akre was the only camp in which a lack of fuel was not reported. Additionally, the household supplies (i.e. kitchen tools and cooking equipment) were ranked as inappropriate by 30% of households in Darashakran and 29% in Basirma, meaning that these households felt they did not have appropriate cook ware or stoves to prepare their food. In Qushtapa and Arbat transit the largest proportion of households reporting there was insufficient water can be found, 13% and 18%, respectively.

Most families prefer to use gas. Refugees outside of the camp use exclusively refillable bottle gas. In the camps the use of cooking fuel is mixed and the final choice of fuel is dependent on the ability of the refugees to afford and access gas. UNHCR gives one jerry can a month, but those interviewed complained that they have to cook using kerosene heaters that are also designed also to be stoves. In locations close to urban services, kerosene is being exchanged for cash, which is then used to purchase gas. In camps without this access, kerosene heaters are used to cook. In the winter, this was not problematic given it also heated the tents, but with the summer temperatures above 40 Celsius, it is difficult to prepare food in tents. There was also a concern of high risk of fire, especially during the windy months. The refugees are very appreciative of the chance to move to the permanent structures, as they have safe cooking areas outside of the tented space. Once refugees are settled into the permanent structures, looking for alternatives to kerosene should be considered.

Storage and refrigeration is also of great concern for the refugees, especially for the storage of fresh or cooked food. Without access to refrigeration, refugees in camps are unable to be efficient with the cooking, will use more fuel and also leave food exposed for longer to contamination and vermin.



The JAM team found no documented links with health issues and food storage; however it was a common opinion in the FGDs that refrigeration was a priority. The markets within Domiz camp for example, even sell refrigerators, so for families who have adequate income they can purchase them, whilst families without the economic means or space have to continue to purchase fresh food regularly and cook more frequently.

## Conclusions

The analysis of secondary data and the information collected during the JAM led to the following main conclusions:

1. Refugees from Syria are still largely dependent on humanitarian assistance to cover their basic food needs. Nevertheless refugees living in the camps and the camps themselves do not share homogenous socio-economic conditions, notably income levels vary. Some families are able to cover their food and basic needs better, while others struggle and rely only on external support.
2. The food consumption scores of households are high with over 92% having adequate food consumption. This, however, is at least partly attributable to the traditionally varied diet in the region. Up to 12% of the household report having insufficient quantities of food for their consumption.
3. Some groups remain vulnerable to food insecurity as they have no possibility of earning an adequate income and are totally dependent on assistance and support from the host community. According to the interviews in each camp around 20% of households are vulnerable and in need of more support than what is currently provided.
4. Many of the refugees that reside outside of the camps are also unable to earn sufficiently to meet all their expenditures and are in need of additional assistance to cover their food needs. To illustrate this, data related to food consumption shows a worse trend among the non-camp population where only 92% have an acceptable FCS as compared to the camp population where 99% have an acceptable FCS. Increased competition for work, poor job security and high rental costs are all contributing to the worsening status of refugees outside of camp.
5. Current in-kind food assistance does not fully meet the needs of the refugees. Considerable amounts of the food ration are sold under the market value of the items, in order to access more

appropriate food items. There is also dissatisfaction concerning the distribution process itself, and issues of inadequate cooking fuel and storage facilities.

6. On the other hand, the provision of food vouchers is highly appreciated by the refugees and there is an overwhelming request to use vouchers (or cash) as the food assistance modality rather than in-kind food assistance.
7. There is clear willingness among the refugee households to work and the majority has already engaged in some kind of wage labour, depending on their situation. Lack of residency permit is mentioned as the key constraint in limiting households' access to work, particularly if they reside outside of the camps.

## Recommendations

On the basis of these conclusions the team recommends the following main actions:

