



LIBYA

FOOD SECURITY SECTOR

Strengthening Humanitarian Response

COVID-19 Update

10 April 2020

CURRENT SITUATION

Libya is, without a doubt, a country extremely vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. By 06 April, there were 18 identified cases in the country. Libya was identified as one of the 27 countries "most vulnerable to emerging outbreaks of illness" in a Global Health Security (GHS) Index report published in March.

The main drivers of vulnerability in Libya are reliance entirely on imports to meet the needs of its domestic market as well as multiple governance by Government of National Accord (GNA), Libyan National Army (LNA) control and militias causing a significant rift in COVID-19 responses. The different areas have not been able to form a cohesive response in terms of numbers of possible cases, processes, or curfews. The different parts of the country have been attempting to respond separately. Conflict and shelling also continue despite an agreed-upon call for a humanitarian pause. Despite border closures, Libya has long land borders with many countries that have limited border management capacity and many cases of COVID-19. Smuggling continues to be an issue, with control of this becoming even more difficult as borders remain porous despite regulations.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

General indirect impacts

Macro-economic effects

- Reduction of industrial, oil and tertiary services production affecting domestic consumption, and international trade.
- Impact on food systems including production (availability) and access (physical and economic/prices).
- Rise of under-employment and unemployment.

Effects on livelihoods:

- Decreased income and purchasing power due to loss of jobs and work opportunities, restricted mobility (internal and international), loss of access to productive inputs, loss of access to markets, decreased productivity because of sickness, increased health expenditures.
- Increased food insecurity linked to decreased food production due to lack of agricultural inputs and loss of labour due to sickness or less manpower.
- Increased malnutrition due to decreased food security and health care
- Lack of consideration to specific groups such as IDPs, migrants and some refugees; increased xenophobia.

Impact of measures imposed due to the pandemic

Displacements

There have also been small waves of displacement as a result of reported and confirmed cases of COVID-19. In Misrata and Tripoli, families have left the city following news of confirmed cases. Many families are worried they would increase their chance of exposure if they stayed in urban areas. The lack of guidance or enforcement by authorities means that movement between cities is still taking place despite curfews and restrictions.

Humanitarian Access

The changing curfew and regulations in Libya, the ongoing clashes, and the fact that cities are taking independent decisions to restrict movement and close roads, has the potential to significantly impact the ability of humanitarian agencies to perform in Libya. Since the precautionary measures were introduced to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Libya, humanitarian agencies reported many access constraints that were linked with the precautionary measures taken by the humanitarian agencies themselves as well as the important measures imposed by the authorities, such as putting in place curfews to take effect in order to limit movements. Some agencies have not been able to dispatch their trucks to deliver assistance because of the long distances and the violation of curfew conditions that such long movements may pose.

Negotiations are ongoing with the relevant authorities for their support to issue exemptions for humanitarian movements and activities so that assistance continues to be delivered during this time.

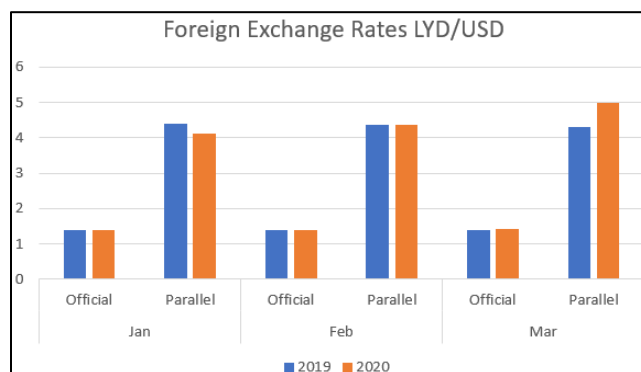
Supply-Chain

Libya is a country that relies entirely on imports to meet the needs of its domestic market. For years, Libya has witnessed continuous fluctuations in the prices of food due to the ongoing war and the constant movement of the exchange rate of the local currency, dinar, against the US dollar. According to the Libya Joint Monitoring Initiative March 2020 Report, the decision to close land borders has led to spikes of food prices in some local markets, since they have to be imported from abroad. Suppliers are also expecting to see a severe shortage of produce across the country in the near future, as most of the agricultural lands around the capital, as well in the southern

region have become battlegrounds since last year.

