



MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL REPORT 2020

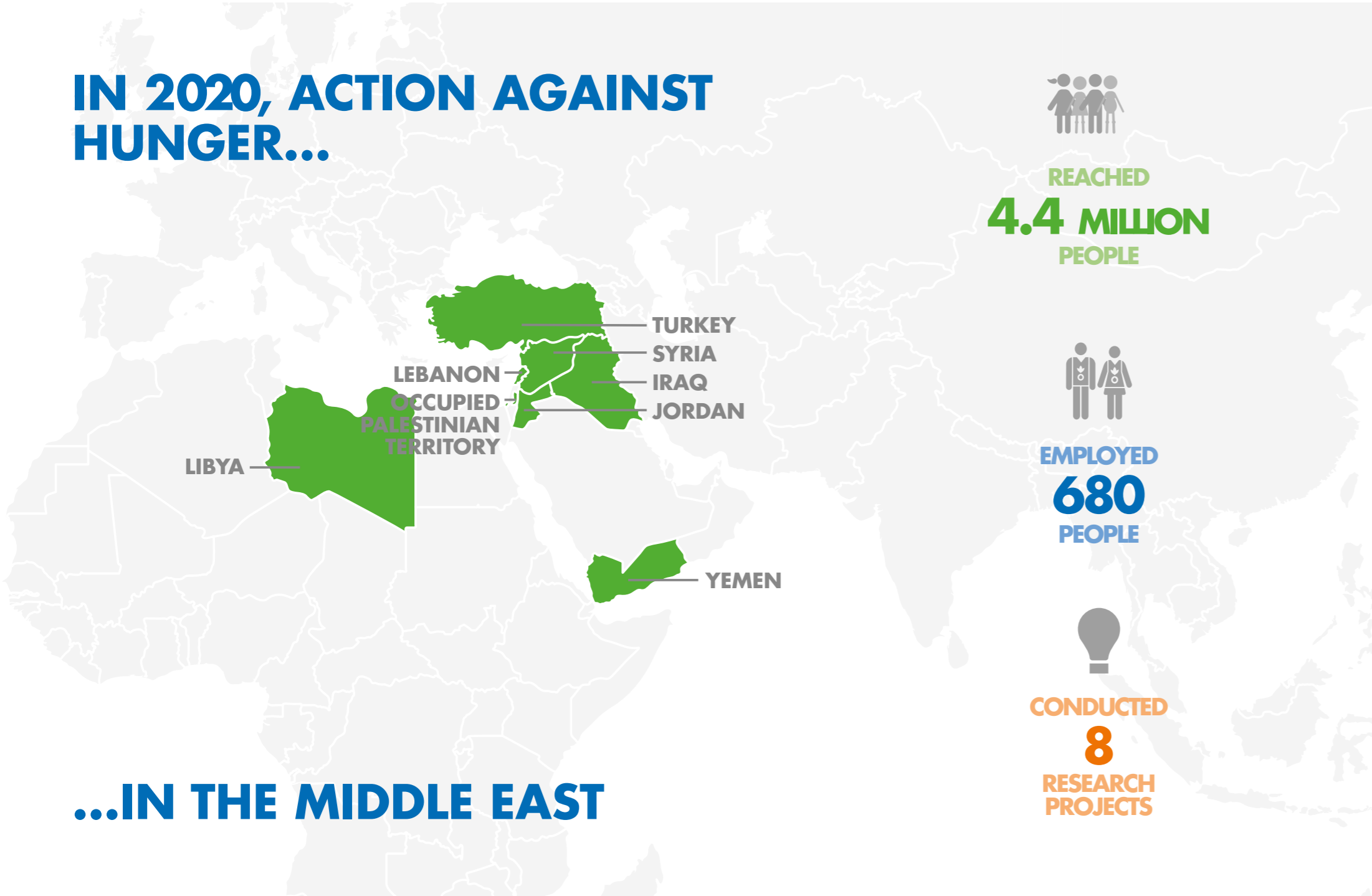




CONTENTS

KEY STATISTICS	2
THE MIDDLE EAST IN 2020	4
IRAQ	7
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT: WOMEN GO INTO BUSINESS IN QAYYARAH	8
JORDAN	11
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AT AZRAQ TOWN	12
LEBANON	15
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT: WOMEN LIVING IN LEBANON FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN FULFILLING THEIR RIGHTS	17
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY	19
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT: WAJDI AUWDA: A DREAM CAME TRUE	21
SYRIA	23
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT: VOICES FROM HAMA	24
YEMEN	27
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT: ONE FAMILY'S STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN YEMEN	28

IN 2020, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER...



...IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE

3.2M
people reached



180,833
hygiene kits distributed



3,314
water points improved



915,052
cubic meters of water delivered

MENTAL HEALTH & CARE PRACTICES

24,060
people reached



13
mental health and care practices projects



178
people received MHCP kits



13,299
people received IYCF preventative support

FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

131,238
people reached



29
food security and livelihoods projects



5,200
metric tons of food aid distributed

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



161,037 people reached



4 disaster risk reduction projects

NUTRITION & HEALTH

936,328
people reached



27
health and nutrition projects

COVID-19 RESPONSE



distributed **131,763** items of PPE



distributed **56,478** Covid hygiene kits

THE MIDDLE EAST IN 2020

Chiara Saccardi

Head of operations
for Middle East
Madrid, Spain

Jonathan Cunliffe

Regional
Operations
Director for Middle
East
Paris, France

Action Against Hunger has been operational in the Middle East for many years and provides support to vulnerable people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Turkey and has recently started to work in Libya. In 2020 Covid-19 has presented a set of unique challenges and issues for humanitarian actors - including our own organisation - working in these countries. Covid-19 is having a significant impact on countries and health systems across the Middle East. Countries that, in many cases, were already facing significant insecurity, population displacement and economic challenges are now having to cope with a pandemic that they don't have the resources to respond to. For vulnerable communities and populations across the region, the pandemic is further undermining their livelihoods and access to basic services. While many countries, such as Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and oPT, responded to the first wave of Covid-19 through enforcing tough lockdown measures; when these measures were ended infection rates increased and these countries have been seeing widespread community transmission and their health systems are gradually being overwhelmed.

In addition, the tough lockdown measures that were previously used to control the infection rate, are no longer seen as politically and economically viable and so governments are increasingly limited in how they can respond. Since August 2020 there has been a steady increase in the rate of transmission of Covid-19 in most countries in the region, and - as a result - the effects of the pandemic continue to have a huge impact on public health and economies in the Middle East.

Context wise, the region continued to be dominated by two main ongoing conflicts - in Yemen and in Syria - which depend largely on the dynamics that involve other regional and international actors, engaging with attentive follow up of the roles of Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United States, Turkey and Russia - among other ones. Palestine has witnessed the impact of the publication of the Peace to Prosperity Plan, promoted by the Trump's administration, which led to a heavier annexation process. The arrival of the new Biden regime may well change some of the dynamics across the region in 2021. The demonstrations that sparked in Lebanon in late 2019, have increased and continued across the whole 2020 leading

to a major social, economic and political unrest which has been further aggravated by the blast in the port of Beirut, which occurred in August. Libya has continued to struggle in its stalled power balance and continuous violent clashes, further sustained by deployment of Turkish troops in support for the government of national concord in Tripoli, thus helping to prevent the complete collapse of the government. In Iraq, after reaching the official end of the Islamic State crisis in December 2017, millions of people are still displaced in unhealthy camps and urban slums due to the failure of successive governments to effectively rebuild the infrastructure of cities, towns and villages destroyed by the conflict. Jordan witnessed and unprecedented wave of protests, mainly pushed by austerity measures, while the country continues to host hundreds of thousands of refugees who are not likely to return to their origin country anytime soon. Furthermore, economic crisis with hyperinflation and depreciation of the currencies has heavily affected several countries, namely Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Access constraints have always existed with regards to our work in the Middle East. Whether that has been caused by conflict (in Georgia, Yemen, Libya, Syria and Iraq; for example) and / or administrative constraints (such as in oPT), Action Against Hunger has always had to work its way through complex access issues to effectively reach beneficiaries in the Middle East and knows how to navigate across this type of barriers. 2020 has proven to be even more challenging, and it is certainly a great achievement for our teams to have kept their quantity and quality of delivery high, in spite of the Covid-19 barriers. Our programmes have been quickly and positively adapting to this situation and Action Against Hunger has developed new methodologies to continue to deliver its activities in the changing context.

We thank Support to Life for the continuous partnership in Turkey.





IRAQ

88,278

7,623

3,937

5,767

82
STAFF

OPERATING
SINCE
2013

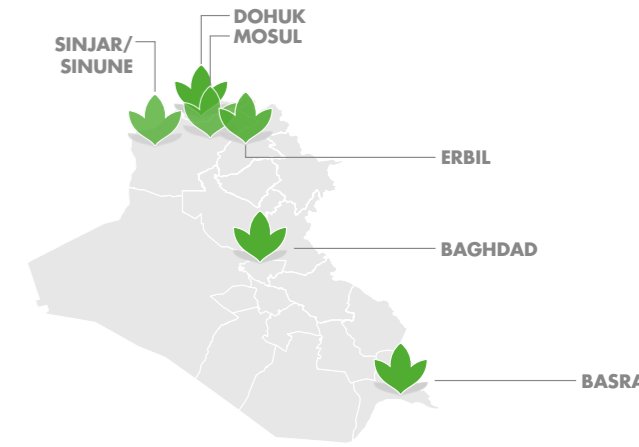
REACHED
99,838
IN 2020

At the outset of 2020, it was anticipated that the overall situation in Iraq would improve, leading to a transition from a humanitarian to a development-led response. The UN Humanitarian Needs Overview reported a 40% decrease in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2020. Even so, the number of people in acute need remained significant (1.77 million people).

However, the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic impact increased the vulnerabilities of internally displaced people, returnees and host communities. The crisis led to a rise in unemployment, currency devaluation, increased food prices, loss of livelihood opportunities, and stretching of already inadequate healthcare, sanitation and other public services.

Moreover, the government's camp-closure policy created a new wave of displacement and premature returns to areas that lack basic infrastructure. In 2020, an estimated 1.85 million people were in critical need of sustained and equitable access to safe and appropriate WaSH services.

Action Against Hunger's WaSH team enhanced hygiene practices through awareness-raising and distribution of hygiene kits. Mental health, protection and FSL teams targeted households affected by Covid-19 and also provided psychosocial support. Procedures were developed to allow programme activities to continue, with transmission control measures to protect staff and beneficiaries.