<b>Study the possibility to introduce a food voucher system in the camps</b>	This will replace general food distribution in order to stimulate the local market, to enhance dietary diversity and to empower refugees about food choice. Alternatively, if infrastructure is judged inadequate after further study, the least preferred items of the food ration could be replaced by a cash transfer.
<b>Improve the implication of refugees in the current distribution system</b>	Include refugee committees in the distributions and ensure disabled are provided with adequate support to access their food entitlements.
<b>Study the need and the possibility to introduce socio-economic targeting for food assistance</b>	Given the varied situations among camps as well as households, the introduction of needs-based targeting based on socio-economic profiles of the households should be studied for both camp and non-camp populations.
<b>Develop assistance strategy for refugees residing outside of camps</b>	Explore how refugees living outside of camps can be better assisted within the current political environment based on their needs.
<b>Pilot a conditional food transfers activity</b>	Develop a strategy for food for work/food for training that could involve refugees in activities that are beneficial for the community. The FFW activity could target people already involved in community services (i.e. teachers) and support new income generating activities.
<b>Target women or young people</b>	Study the demand and pilot conditional food and cash/voucher transfers (food/cash/voucher for training) specifically for these groups in order to support skills creation, livelihood support and access to employment.
<b>Develop a livelihood support strategy</b>	Continue general food assistance, but facilitate a progressive reduction of the dependence on food assistance until it covers only the most vulnerable groups. Organise a more detailed livelihood study, to explore different possibilities to increase the self-reliance of refugees. Formalise results in a livelihood strategy.

**Integration into national  
safety nets**

Advocate with the Government of KRI for the inclusion of vulnerable refugees into national safety-nets including the Public Distribution System (PDS) as done successfully with refugees arriving in earlier years

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**Annexes**

**Annex 1 : JAM Terms of reference**

**WFP/UNHCR Joint Assessment Mission (JAM)  
Terms of Reference**

**For Review/Assessment of the Situation of Syrian  
Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq**

**February 2014**

**0. Background**

The Republic of Iraq is a middle income country with a population of 32 million people of which 23 per cent are less than 14 years of age (2011). The population growth rate is 2.3 per cent and 25 per cent live below the poverty line. While the economy is led by the oil sector rendering the country resource rich, several social indicators are below acceptable levels. Iraq ranks 131 out of 186 on the Human Development Index, which is well below the regional average.

A number of key factors are challenging stability and the implementation of the UN assistance for refugees and IDPs in Iraq. Spill over from the Syrian civil war and ensuing regional instability, internal Iraqi political and sectarian tensions and divisions have polarised the country.

Stagnant socio-economic progress and lack of basic services further hampers daily life in Iraq while a number of institutions and ministries have a limited capacity. It is within this context that UNHCR, WFP and other UN agencies and partners deliver assistance and protection to vulnerable groups who are often located in remote or inaccessible areas.

While a number of security incidents and attacks has been increasing during the last few months, restrictions resulting from the fluid security environment affect both staff safety and program implementation in the central and southern regions of Iraq. Due to some security concerns, supported also by the recent political events involving protests and other incidents, the refugee and displacement issues are not in the Government's list of priorities. UN staff movement in the red zone has decreased as well as longer missions in the central and southern regions.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) the security situation is relatively calm. This enables UN staff to move easily. The KR-I is a self-governing region, developing its' cultural and human potential, spurred by a secure environment and a proven record

of attracted investment. New construction is abundant, electricity supply system is constantly improving, as well as other infrastructure components. With opening of new universities, increasing business scale, a better opportunities for improving life standards are appearing. The KRG maintains a welcoming posture towards refugees and returnees, providing UN staff a safe operational environment. However, in Kirkuk the volatile security situation continues to prevail, creating obstacles for smooth local integration for IDPs and staff to provide the needed assistance.

The Syrian uprising continues to push Syrians into neighbouring countries with an increasing steady flow into Iraq. A rapidly increasing number of Syrian refugees is putting strain on the local infrastructures and essential services, which had already been significantly weakened by the years of war and instability.

As of February 2014, there are almost 220,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> In 2013, an influx of new refugees in the north resulted in the setting up of new camps in the governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. At the same time due to security reasons, the Iraqi policy in Central Iraq has been to maintain closed borders. As a result, more than 90 per cent of refugees are hosted in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Most of the refugee families originate from Qamishli city, Hassakeh, Aleppo and Damascus. Majority of the Syrian refugee population (74%) are non-camp refugees; most reside in urban centres in Dohuk, Erbil and Suleimaniyah.

As per the WFP/UNHCR MoU, annual or bi-annual assessments are recommended. It is especially felt to be necessary in KR-I at this point, as circumstances have changed significantly since the beginning of the refugee influx. The JAM is jointly organized by UNHCR and WFP with the participation of other stakeholders such as UNICEF, KRG, donors and cooperating partners. The JAM will investigate the status of assistance to Syrian refugees – by assessing the overall nutritional status, level of self-reliance of refugees and host population, additional needs and suggest an intervention strategy from January 2015 onwards. The joint review/assessment will also provide information that will help to fine-tune the on-going operation in line with overall objectives and current needs, making recommendations to resolve problematic policy and operational issues, such as ration provided, modalities of food assistance, and opportunities for supporting and reinforcing development of livelihoods.