The Importation of goods into Libya may be affected due to increasing exchange rates and restrictions imposed by exporting countries causing a reduction in supply.

The exchange rate on 10 March 2020, reached 5 LYD/USD, which is the highest recorded figure since December 2018. The Central Bank Libya (CBL) blocked official access to foreign exchange, making it difficult for importers to pay for shipments of goods into the country. During March, food prices have remained relatively stable, but are expected to increase sharply due to the 3-week import blockage.



March 2020, Libya Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)

With COVID-19 outbreak, Libya will struggle to finance imports with the limited foreign currency which might lead to a shortage of essential commodities and thus leading to an increase in food prices.

Also, since the majority of food products available on the Libyan market are imported, any change in export regulations from countries also tackling COVID-19 will place a severe strain on food availability and prices in Libya. Government measures like curfews and closure of shops and also reduced importation due to inaccessibility to foreign exchange in Libya, will also cause a reduction or a delay in the supply on products like beans and pasta therefore forcing prices of the available stock within the country to increase.

Delay in supply chains which may impact on the food availability which will lead to an increase in the food prices.

While global markets for basic cereals are well supplied and prices generally low, commodities need to move from the world's 'breadbaskets' to where they are consumed. Commodities in Libya are imported by sea through the Libyan ports of Tripoli, Misrata and Khoms serving western and southern Libya and Port Benghazi serving eastern Libya. The COVID-19-related containment measures have started to make this more challenging: all air, land and sea borders

are affected, with exemptions for cargo, chartered, humanitarian and government entities. Transportation services are disrupted in terms of availability, lead times and cost as current disruptions in containerized shipping is creating uncertainty on international sea transportation, availability and surge in costs. Border closures impact negatively on overland cargo transportation. Numerous ports have further started to put health inspections in place which will require more cumbersome procedures such as a disinfection of vessels, causing delays and potentially supply chain hiccups.

Within Libya, transporters are facing difficulties on movement due to the government curfew imposed, although there are different timings for the curfew between GNA and LNA controlled areas. Transporters are increasingly facing check points (some of them are local militia made) where they stop trucks and ask more information. so far there are effects of COVID-19 is that local authorities are tightening controls on movement for international relief from one point to another.

Agriculture

Continued conflict on the most fertile lands in Libya has had a negative impact on agricultural activities and affected the availability of inputs. Access to these lands due to curfew and movement restrictions with COVID-19, along with disrupted supply chain, will further negatively affect the agriculture sector and the farming households. Moreover, Libya relies heavily on imports (up to 90%) to cover its cereal consumption requirements, mostly wheat and barley. Livestock will as well be impacted as it provides the main source of nutrition and income for many farming households. Transboundary animal diseases are among the main constraints that lower the performance of the livestock sector through reducing the production and quality of animal products, and consequently affecting food security. According to FAO, Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is a severe zoonotic, viral, vector-borne disease representing a threat to human health, animal health and livestock production in Libya. The socio- economic impact of the disease on people's livelihoods and on trade can be high due to significant losses in livestock production, closure of livestock markets and bans on livestock movement and slaughtering. Border closures will eventually impact food availability and prices.

While no data is yet available on the effect of COVID-19 on agriculture in Libya, WFP's recent study on agricultural livelihoods in the South region confirms that agriculture still represents an

important source of income and food in all assessed areas of the South region. As the majority of the farming population farms between 5-10 hectares (ha), they are less likely to be affected directly by COVID-19 than those in urban or peri-urban areas. However, the assessment found that 44% of farming households spend up to 75% of their income on food and so food price increases could hit their ability to meet basic needs other than food. Moreover, up to 75% of the food they consume comes from their own production, especially vegetables, fruit and animal products. Other food commodities usually consumed (rice, pasta, flower, bread, oil, canned products) are purchased from shops and markets and so it is these items that may become more difficult to obtain. Most of the households reported that the local population is consuming less preferred food and reducing the number of meals per day. These coping strategies help families to meet their food needs in the face of the protracted crises and may become more severe the longer the COVID-19 crisis goes on.