Action Against Hunger Iraq rolled out the Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT+) to enable early identification and mitigation of the environmental impact of its humanitarian action.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

WOMEN GO INTO BUSINESS IN QAYYARAH

BUY PASTRIES AND CANDIES IN ALAA'S BAKERY

The town of Qayyarah lies on the Tigris River's west bank, some 70km south of Mosul. For decades, the local economy has suffered from a lack of employment opportunities and an increasing number of households live below the poverty line. For two and a half years the population were under the control of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) group and armed confrontations had a very negative impact on the population and the town. An estimated 35% of the infrastructure remains damaged or destroyed.

More than 35,000 residents fled Qayyarah before it fell to ISIS in 2014. The effects of the occupation that followed and the subsequent operations to retake the town, will affect the residents for years to come.

Alaa (pictured on page 6) and her family returned after several years in Kirkuk and Erbil. "My husband lost his job because of Covid-19. Without any income, our life returned to sadness and depression."

Hundreds of people lost jobs in government due to the occupation. With an unemployment rate of up to 70%, some residents have to use credit to buy food and other essentials.

Today, both men and women face severe challenges in accessing job opportunities or finding a steady source of income.

Action Against Hunger's recent assessment in Qayyarah has revealed that the absence of start-up capital is a major obstacle to opening up a business. A deteriorated economic situation, security restrictions, competition and lack of business skills are the main factors negatively affecting business performance. In addition, rental costs are increasing in the country, and very often three or four months' rent is required upfront.

In response to this situation, Action Against Hunger launched a programme to support new business ideas and small start-ups to create sustainable employment.

"I used to spend my spare time making pastries for my family, relatives and friends for birthday parties and other events." Even though Alaa has always enjoyed cooking, she never thought it would become her job. Back in Qayyarah, she submitted her business idea for a bakery.

"When Action Against Hunger called me, I was indescribably happy. I was afraid of the responsibility but through the training I gained experience in marketing and promotion that has motivated me to expand and develop my business."

In Iraq, mental health and psychosocial support is an essential part of Action Against Hunger programmes. New business owners benefit from life, social and emotional training, overcoming their fears and developing social skills.

Looking forward, Alaa plans to train other women and girls to make pastries, and wants to provide job opportunities in the region.

RENT A DRESS AT MARWA'S SHOP

After her second divorce, Marwa struggled to get back on her feet. She worked for minimal wages and was deeply frustrated. Rather than despair, she submitted a business proposal to open a dress-rental shop.

"A dress-rental business was my childhood dream. When my mother went shopping I was always thrilled and I'd insist on accompanying her to wedding and second-hand dress shops, in order to wander around the stores and contemplate their beauty."

Action Against Hunger teams supported Marwa's idea and provided peer-to-peer training on business planning, clothing rental, accounting, proper ironing and customer service. In the end, her business idea turned out to be a big success: "I still remember the night before my first day at work. I didn't sleep I was so happy, and I woke up early to send a dress to a customer using the delivery service."

"One day, a friend invited me to her wedding. I didn't have a gift but I thought giving her a service might make her happy. With flowers, a table, chairs and fabrics, I designed a complete party." This experience was critical to Muna's future, as she was looking for a steady income.

Muna developed her wedding-services business idea and received Action Against Hunger support to turn make it happen. She successfully completed technical training and made a profit within the first month. She is a single parent and faces many challenges since widows are often stigmatised and excluded from active life in their communities. "I was so happy that my family has been challenged and I was allowed me to go ahead with creating a Facebook page for my business."

"My daughter and I would like to thank Action Against Hunger. Our lives have turned from despair and dependence to hope and self-reliance."

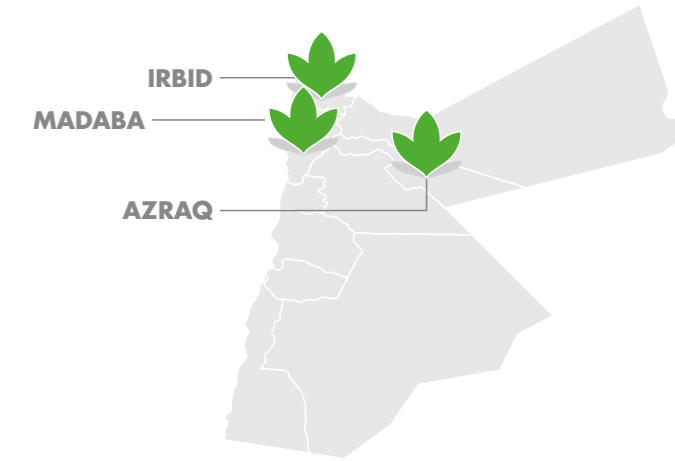
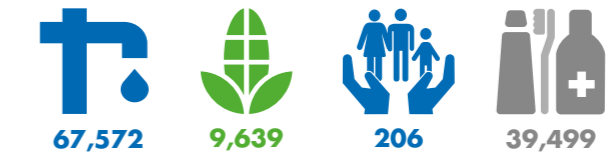
Muna urges everyone not to lose hope and never give up.