## **II. Objectives of the Mission**

The overall objective of the JAM is to assess the food security and nutrition needs of both camp and non-camp refugees, their capacities and vulnerabilities, and provide programmatic recommendations for a strategic plan with a scope of 6-12 months.

To implement the objective the following activities will be conducted:

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<sup>6</sup>Syria Situation Biweekly update No. 42 1-14 Jul 2013 (UNHCR BO Baghdad)

1. Update key information in connection with the humanitarian mandates of WFP and UNHCR, with regard to food security and nutrition and their underlying causes.
2. Review the on-going food assistance operations and provision of related complementary assistance and services by WFP, UNHCR and their partners, identifying good practices, principle constraints, risks for the incoming summer/winter and lessons learned as well as areas for improvement.
3. Identify ways to improve the service quality and efficiency of partnerships with other humanitarian institutions.
4. Assess the potential for targeted food assistance in urban areas, its associated risks, the potential target groups and criteria.
5. Have a clear understanding of needs, potentialities and perceptions linked to self-support and reestablishment of livelihood systems among refugees.
6. **Cross-cutting themes namely** Protection, Age, gender and diversity have to be mainstreamed in assessment of refugees, host community needs, relationship/interaction between refugees and host communities, access to services, livelihood opportunities.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Information will be collected and compiled by the assessment team through a combination of secondary and primary data analysis. The following methods will be used by WFP/UNHCR teams on the ground to accomplish the objectives of the exercise while respecting Protection and Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM):

- Transect walk
- Review of secondary data.
- Participatory observation and spot checks.
- Semi-structured discussions with individual key informants (e.g. government, civil society, refugees, residents of host communities, NGOs, UN agencies).
- Focus group discussions.
- Carry-out a food and nutrition security focused household survey

The results of the research will be, to the possible extent, processed in a way to produce quantitative outputs for better interpretation of the results. In addition, regular consultations debriefing meetings among interviewees, facilitators and monitors to cross-check and share results, discuss issues and ensure activities are on track will further enhance the desired outcome.

#### **Specifically the JAM will**

- 1.) Determine the food security situation of the Syrian refugees living inside and outside the camps (access, availability and utilization of food) and identify Effective food security interventions to protect and secure the food security and nutritional status of the refugees.

### Food Security

- Assess food availability, in particular at refugee household level and in all the areas hosting refugees, affecting both refugees and host communities.
- Assess household access to food, in particular refugees' current livelihood practices, including access to income and food security-related assistance, as well as any factors inhibiting these;
- coping mechanisms;
- highlight any gaps in the food security related assistance;
- identify potential protection risks associated with various means to access to food and coping mechanisms;
- Assess food utilisation, including sharing practices within the household and the community; hygiene, storage and preparation of food; and
- any factors inhibiting optimal use of food.;
- Review practices and beliefs on nutrition and their impact on pre-and post natal periods as well as breast feeding of 24 months.
- Review the current institutional arrangements (including an analysis of partnerships) to provide basic WASH and camp administration services
- Describe the prospects for durable solutions and the probable scenarios for the future.

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### Protection/Community Services

- Review the current arrangements for registration/revalidation of refugee documents (Asylum seekers certificates) providing access to food assistance, aiming further transfer to ration cards;
- Assess current mechanisms for refugee participation in camp coordination and activities and provide recommendations on how these can be strengthened to achieve better food security and nutrition outcomes;
- Assess the situation of the new and under-construction camps in connection to the provision of basic services, food markets, employment and interactions with host communities.
- Assess the situation of non-camp refugees: access to food, other humanitarian services and their vulnerability.

**2.)** Review the on-going food assistance programs and provision of related complementary assistance and services by WFP, UNHCR and their partners, identifying good practices, principle constraints, lessons learned and areas for improvement.