Food systems – availability and access

With Ramadan expected to begin around 24 April, the current inflation of food prices due to COVID-19 is likely to increase in April. In some locations, food prices have more than doubled, as some local merchants attempt to take advantage of the current shopping panic. Ramadan may also bring COVID-19 exposure risks, as the month is considered a social and community gathering time. It will be difficult to impose the current curfew in Ramadan, and it's possible that curfew times will change to allow more mobility during the evening hours when people are not fasting.

LNA distributed supplies of flour and sugar at the governmental supply price in eastern region cities. Other regions, such as the west or the south, have no such procedures from the GNA. Citizens throughout Libya are facing increasing prices for essential foods items as a result of traders reducing the amount of certain foods in the markets. These traders have been storing supplies to sell them later at higher prices when food has become scarcer. The authorities have tried to stop this, but there is a general increase in commodities across Libya, despite the fact that food and markets are still flowing in from abroad.

Impact on vulnerable populations

IDPs, refugees and migrants are expected to be the most vulnerable population groups impacted by COVID-19, mainly because their employment situation is most likely impacted, they are losing their revenue sources, their overall health situation is already weak they do not have needed access to health services. Already in HRP 2020, around half of the people in need of humanitarian assistance are IDPs, refugees and migrants in or transiting through Libya. Already FSS partners are receiving an increasing number of requests for food assistance from many municipalities and Social Affairs Offices.

Current Beneficiaries

WFP has initiated a Libya Conflict Sensitivity Forum to understand potential impacts on its beneficiaries. If food security worsens, due to the spread of COVID-19 and lack of work and income for more people, there may be greater risks on WFP beneficiaries. Due to health precautions, distributions will need to be spread over more days in order to prevent overcrowding. If a greater number of people are in need and are angry that they are not able to access money or supermarkets, this may heighten the risk for beneficiaries. WFP is looking at increasing localised drop-offs of food/door-to-door support.

Low-income households

Since the COVID-19 entered Libya in early March and the subsequent measures taken by authorities around the country, there are some similarities in the changing situations in Tripoli, Benghazi and Sebha. According to WFP Libya Conflict Sensitivity Forum, daily wage workers have been hardest hit, as have those less well-off and working in the private sector. For now, support provided by WFP and other organisations appears to have avoided any major worsening of conditions for those most in need. However, prices are rising everywhere, with food prices up 20% in Sebha and at least 30% in Tripoli. Some shops are low on supplies and other food shops have had to close as new stock cannot be moved. Panic buying has been happening everywhere and there is a widespread concern about the lack of healthcare capacity and infrastructure, with some businesses even trying to step in and support, and the military in Benghazi repurposing a facility for the COVID-19 response. While movement restrictions and curfews are in place everywhere, application seems to be varying. In Tripoli, humanitarian/emergency exclusions are in place

but in Sebha, militias appear to be stopping all movements, not abiding by specific measures that are supposed to be in place to allow for emergency exclusions (travel to hospital etc). Anger is reported from all regions but the targets differ: In Benghazi, there have been protests about liquidity; in Tripoli, anger is being directed at the Ministry of Health, while in the South, the militia presence makes it impossible to protest, even though there is anger at the 1,000% increase in the price of cooking gas (LYD300 vs LYD30 previously).

Migrants in Urban Areas

A deteriorating security and economic situation in Libya have left migrants living in urban areas along main migratory routes, such as Bani Waleed, Benghazi, Misrata, Sabha, Algatroun, Zuwara, and Tripoli particularly vulnerable and in need of assistance. Migrants in these areas are often stranded while trying to find work, with limited access to basic services and limited ability to meet their food needs. COVID-19 puts these vulnerable populations at even greater food security risk, particularly migrants who rely on daily labour opportunities which have been significantly reduced during this pandemic

Migration Flow Monitoring surveys conducted by IOM and a joint report by IOM WFP on hunger, displacement and migration confirm that substantial humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities are identified among unemployed migrants, recent arrivals and female migrants.

In addition to higher food prices, an increase in unemployment, especially for unregistered migrants (who often work unofficially in daily jobs) is expected to reduce their households' disposable income to meet their food and other basic needs. This population is also more vulnerable since, due to protection concerns, would not access the national health facilities fearing capture, and thus would spend more on health clinics.