Alaa, Marwa and Muna are among 38 Qayyarah women and men who received support from the programme. Each selected business project is supported with an average of US\$3,000, in two tranches. New business owners receive LSE from psychosocial workers and business-skills training from livelihood experts. When specific additional peer-to-peer training is needed, Action Against Hunger mobilises local business owners to help address skills gaps. The right mix of livelihoods and psychosocial support improves the new start-ups' impact and sustainability.





JORDAN



Jordan hosts 754,000 refugees, the second largest number of refugees per capita in the world. The majority of them are Syrian and, after a decade of civil war, returning to Syria is still not an option for most. Jordan also hosts a smaller number of refugees of other nationalities, including Yemeni, Iraqi, Sudanese and Somali. Over 83% of Jordan's refugee population lives in host communities and depends on unstable and informal livelihoods. While also responding to the needs of a large number of vulnerable Jordanians, public services remain strained. Moreover, Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world and poor infrastructure, climate change and population growth further exacerbate the situation.

In terms of livelihoods, Action Against Hunger has engaged in a number of activities in the solid waste management sector, focusing on access to employability for refugees and vulnerable Jordanians,

improving working conditions, and creating sustainable waste management programs at municipal levels.

Action Against Hunger Jordan continued to work in its core sectors of WaSH, MHPSS and FSL, across three bases, both in camps and host communities. As well as the rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities and awareness raising activities, a regional WaSH Master's Degree was established in partnership with the German Jordanian University and Bioforce. In terms of livelihoods, the country team established a community compost unit in Azraq, provided cash for work and support for small businesses in the waste management sector.

Action Against Hunger Jordan continued to work towards strengthening the mental health system and is co-leading the regional No Lost Generation MHPSS Taskforce.

When Covid-19 hit, the country team conducted remote Risk Communication and Community

Engagement phone calls to assess beneficiary needs and ensure access to Covid-19 information. During the lockdown, the team provided water-trucking support and distributed hygiene and latrine cleaning kits in host communities and Azraq camp, as well as in informal tented settlements. The team raised awareness on Covid-19 and hygiene practices, provided MHPSS support remotely and carried out a research project on the impact of Covid-19 related loss of livelihoods and mental health needs. The office continues to advocate for comprehensive and integrated support in its target sectors.

© Action Against Hunger

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN AZRAQ TOWN

Maram is a Jordanian who lives with her family in Azraq Town. She graduated in 2016 from the Jordanian University of Science and Technology in Irbid, with a specialisation in agricultural engineering. Prior to her engagement as Team Leader, she worked for IKBA another non-governmental and profit organisation as a surveyor consultant and later worked as a teacher in the schools for refugees in the Azraq Town area.

During her work on the farm, she would manage the project's cash for work workers' tasks and assignments, as well as write reports, detailing her daily routine on the farms as well as her accomplished tasks while sitting under the olive trees. "I would write about how we were flipping the piles once or twice a day," she explained. "Sometimes, we would need to flip three or four times a day, depending on the temperature and humidity." However, during these days she learned new and exciting skills. She expressed how her time management and communication skills grew while interacting with the cash for work workers and with delivering work on deadlines. Moreover she learned to use the different machinery such as the grader. "After working with the compost on the farms, I became a full-fledged mechanic!"

Maram said humorously as she recalled her days on the farms.

One of the most interesting parts of her job was being in the middle of the composting action. She loved being near the farms and working side by side with the cash for work workers. Part of her work revolves around using several types of testing to monitor the composting process. "On occasion, I control the dimensions of the pile, as it is different every time because in the field it is not as on paper," she then laughed and commented, "On paper, they told us that the pile dimensions are four meters and two and a half, but in the field you cannot control the pile with these dimensions."

Maram is blessed for the wonderful opportunity to be engaged in Action Against Hunger's project, as it has positively affected her daily life. "My personality was strong, but now I am stronger," she says. During the short period of time she worked as the team leader, she felt her personality played a huge role as she gained confidence when dealing with the responsibility she gained as a result of working as part of this project. Even though she is moving on to other things, she cherishes the relationship she built with Action Against Hunger's team.

"We were like friends all the time. I really liked my work here. I actually did not want to leave but, you see sometimes we need to improve ourselves." She believes it is important to strive for different experiences, to challenge yourself, to better yourself and to explore different career opportunities as "this is life and we need to move on".

Maram hopes that more women in the area will obtain job opportunities instead of staying home, as is the usual social norm in the area. "The women here don't interact with these jobs, so they prefer to stay at home and cook and raise their kids. We need the community to understand that women need to be present in these projects," she said. She is an advocate for women's involvement in the work force and hopes more organisations will focus on this as they bring more projects to the area, as Action Against Hunger did with this project.

"This needs time," Maram said, "You do not change a community in a night, so it needs time to involve women in these projects." She always encourages women around her to have more self-confidence and engage in field work, as she views it as an enriching experience, especially as women make up half of her community.





