

## Guidance on response strategy and modalities in Eastern Ghouta

This guidance is issued following qualitative consultations with partners that are present in Eastern Ghouta. Further, assessment and contextualizing is needed for programming.

### Food Assistance

- Regarding the food supply, WFP and ICRC plan to deliver adequate supplies of General Food Rations through the Inter Agency Convoy to the area which will assist in pushing down food prices so as to help minimize the worsening nutritional crisis especially for those households who have access to fuel and will therefore be able to feed their family.
- General Food Assistance (GFA) will help reduce households' expenditure on food and will make more money available at household level for purchasing non-food items. As a follow up to GFA, efforts should also be made to distribute rations which are ready to eat and therefore will help address the immediate food needs without the need to cook, which has been heavily impacted by the shortage (and high prices) of fuel supplies.
- Increase in cooking fuel prices is a concern, since this will limit the ability to cook food. Having 'community kitchens' which will cook for households who no longer can feed their family is a good initiative and one that should be supported as well. It was reported that people burn plastic to get fuel. It's a coping strategy but with serious environmental/health implications.
- The biggest challenge is the suspension of the contract of the traders who used to deliver acceptable quantities of food/NFI to the areas. As high prices and non-availability of food items are the main issues, cash is not an option as this will increase the prices of available quantities of food.
- In terms of Cash Based Transfer (CBT) for Food Assistance, the situation in Eastern Ghouta is not ideal for a CBT intervention. Traders are not able to source food due to high transaction prices at access points and without functioning supply routes a CBT will very likely lead to huge inflation when dealing with cash. CBT should only be undertaken in areas where markets are functional, where food is easily accessible and where the quantity of available food exceeds its demand. Eastern Ghouta does not fully meet these conditions, therefore extreme caution should be used when considering CBT modalities for this area.
- It is reported that the Food Security Office in Eastern Ghouta has good wheat and wheat flour stock to keep the price of bread bundle on the level of 700-750 SYP and are going to plant more areas this year to ensure the harvest of large wheat quantities for next year.

### Recommendations

- Bread voucher as bread prices may remain stable.
- Community kitchens, and linking family rations (for ex IAC) to such community kitchens where possible, especially where fuel prices/availability are very high.
- Ready To Eat Rations if needed as a follow up to GFA.

### Livelihoods/Agriculture

- Supporting the agricultural sector is highly recommended as there are large agricultural areas that could provide the minimum quantities of vegetables.
- The main winter crops/vegetables are spinach, cabbage, mushrooms, etc. The harvest time is in January and February.
- Some partners have reported that agriculture projects (winter crops, homestead) are feasible through local procurement of inputs; other productive inputs/tools are also reported to be available. This needs further assessment for programming.
- The need of fuel is limited as the target areas are phasing into the rain season.
- Livestock is considered a very important source of income and food. Sheep are highly recommended, followed by cows. Livestock (sheep and cows) can be locally procured, along with fodder.
- Modality: where applicable, cash transfer for local procurement of seeds and animals is considered as a feasible option at present by those partners who were consulted (commission is currently 8 %).
- Cash for work is also recommended on rehabilitation of rural facilities (stores, cattleshed etc.)

### Recommendations:

- Agriculture and Livelihoods interventions to meet the seasonal needs