Women

A UN-Women rapid response survey on COVID-19 response in Libya in March showed that the situation is even worse for the displaced women as their needs increase and their economic responsibility increases as a result of the accumulation of rent and other needs in the absence of a source of livelihood. 60% stated the emergence of financial difficulties that the family will face, especially in the absence of salaries or liquidity, and in light of the steady rise in prices. To cope with the situation, 48% of the women said that they will be forced to eat food

that they do not like, or that it is cheaper; 42% will resort to reducing their portion of the meal; and 60% would work to reduce meals.

Migrants in Detention Centres

There are growing concerns that there are insufficient food supplies to fulfil the needs of migrants in detention centers (DCs). While all but one of Tripoli's official DCs have been emptied, others still hold large numbers of detained migrants. Food shortages originally began over the summer due a lack of agreement regarding payments by the Ministry of Interior and the companies providing food to the DCs. However now the situation may worsen as Libyan grocers are taking in more than what the wholesale market has capacity to provide. In addition to inflating prices, this may have implications on the capacity of food suppliers to deliver food to the DCs. Already DCs have reported that food suppliers have stopped providing food in many DCs. FSS partners are distributing emergency food packages in several DCs.

IDPs and Returnees

According to the latest DTM Libya IDP and Returnees Report (January-February 2020), food was the top priority need of Returnees (21%) and the second top priority of IDPs (27%).

The top challenges in fulfilling these needs were related to the erosion of coping mechanisms of the affected populations due to the protracted nature of the ongoing armed conflict. The majority of key informants reported that IDPs and returnees in need were unable to meet their basic needs such as food and non-food items due to reported price hikes and limited or irregular supply of the needed items on the market.

Although local markets were reported to be the primary source of food for residents, including IDPs, returnees and the host communities, food distributions by charity and aid organizations were identified as a major source of food supply for vulnerable populations.

PREPAREDNESS MEASURES

Transportation of stock is a major challenge for FSS, beyond ensuring COVID-19 compliance of distributions. At this time there may be a heightened risk of trucks being stopped and stock being confiscated by militias. FSS partner WFP is taking preparedness measures by pre-positioning some stock with partners while most of the stock will need to remain in secure warehousing in

Tripoli/Benghazi, especially considering security challenges in the south.

COVID-19 guidelines have been prepared and shared with partners. Messaging is also being developed in line with Communications with Communities working group for beneficiaries.

WFP is distributing April packages earlier to ensure all distributions are done before Ramadan.

WFP is also working through its cooperating partners with municipalities to allow trucks carry food to pass in areas dominated by GNA. As well, in LNA areas, WFP is working with Lib-Aid to obtain approvals to dispatch within areas of LNA.

Inter-sectoral responses, through the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), will be provided to persons displaced due to the armed conflict, hard-to-reach areas, caught at checkpoints or stranded between frontlines within 72 hours of verification. The mechanism is designed to deliver immediate and life-saving supplies, most notably immediate response food rations.

ASSESSMENTS

FSS partners are planning to conduct several assessments (pending funding availability) related to nutrition, food security, conflict sensitivity, social safety nets and livelihoods.

It is essential to monitor food prices and markets, and to transparently disseminate information. This will help to both strengthen government policies and avert public panic as well as capture problems in real time and provide the information for early action and mitigation.

FSS partner REACH has conducted and recently released the **Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)** March 2020, presenting an overview of price ranges and medians for key foods and NFIs in the assessed locations, including contextual analysis on the Libyan economy. As of now, there is no noticeable shortage of food supplies or daily essentials in the markets. However, the impact of reliance on importation, limited foreign currency, loss of billions of dollars in state revenues and delays in supply-chain will highly impact livelihoods as the whole social safety nets system in Libya relies on subsidies and are directly correlated to the state revenues.

In order to provide some preliminary data on the scale and scope of price changes, REACH conducted a **Rapid Market Assessment** in Libya to provide a brief city-level overview of market functionality, with a focus on shortages and price spikes for basic food and hygiene items and

information gathered between 30 March and 01 April from key informants in 21 cities across Libya. According to the assessment, food prices spiked in the majority of assessed cities directly after the COVID-19 measures were implemented, with some locations reporting temporary price increases reaching 500-900%. In some cities in the eastern and southern regions, authorities reportedly intervened to correct these price hikes. Shortages of basic food items, such as eggs, vegetables and wheat products were most frequently reported. 48% of assessed cities reported food shortages and 86% of assessed cities reported food price spikes.