© Maria Klenner for Action Against Hunger

LEBANON

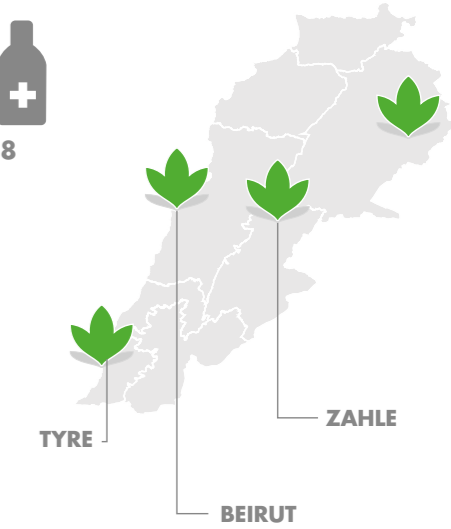
51,028

10,256

7,627

131,701

128



185
STAFF

OPERATING
SINCE
2006

REACHED
68,911
IN 2020

In Lebanon, the combination of an unprecedented economic and financial crisis, the Covid-19 outbreak, the Beirut port explosion and the protracted Syrian refugee crisis led to an exacerbation of vulnerabilities among refugees, Lebanese, and other exposed groups in 2020.

Food security is a major source of concern for both host and refugee communities. Lebanon is now categorised among the top 20 countries likely to face increased rates of acute food insecurity and famine in 2021.

Our teams have adapted programmes to the changing situation, including Covid-19 prevention and response activities, and after the explosion in the port of Beirut set up an operational base in the capital. Programmes have been secured for the medium and long term, in alliance with other organisations, and through institutional relations with donors, authorities and local entities.

Recurrent lockdown measures, strict confinement policies, and economic contractions have also left many with limited access to livelihoods and basic needs, especially food. Unemployment rates have increased since the Covid-19 lockdown, reaching 39% among Lebanese and Syrian refugees. Nearly the entire Syrian refugee population and 55% of the Lebanese live in extreme poverty and cannot afford the Survival Minimum Expenditure Baseline. In 2020, this pushed the Lebanese, Syrian and other refugees to borrow food to cover their food needs.

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, from April 2020 a rapid scale-up included mass distribution of disinfection kits across all informal tented settlements within the intervention areas (West Bekaa, Arsal and Saida), reaching 11,307 households across all areas (55,446 individuals, 28,443 female), and a further distribution of replenishment kits after two months.

All distributions were accompanied by household awareness sessions on Covid-19. The teams adopted innovative ways to connect and communicate with communities and stakeholders in order to reduce face-to-face sessions. Everyone on the front line was provided with the necessary personal protection equipment and extensively trained on Covid-19 awareness measures and updates to be able to inform the community.

Various programmes included food parcels, so as to target vulnerable communities affected by lockdown measures. The distribution of kits and parcels was combined with awareness-raising aimed at pregnant and lactating women, and caregivers of young children.



© Action Against Hunger

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

WOMEN LIVING IN LEBANON FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN FULFILLING THEIR RIGHTS

Women living in Lebanon – and particularly refugees – face significant challenges in fulfilling their rights, be this the right to food, sanitation or safety.

Of women-headed households, 35% are food insecure. The right to sanitation of many Syrian refugee women is not fulfilled, compromising their dignity. When using latrines at night, women are at risk of being harassed or attacked. Young girls are at risk of early marriage and teenage pregnancy – a major human right violation. In some cases, women have a disproportionate workload, taking on agricultural work while men remain back at the informal settlements. Men are staying back due to perceived movement restrictions for them at checkpoints or limited livelihood opportunities for men who are paid more. This is placing a heavy burden on many women, as they work in addition to their domestic work and childcare.

Some women consider themselves to be 'deprived of the right of living peacefully'.

In other cases, women are forbidden from working: 17-year-old divorcee Aya, who was married at 15, has a one-year-old daughter and is currently living with her parents and her six siblings in a tent. "I have told my family that I want to work and provide for myself, but they never approve." She continues: "I can't stand being a burden, it's humiliating. I want to get my daughter certain things that we can't afford. My family thinks that women should not work."

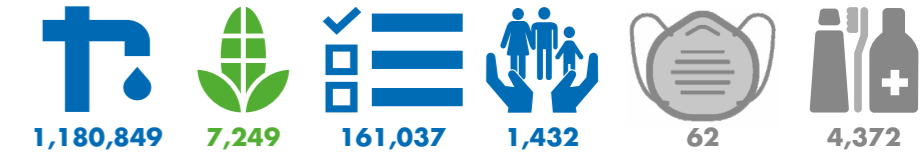
Despite these challenges, some women still manage to act as examples for their community. For instance, in Aarsal, 12 Syrian women were supported by Action Against Hunger to be community mobilisers. They provide awareness sessions on healthy diets, breastfeeding, maternal nutrition and hygiene and baby care.

Khatoun, a WaSH community mobiliser in West Beqaa, identifies the needs of the camp and its residents and provides awareness sessions on hygiene promotion. Khatoun says that when she was still living in Raqqa, in Syria: "I was frequently stopped by ISIS followers asking me to 'cleanse myself from wrongful teachings [her law practice], and learn religion instead,' but I always argued back." She fled Syria and arrived in Lebanon. "It was tough to adjust in the first year. I had a job before, I was a lawyer, I was independent [in Syria]." She shares that she enjoys being a community mobiliser: "The sessions have been received very positively. Even refugees from nearby camps have come to take part and learn more." Khatoun wants to expand her responsibilities and has requested training to provide puberty and sexual harassment sessions to adolescent girls.



