A deteriorating security and economic situation in Libya has left migrants living in urban areas along main migratory routes, such as Bani Waleed, Benghazi, Misrata, Sabha, Alqatroun, 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.

Migration Flow Monitoring surveys conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a joint report* by IOM and the World Food Programme (WFP) on hunger, displacement and migration - confirm that substantial humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities are identified among unemployed migrants, recent arrivals and female migrants.

The COVID-19 pandemic puts vulnerable populations at even greater food security risk, particularly migrants who rely on daily labor opportunities which have been significantly reduced during this pandemic. Nutritious food supports a healthy immune system which is even more critical now. Regular food support will help to meet this basic need and allow for limited income to be used for other needs including accommodation and health expenses. While this pilot project has been critical to migrants before the pandemic, it has now become lifesaving.

To urgently support thousands of migrants in these areas, IOM and WFP 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.

*SITUATION OVERVIEW

RESPONSE

OUTCOMES

*The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix-World Food Programme: Hunger, displacement and migration in Libya report, available online.
Halima* is from Chad. She travelled to Libya with her husband and daughter a few years ago. Her family settled in Bani Waleed where Halima’s husband worked. When her husband passed away, Halima and her daughter lost the sole breadwinner in the family and became financially vulnerable. They had few savings, no means to earn money and were unable to pay the rent. Their landlord had recently evicted them.

An MRRM case worker visited Halima and her daughter at their one-room accommodation far from the city centre of Bani Waleed. IOM and WFP provided them with food, hygiene kits and clothing which will help them to improve their health and living standards. Both women expressed appreciation and joy at the visit and support:

“We can’t believe all of these greatly needed items are now ours to use, thank you very much indeed.”

Mufasa,* 45 and Terrence,* 21, are both from Nigeria. They travelled to Libya to work and support their families back home.

On their way to Tripoli, they both went through a traumatic ordeal when they were robbed, kidnapped, and later detained in a group by bandits for one month. Mufasa was kidnapped near Alqatroun; Terrence was kidnapped at a different location. Terrence’s captors often beat the detained migrants; an ill young man who had travelled with Terrence died in captivity. Upon their release, both men travelled to Bani Waleed with no money or possessions.

The MRRM team provided both men with assistance including WFP food, hygiene kits, and clothing to get back on their feet with dignity. Mufasa said, smiling:

“I’m very happy to get these good things, I really liked them.”

IOM and WFP aim to reach 25,800 migrants in seven urban locations through this project.

The distribution of ready-to-eat food kits to multiple locations has enabled the partnership to enhance the overall scale and reach of assistance to migrants in underserved locations.

Migrant community leaders and embassy representatives have appreciated the partnership’s ability to reach many migrants within a short time period and assist vulnerable individuals who have experienced prolonged insecurity and hardships.

*Not pictured and all names have been changed to protect identities.