### **This analysis will focus on:**

- Compliance with WFP/HCR MOU, policies rules and procedures including transparency, standards and gender;

- Review progress on food-related recommendations from previous Joint Rapid Needs Assessment 2012;
- Review of programme monitoring (M&E) systems being undertaken jointly by WFP and UNHCR including collection, analysis, reporting and use of data;
- Assess the situation of camps in connection to services associated to voucher redemption (transportation, number of shops, orientation to clients, competitive services, variety and appropriateness of products and presence of any case of abuse or take of economic advantage of the refugees needs to redeem vouchers);
- Examination of implementation tracking through analysis of distribution reports and WFP/UNHCR monthly monitoring reports to determine possible gaps/shortfalls in the management of the programmes;
- Assess the actual food needs and appropriateness of on-going food assistance;
- If continued assistance is recommended, advise on the most appropriate modality of WFP assistance for the next EMOP and other complementary food assistance in the camps and refugee hosting areas, including duration of the assistance programme; basic food basket; food/resource needs; means of distribution (food, vouchers, cash and/or combination); need for targeting in local communities; specific needs of vulnerable groups; stock/shop monitoring;
- Post-distribution and on-site monitoring; effective and transparent food distribution (camp and urban centres).
- With reference to the school feeding, review the need and determine related food and non-food items needs for the period of the planned EMOP;
- Review the coordination strategy and mechanisms related to food assistance;
- Assess the distribution chain of the current food assistance systems (vouchers and in-kind aid), including: logistical aspects of the current food assistance systems, including timeliness and regularity of distribution, monitoring system (food basket and PDM), losses, and possibilities to reduce constraints and increase efficiency.

**3.) Assess the potential for targeted food assistance and associated risks, and identify potential target groups and eligibility criteria**

- Assess the possible requirements to start providing targeted assistance based on legal status (UNHCR registered, awaiting UNHCR registration, unregistered by UNHCR), the vulnerability and state of food security of the refugees;
- Identify potential targeting criteria and systems; Explore possibilities to expand positive coping mechanisms to enhance livelihoods.

#### **IV. REQUIRED OUTPUTS**

A workshop will be organized to share major findings and recommendations of the JAM, as well as facilitate the elaboration of a Joint Action Plan. An Aide Memoire for debriefing purposes with provisional conclusions and recommendations to be presented to and discussed with different stakeholders.



A finalized and concise JAM report should:

- Summarize the findings , specifying any uncertainties due to data limitations;
- Analyse the particular problematic issues identified in the TOR, and any other that may have been identified during the review/assessment process, and proposed solutions;
- Describe specific solutions and the probable scenarios for the next 6-12 months, presenting assistance interventions that could improve the nutrition, food security and self-reliance of the refugees, address any problems of malnutrition
- Present similar information concerning any measures needed to protect or enhance the food security and nutritional status of the local host populations;
- Provide recommendations for specific objectives and joint plan of action for food security and self-reliance for the next 6-12 months, applicable for implementation by the KRG, WFP, UNHCR and other stakeholders;

## V. Timeline

The JAM will take place from April to June 2014.

Activity	Feb	March	April Wk 1/2	April Wk 3/4	May Wk 1/2	May Wk 3/5	June Wk 1/2
Preliminary JAM preparatory meetings							
ToR and budget approval by WFP and UNHCR							
Establishment of technical committee							
ToR approved Government							
Arrival of JAM experts							
Finalization of tools							
Mission briefing, preparation including meeting with government							
Secondary data review							
Presentation to stakeholders							
Mobilisation of partners, preparation of final methodology guidelines & field plan							
Field phase (data collection)							
Analysis / Reporting							
Presentation of preliminary results & joint action plan							
Final Report							

Activity	Feb	March	April Wk 1/2	April Wk 3/4	May Wk 1/2	May Wk 3/5	June Wk 1/2

## VI. TEAM COMPOSITION

The team will include at least the following: *WFP and UNHCR co-team leaders* (who will be supported by their respective Country Offices and field teams on site), *the Government*, technical support staff from both agencies, and representatives of the major cooperating UN agencies and/or NGOs. Representative(s) of the donor community may be invited to join the JAM as observers. The team members should possess technical skills and experience in Food security, Nutrition and Self-reliance (agriculture, employment and income-generating activities).

All members should be available for the whole time of the assessment. In addition, they should contribute to the success and smoothness of the JAM according to their qualifications and experience. All should be good 'team players'.

## VII. Budget

Costs of the JAM exercise will be covered jointly by UNHCR and WFP. Additional support may requested from participating agencies.