© Ahmed Nassar for Action Against Hunger

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES



Humanitarian needs continue to be acute for many Palestinians, who endure an environment of conflict with Israel and a peace process that has stagnated for many years. The start of 2020 saw the publication of the Peace to Prosperity Plan, led by the Trump administration, which among other things paved the way for a much more aggressive annexation by the Israeli government. Foreseeing a long-term solution for Gaza becomes a complicated challenge as well, after 12 years of embargo.

The year has also been characterised by Israeli political instability, which will undergo elections again in 2021. Gaza's isolation and internal political divisions between the West Bank and Gaza are the most significant barriers to humanitarian aid. The blockade on goods and people, the burdensome controls on humanitarian work and the confiscation of assets by the authorities continue to affect Action Against Hunger's work.

Moreover, the spread of Covid-19 and the lack of stable funding in 2020 led to the exacerbation of the vulnerability and needs of already marginalised communities. The situation is even more complicated in Gaza, one of the most densely populated areas in the world and with minimal electricity supply.

In 2020, Action Against Hunger implemented 28 projects in the occupied Palestinian territories. The country team worked with communities and institutions in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, focusing on inclusive entrepreneurship, economic empowerment of young people and women, WaSH, protection and provision of food and cash assistance and the strengthening of local capacities and health institutions. Interventions also focused on the psychosocial wellbeing of Palestinians, particularly under the harsh realities of the Gaza Strip, by providing psychosocial sessions while

simultaneously providing cash assistance to meet immediate family needs.

With the spread of Covid-19 and increasingly strict restrictions imposed by Israel on Palestinian communities, interventions were especially tailored to build the resilience of Palestinians to circumnavigate the difficult circumstances. The country team conducted three rapid needs assessments on the impact of the crisis while consulting local partners and government entities on the gaps to fill. The team ensured the availability of hygiene and sanitation kits and supported health facilities while continuing to respond to the economic and protection needs of those most vulnerable.



COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

WAJDI AUWDA: A DREAM CAME TRUE

Before I developed my own project and started to produce **HANDMADE AGRICULTURAL GIFTS**, I had no financial stability. I was working with a limited salary that was not enough for me and I was obliged to rely on the help of my family. Due to financial instability, my wife had to stop studying at the university.

My project-idea has always been in my mind. Nevertheless, I was hesitant because I was too afraid it would have failed and led to the accumulation of debts. Whenever creating a new project or business, it is not possible to be sure of its failure or success.

I took advantage and got the chance to develop my project. **I BENEFITTED FROM THE TRAINING SESSIONS** organized by Action Against Hunger through which I have been able to strengthen my self-confidence and gained the ability to make difficult decisions.

When I first started my project, I only had one selling point offering Aloe Vera gifts and porcelain decoration and painting.

Currently, I developed my work by integrating woodworks with agribusiness. **MY ACTIVITY EXPANDED TO 35 SALES POINTS SO FAR.** I also made agricultural corners for several houses, companies, restaurants and participated in several exhibitions.

Thanks to the project I developed, **I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD MY WIFE'S UNIVERSITY FEES** and now she is working together with two of my brothers as an employee in the business.



” I took advantage and got the chance to develop my project. I benefitted from the training sessions organized by Action Against Hunger through which I have been able to strengthen my self-confidence and gained the ability to make difficult decisions. ”

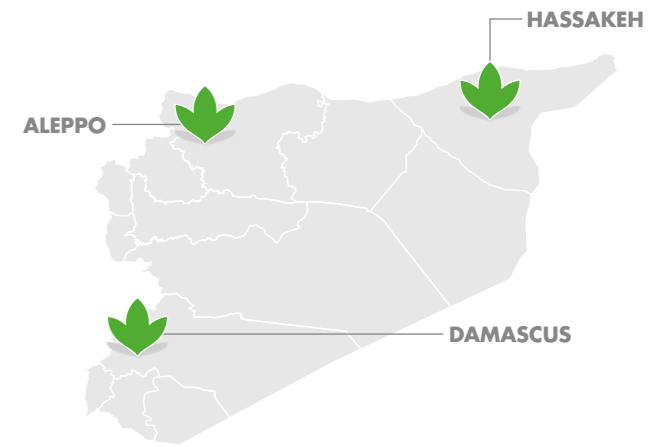




© Action Against Hunger

© Action Against Hunger

SYRIA



131
STAFF

OPERATING
SINCE
2008

REACHED
2.3M
IN 2020

2021 will mark a decade of conflict in Syria, which has pushed vulnerable Syrians – both within and outside the country – to the brink. Inside the country, the 13 million people in need of humanitarian aid today is more than double that when the war started. Estimates indicate that more than 80% of the population lives below the poverty line, and food and nutrition is reported to be the top priority need by 71% of households. Much of the country’s infrastructure has been severely damaged, including a third of schools and over half of public health facilities. Skyrocketing inflation, limited job opportunities and a continued devaluation of the local currency has decreased purchasing power, leaving essentials like food, water, shelter, sanitation and basic health services out of the reach of most. International sanctions and the deepening economic crisis in neighbouring Lebanon are worsening the crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic compounded the socio-economic and health crises that already challenged the country reeling from a decade of war. Its immediate and long-term ripple-effects are disproportionately hitting fragile communities, livelihoods and supply chains, while weakening already devastated sectors – including agriculture, which was once seen as a cornerstone of the Syrian economy.