REACH will continue with conducting monthly JMMI and a **supply-chain assessment** which will help monitoring food prices and availability.

FSS is also coordinating with REACH to revise, in coordination with other sectors, the **Coping Strategy Index (CSI)** in order to better assess the vulnerabilities of affected populations with the crises (conflict, COVID-19 and potential natural hazards). The revised CSI will also be used in the **2020 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA)**.

The preparation for market monitoring in April 2020 has started; as a result of the curfew and due to closure of supermarkets, the enumerators would not be able to visit the shops but are exploring the possibility of collecting prices through phone calls. WFP has recently trained new enumerators to conduct an **mVAM** assessment during April.

COORDINATED ACTIVITIES

FSS continues coordination within sectoral, intersectoral and ad hoc COVID-19 coordination mechanisms to provide live-saving assistance while abiding by COVID-19 regulations.

FSS partners continue to respond for live-saving activities with in-kind food distributions. So far, the only programmes that have been disrupted and thus far suspended are WFP's Food for Training classes and FAO's disease control trainings, which cannot be safely implemented at this time.

FSS Partner WFP is receiving several requests of assistance from many municipalities and Social Affairs Offices. A mechanism is being put in place which will include ensuring the eligibility criteria are met and the prioritisation manner to accordingly address food needs.

[Food Security Sector coordination with the Health Sector](#)

FSS partners are abiding with the Health Sector guidelines for COVID-19. FSS has also emphasized with cooperating partners the precautionary measures put in place regarding re-arrangement of distribution sites to channel traffic and avoid crowding, including setting up appropriate handwashing areas and ensuring hygiene and sanitation preventive measures are applied: no physical contact, strict respect of a 2-meter distance between everyone and improving of the ventilation at distribution points, immediate departure from the distribution site after collection of rations, provision of hand sanitizer solution to all staff and beneficiaries at distribution points, and limitation of the scale of distributions per day.

FSS Partner WFP is adjusting its food distribution SOPs in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. Recommendations/precautions on ideal conduction of the distribution process and roles and responsibilities of all parties engaged in the distribution process is clearly delineated. In collaboration between UN sister agencies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP is distributing WHO-produced awareness leaflets along with WFP rations to all beneficiaries as well as cooperating partners and other counterparts in municipalities and social affairs offices.

[Food Security Sector coordination with the Education Sector](#)

In coordination with the Education Sector, WFP's School Feeding programme continues through delivery of date bars to the 18,379 school children and their families as Take Home rations instead of onsite school meals in Ghat, Alqatroun, Alsharguia and Alkufra. Distributions are taking place during curfew-allowed times and with all precautions in place.

[Food Security Sector coordination with OCHA](#)

FSS is closely coordinating with OCHA, the cooperating partners on the ground as well as the governmental entities in order to ensure safe dispatch commodities and readiness of all the stakeholders to receive the commodities and distribute the Food supplies. Recently, Partner WFP coordinated with OCHA for movement of food stock from Tripoli to Ejdabiyya, taking some WASH items with them.

[Food Security Sector coordination to reach Migrants in Urban Areas](#)

FSS Partners **WFP and IOM** have partnered to facilitate the timely provision of ready-to-eat (RTE) food assistance to migrants in urban locations. WFP supplies one month ready-to-eat RTE food kits for distribution by the IOM Migrant

Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM), which is comprised of IOM mobile teams that provide a complementary integrated set of services to migrants which include essential non-food items, primary health care, protection support, and referrals.

The partnership supports Libya and migrants in various ways:

- WFP RTE food items are purchased locally through a wholesaler, with some commodities produced in Libya, supporting development of the Libyan private sector
- The project improves the food security of vulnerable migrants in a way that minimises risk to their safety: RTE food items are delivered directly to migrants at fixed locations and through door-to-door assistance, reaching individuals who are living in urban areas that are chronically underserved.
- Joint WFP-IOM RTE distributions support migrants to cover their food and nutrition needs, contributes to the strengthening their health and enables those who are assisted to allocate resources towards meeting other essential basic needs.
- Both migrants and Libyans have referred migrants to the IOM MRRM, demonstrating host community awareness and acceptance of the essential services. Although this project targets migrants, the partnership enables IOM to also direct vulnerable Libyans in need to WFP local partners.

