



Anas Almohammad: Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster Coordinator for the North West Syria hub

Syria: record 12.4 million people food insecure after a decade of conflict

As the 5th annual [Brussels Conference on Syria](#) marked a bleak anniversary, an FSL Cluster Co-Coordinator reflects on his work there and his hopes for the future of his homeland

Today an unprecedented **12.4 million people in Syria – some 60 percent the population – are food insecure**. After a decade of conflict, 2020 was one of the country's most turbulent years ever: a global pandemic, ongoing insecurity and violence, the collapse of the Syrian pound and food prices soaring by over 220 percent have collided to form a catastrophic outlook. With people typically queuing for hours to buy fuel, bread, and other necessities they can barely afford, COVID-19 is a constant source of anxiety that only adds to concerns about where families might get their next meal from.

Anas Almohammad, from Deir ez-Zor in Eastern Syria, is Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster Co-Coordinator for the [North West Syria hub](#), based in Turkey. Due to the conflict, he has not been able to visit his relatives since leaving in 2014. Having previously worked for the Ministry of Agriculture in Syria, he now leads the Cluster's Agriculture technical working group and Bread and Bakeries coordination group, helping people to access basic foods that would otherwise be out of reach.



Food distribution (left) and shopping with cards in Syria (right). Photo credit: WFP/Hussam Al Saleh

FSC response in Syria

Anas works for the FSL Cluster alongside national and international NGOs, collaborating with [over 80 partners](#) to assist communities across the country. He cites reaching those most at risk as what drives him most, with the [FSC for the Whole of Syria](#) and the [FSL Cluster for North West Syria](#) coordinating **cash and voucher assistance, emergency food distributions** including much-needed **bread and bakery products**, and support households' resilience through **agricultural programmes to boost production**.

While the majority of Syrians used to be able to earn an income and pay for their own food, farming inputs, education and health services, Anas says he is struck by how many have now lost their means of supporting themselves. "They rely almost entirely on humanitarian assistance and what family members can send back monthly from abroad. Most of my relatives from Deir ez-Zor are now internally displaced in the North West. Although some stayed at home, the situation there is very bad, with monthly salaries between USD 10 to USD 20 – anything they need to buy is impossibly expensive."

North West Syria: an unfolding and protracted crisis

Anas tells us that "out of 4.4. million people in the [North West region alone](#), **3.3 million are food insecure**, including 2.7 million who have been internally displaced due to the conflict. Of these, 1.6 million are living in camps and are completely dependent on humanitarian assistance. They are highly vulnerable, and their cramped living conditions make it easier for COVID-19 to circulate."

Compelled to coordinate food security response remotely due to the pandemic, he cites **flooding in IDP camps** and **fires in farming areas** as added challenges for Syrians and humanitarian actors striving to help them. "With rural populations forced to abandon their land and livelihoods, the resilience of the entire country is being dangerously undermined."



Syrians, including elderly people and children, queue for food parcels. Photo: WFP/ Hussam Al Saleh

Helping the most vulnerable to help themselves

“The most inspiring part of our work is helping people to help themselves, standing by those in need and supporting them. For this, all local and international partners come together as a great team, assisting communities across the country.”

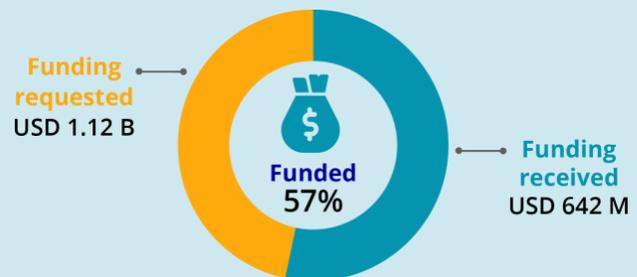
Despite the difficulties he witnesses every day, Anas hopes that over the next few years the Cluster can shift increasingly from emergency assistance and early recovery to resilience. “If investments and additional resources are made available, the Cluster will be able to further support coordination of agricultural production and livelihoods programmes. I have seen the difference that we and our partners are making to the everyday lives of millions of people with little left to hope for, and I believe we can continue on this path with longer-term goals too.”

Learn more about what the Cluster is doing in Syria [here](#)

With needs across Syria higher rising at unprecedented rates, food security response must be sustained and fully funded.

- Out of 9.8 million people in need of urgent food security assistance in 2020, the [FSC for the Whole of Syria](#) reached an average of **5.4 million people monthly with regular food baskets** and some **3.7 million people across 2020 through livelihoods support**.
- Each month the [FSL Cluster in North West Syria](#) coordinates **lifesaving food security response for 3.3 million people** and **livelihoods support for 200,000 people**, out of a total population of 4.4 million.
- In 2020, the FSC for the whole of Syria received **just half the USD 1.12 billion** needed to carry out urgent food security and livelihoods response.

 Increased funding must be ensured in 2021 to continue coordinating food assistance for the most vulnerable, displaced and host communities; to strengthen productive assets and agricultural programmes; and to boost families' resilience through income-generating initiatives.



The EU-UN Brussels Conference on Syria



The Conference addressed the most critical issues affecting Syrians and refugee-hosting communities across Syria, both inside the country and in the region, and renewed the international community's political and financial support for Syria's neighbours, in particular Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey as well as Egypt and Iraq.

A “**Day of Dialogue**” was held on **29 March**, with panel discussions from a variety of governmental and non-governmental institutions. The ministerial part of the conference on 30 March brought together participants to discuss all key aspects of the Syrian crisis: political, humanitarian and regional development.

On the 26th of March 2021, the FSL Cluster in North West Syria participated in a Side Event of the European Union and United Nations (UN) [Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”](#), entitled [“Resilience of Agricultural Value Chains in Syria: Opportunities and Challenges”](#).