In 2020, our teams worked through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic to reach over 2 million people across the country – more than double the total number reached in 2019. Action Against Hunger worked closely with local partners and various stakeholders to bring emergency assistance as well as recovery and resilience programmes. The changing nature of the conflict and the changing areas of control in Syria mean that now, more than ever, a needs-based, context-sensitive,

sustainable approach is needed – one that restores dignity to conflict-affected communities and begins to sever their reliance on aid.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, a stronger focus was put on WaSH programmes, alongside the distribution of emergency food parcels. The FSL teams continued to provide home gardening kits and legume seeds, complimented by (remote) agricultural production workshops and livestock management trainings. The health teams equipped front-line health workers with psychosocial support and training in nutrition capacity building, while also supporting the capacity of health facilities across the country. These measures were complimented by subsequent awareness-raising sessions that prioritised front-line medical workers and later extended to clinics, schools and communities.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

VOICES FROM HAMA*

FATIMA



trucks to irrigate her garden; but since Action Against Hunger's water rehabilitation project in Hama governorate she can now use rainwater to irrigate her small 900-square meter garden, meaning she can grow nutritious vegetables like lettuce, beans, peas, tomato, peppers and zucchini for her children.

In 2020 Action Against Hunger's rehabilitated water system in this area of Hama benefited 10,000 conflict-affected Syrians, and would not be possible without the generous funding of the Government of Canada.

"I'm very happy with the availability of rainwater. I don't have to buy water when it's not sufficient," says Fatima, a 42-year-old widow and mother of six children, two of whom live with disabilities.

She lost her husband in the war and now depends on income from daily agricultural work to support her family. She described the horrible water conditions she used to face and her dependence on buying water from water



ABO FADI



"Before the rehabilitation, I used to get around 300 kg of fruit from 1 cultivated donum (900 m² of land) and now thanks to receiving more water from the channels, I think the production will be more than double that – at around 700 kilograms," says Abo Fadi, referring to the water network rehabilitation completed by Action Against Hunger.

"Moreover, I no longer have to worry about having to pay for workers to clean the channels nor having to pay for water from the trucks to feed the livestock because the water received from the channel is cleaner and can be used as drinking water for the livestock, and that will have its impact on livestock production."

In a country devastated by ten years of war, communities in Syria struggle to access food as a result of food prices skyrocketing over 250% and water infrastructure decimated.

Thanks to the generous funding of the Swiss Development and Cooperation, Action Against Hunger was able to reach 302,000 people through restoration of life-saving water networks in 2020.

MARIAM

"I used to have to worry about buying water but now I'm relieved to be able to rely on the gathered rainwater," says Mariam, a 31-year-old widow and mother of five whose husband passed away from cancer four years ago.



"I can now use rainwater for cleaning, to feed my cow and if there's no water from the network I can even drink from it," she explains. "I used to have to set aside money to buy water from the trucks but no longer need to. As soon as I'm able to, I hope to use it to water the onions, garlic and potatoes in my garden as well."

Those like Safaa who are able to work in the informal sectors such as daily agriculture work, rely on meagre wages of around 1700 SYP (less than \$3.00 USD) per day.

In a country with minimal water infrastructure due to a decade of war, water tanks are beyond the reach of many because of devastated purchasing power.



10,000 people benefitted from this project in Hama and would not be possible without the generous funding of the Government of Canada.

***ALL NAMES CHANGED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY.**



YEMEN


20,987


288,437


189,331


5,672


123
STAFF

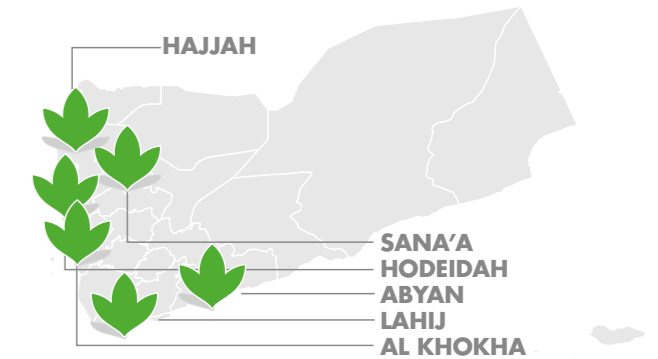

OPERATING
SINCE
2013


REACHED
504,427
IN 2020

The escalating armed conflict remains one of the main root causes of acute malnutrition in Yemen today. New conflicts in Marib and Al Jawf caused further displacement, affecting the delivery of basic services and supplies to around half a million internally displaced people. Additionally, the high rate of communicable diseases, minimum dietary diversity and recurring natural disasters, combined with a lack of commitment from donor countries, caused the country once again to face a looming threat of famine. It has been estimated that over half a million Yemeni children under five, and more than a quarter of a million pregnant and lactating Yemeni women, suffered from acute malnutrition during the course of 2020. Moreover, about 49 % of Yemenis have no access to safe water, 13% of the population practices open defecation and only 45% have access to soap. The Covid-19 pandemic further aggravated existing vulnerabilities and the sudden lockdown by neighbouring states

caused the remittances to plummet and subsequently weakened the average household purchasing power.