POTENTIAL SCALE UP SUPPORT

FSS Partner WFP is considering using its Know-How to augment support to the Libyan and migrant populations. FSS can use WFP's extensive knowledge of procurement, lessons learnt, supply chain, and importation of basic commodities to support the Libyan capacity to build their own institutional systems. Below are possible activities:

Building institutional capacity (support to local authorities/institutions)

- WFP's current work with the World Bank and Ministries of Education, Social Affairs and of Agriculture, as well as local municipalities, already supports targeting and revision of social safety net schemes in the country. FSS can expand on this ongoing support to the local authorities, which also helps augment the knowledge base as ministries and local

governance request needs due to spikes in displacement.

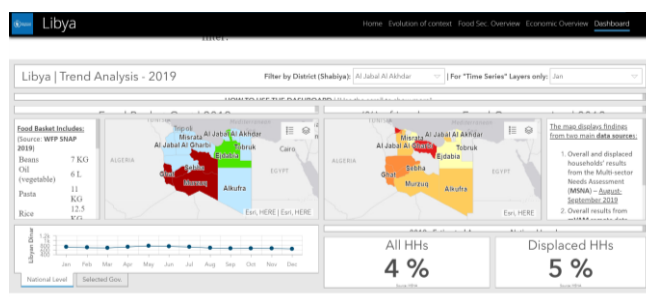
- WFP can support the public distribution system through World Bank funding.

Building capacities of people (livelihood/vocational activities)

- WFP could support with the targeting process of any economic reform. We will have much better access to vulnerable communities than most other organisations and so we could help ensure the people most in need are the ones benefiting from economic reforms.
- We give them incentives to go back into the job market, depending on subsidies, giving them new tools to rebuild.
- In terms of broader skill development and labour market reform, conversations among stakeholder agencies are progressing slowly. WFP could step up and help these reforms reach those most in need. A long-term issue is the mismatch between jobs needed and the skills Libyans have.
- Continued and augmented capacity building for local partners (support for civil society)

Data streams, augmented mapping & assessments

- Through its augmented data streams and vulnerability analysis mapping, WFP is also already focused in on food security and economic conditions across the country: WFP's VAM has developed an interactive [StoryMap](#), which also includes an interactive [Dashboard](#) with trend analyses showing the evolution of the cost of the food basket, and prevalence of food insecurity at the national and sub-national level. The user can use drop-down menus to focus on different geographic areas and different time periods, as needed. Other extensive research and joint work with sister agencies on analyses lend extensive additional knowledge that is not strictly limited to food insecurity but to an overall view of the economic sphere.



WFP's VAM's interactive StoryMap, which also includes an interactive Dashboard

GUIDELINES

The global Food Security Sector (gFSC)

- The gFSC website has been revised and a specific webpage for COVID-19 was created: <https://sites.google.com/view/fsc-covid19/home>. Specific documents for the FSC/FSS partners were created. These documents can be used by the FSS partners already like tip sheet for Cash, programme continuity, SOP for CVA, food assistance, etc.

Libya Health Sector

- Health cluster guide: A practical handbook. Integrated programming for better health outcomes: a multisectoral approach https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/ch.8_integrated_programming_for_better_health_outcomes.pdf

IASC

- INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADJUSTING FOOD DISTRIBUTION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/outbreak_readiness_and_response_-_food_distribution.pdf
- GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN COVID-19 UNITED NATIONS COORDINATED APPEAL APRIL – DECEMBER 2020 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/global_humanitarian_response_plan_covid-19.pdf

USEFUL LINKS

REACH Libya COVID-19 Rapid Market Assessment April 2020:

<https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/30893d09/COVID-19-Libya-Rapid-Market-Assessment.pdf>

REACH JMMI March 2020:

https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/16760a48/REACH_LBY_Situation-overview_JMMI_March-2020.pdf

WFP Libya Dashboard March 2020:

<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/fa0dd8c1f92345f4b0ebc5be6e81f216/download/>

WFP VAM Interactive StoryMaP and Dashboard

<https://unwfp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=7e1717497de04fe48cb2ea7a5f093caf>

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