Throughout 2020, Action Against Hunger Yemen continued to provide an integrated package of preventive and curative health and nutrition activities, including WaSH, MHCP, gender and protection components. Mothers and caregivers were at the centre of activities, supported by a network of mother-leaders, trained to create awareness about infant and young child feeding. Female-headed households obtained unconditional cash grants at the end of 2020, when the economic situation in the country significantly deteriorated. In terms of WaSH, the country office has prioritised sustainable interventions by installing solar panels for health facilities and field offices, producing minimum waste and using local materials. The office has also increased its efforts in strengthening local preparedness capacities through close collaboration with the local authorities.



Action Against Hunger Yemen was the lead in the consortium focusing on mitigating primary and secondary impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Monitoring activities and existing protocols for interventions had to be adapted to reach the most vulnerable and promote health-seeking behaviour among the general public. The decentralised stock significantly alleviated the pressure of obtaining the necessary medicines and personal protective equipment urgently needed during the response.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

ONE FAMILY'S STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN YEMEN

The statistics about the dire situation in Yemen are overwhelming. After nearly six years of conflict, 13.5 million people do not have enough food to eat; 80% of the population (24 million Yemenis) need humanitarian aid; and perhaps most devastating among these figures, one-in-five children in Yemen suffer from acute malnutrition, the deadliest form of hunger.

These numbers speak of the world's worst humanitarian crisis in the broadest of brushstrokes. Too often forgotten in headlines and in tweets, these numbers represent real people who are struggling to survive, and real families who have their own stories to tell.

As part of our response in Yemen, Action Against Hunger provides emergency cash transfers to thousands of these families to help them survive. Recently, I was welcomed into one of their homes, where they shared a little of what life is like.

Along with our driver Waleed and our Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Supervisor Adel, I travelled the dusty roads to Qaddah village, along Yemen's western coast.

We arrived and were met by Ali, the local school principal and well-respected community leader, who helps our teams identify and reach families in the village. He took us to visit Fatima* and her family.

Fatima took charge as head of her household last year, after her husband suffered a series of strokes and died. She has to provide for six children. Two of her adult sons suffer from severe disabilities, leaving them unable to work.

INSIDE FATIMA'S HOME

The family's small home is made from the branches of palm trees, which form a loose border around their land but still leave the house exposed to hazards. When we walked in and sat down with Fatima and her children, I didn't see a kitchen or a bathroom. Their oven is out in the open – posing a real fire hazard. The only equipment I can see to prevent fire is a nearby bucket filled with sand. I worry about what happens if someone does not put out the fire well, and sparks fly against the vulnerable walls.

Fatima puts her head between her hands and recalls with agony the terrible situation of a couple years ago, when this area of Yemen was under constant shelling from the war. They couldn't even access their fire pit. The family hid under the seats we sit on today. The only food they had to eat was leftover bread, tomatoes and some potatoes shared within the community.

I don't ask about the bathroom – it's a taboo topic. But, like many families in Yemen, I assume they use the open area behind their house, putting them at risk of diseases caused by contaminated water and food. The family sleeps outside, exposed, on thin mattresses where mosquitos and other insects buzz, looking for food.

MAKING ENDS MEET

Women in this area of Yemen – even those as strong and independent as Fatima – face challenges as heads of households, and it can be hard for them to find a way to earn money.

Fatima proudly shows us her wicker basket-making skills – she is determined to make a business out of it. Still, it is not enough.

One of her sons who is able to work, named Sari, is a fisherman. On a good day, he catches 10 fish – eight for selling and two to share by the fire with his mother, bothers, wife, daughters, nieces and nephews. However, starting in October each year, the six-month-long windy season in Yemen leaves Sari and the other fisherman unable to go out to sea safely to earn an income.

Fatima uses her monthly cash payments from Action Against Hunger to buy the family's food at the local market. Two of her granddaughters have suffered from fevers recently, so she will

also use some of her monthly money to pay for transportation to one of the free health clinics run by our team.

HOPE IN THE NEXT GENERATION

I try to speak with Fatima's seven-year-old grandson, Ahmad, but when I ask him about what he has learned in school lately, he is too shy to answer. Then, as we got up to leave, he quietly says how happy he is to be in school and is excited that his grandmother will be able to buy shoes and stationery.

The community school – located next door to Fatima's home – was expanded by UNICEF and a local partner a couple of years ago. Action Against Hunger provided solar energy and

water wells for the school, helping to create a healthy environment for more students.

Ahmad is the only child in the extended family who attends school. Fatima's children were not able to get an education, so she has big hopes for her grandson's future.

I visited Fatima and her family for an hour, and I will always remember their home and the kindness they showed me. They will stay with me as I write reports and make our case for how to provide assistance to more families.

I am proud to be part of a lifesaving team that is on the ground 24/7 looking out for the most vulnerable. It is our full responsibility to meet and advocate for those who need our help.



FOR FOOD.
AGAINST
HUNGER
AND
MALNUTRITION.

**FOR CLEAN
WATER.**
AGAINST KILLER
DISEASES.

**FOR CHILDREN
THAT GROW
UP STRONG.**
AGAINST LIVES
CUT SHORT.

**FOR CROPS
THIS YEAR,
AND NEXT.**
AGAINST
DROUGHT
AND DISASTER.

**FOR CHANGING
MINDS.**
AGAINST
IGNORANCE
AND
INDIFFERENCE.

**FOR FREEDOM
FROM HUNGER.
FOR EVERYONE.
FOR GOOD.**

**FOR ACTION.
AGAINST
HUNGER.**

