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**USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP)
Supplemental Guidance for Partners Engaging in Food
Security Activities in Syria
Fiscal Year (FY) 2020**

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Introduction

The Syria crisis remains one of the largest and most complex humanitarian crises in the world. Now in its ninth year, the war in Syria has led to the internal displacement of at least 6.2 million people, and left an estimated 11.7 million in need of humanitarian assistance. According to the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), 6.5 million people remain food insecure and an additional 2.5 million people are at risk of food insecurity and in need of livelihoods support.

The main drivers of food needs in Syria remain insecurity and conflict, as well as new, prolonged, and repeated displacement. Food insecurity is also driven by a lack of financial and physical access to food and the depletion of livelihood assets. Increased food and fuel prices, inflation, low purchasing power, and the decline in income-earning opportunities have hampered most Syrians’ ability to acquire food. These challenges are reflected in a heavy reliance on negative coping strategies, a lack of dietary diversity, and significant gaps in food consumption. Vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities, single-headed households, and the elderly often face challenges physically accessing food, for reasons ranging from a lack of mobility to threats to their physical safety. In many communities, the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees contributes to socio-economic pressures that also create vulnerabilities for host communities.

Despite a significantly improved cereal harvest in 2018/2019 as compared to the previous year, wheat production was still approximately 40 percent below the pre-crisis average according to the 2019 UN Food and Agriculture Organization/World Food Program Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission. The agricultural sector, which normally serves as a major engine of the economy and a source of cheaper, more abundant food, continues to be threatened by factors such as land contamination, lack of availability of and/or financial means to access essential inputs, and damaged infrastructure.

USAID/FFP’s ongoing response in Syria faces specific contextual challenges related to features such as insecurity and a lack of access, remote management of humanitarian operations, hostilities, IDPs in densely populated urban areas, complex protection risks among beneficiaries, and risks associated with operating in areas controlled by U.S.-sanctioned groups. This guidance is intended to address some of the challenges that make operations in Syria unique, while fulfilling USAID/FFP’s global mission to provide food assistance to save lives, reduce suffering, and support the early recovery of populations affected by both acute and protracted emergencies. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the [Emergency Food Security Program](#) requirements found in the FY 2020 Annual Program Statement (APS) for International Emergency Food Assistance, and not be used in isolation. Please see additional *Application and Submission*

Guidance for the Syria response below. Further, this guidance applies only to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and not to Public International Organizations (PIOs).

Experience working on food assistance programs over an extended period of time in Syria is preferred. Emergency Food Security Program resources can be found here:

<https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/what-we-do/emergency-activities>

Key Areas of USAID/FFP Focus: In FY 2020, FFP’s primary focus will be in emergency assistance, monthly food assistance, and bakery support.

- **Rapid Response Mechanisms to provide emergency food assistance.** To support widespread displacements due to the ongoing insecurity and hostilities, USAID/FFP will continue to prioritize activities for the newly displaced, including in-kind ready-to-eat rations (RTERs), food vouchers, and/or cash transfers to respond to emergency needs. USAID/FFP encourages a flexible approach that allows for transitioning between emergency in-kind and cash or voucher assistance (CVA) to monthly food security assistance based on context.
- **Monthly food security assistance to the most vulnerable households.** To support food-insecure households due to conflict, lack of physical and financial access to food, and depletion of livelihood assets, USAID/FFP will continue to prioritize applications for targeted monthly food assistance through the modality most appropriate to local context, including locally and regionally procured in-kind food baskets, in-kind Title II commodities from the US if appropriate, and targeted CVA. USAID/FFP expects applicants to provide a minimum of eight months of regular assistance to the same food-insecure households over a 12-month period, as recommended by the Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster.

USAID/FFP supports emergency food assistance as part of a multi-sectoral humanitarian response and will consider CVA based on the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). USAID/FFP will consult with USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in evaluating proposals for emergency multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to ensure complementary multi-sectoral programming. USAID/FFP may authorize funding for MPCA by contributing to the food needs of the SMEB, with USAID/OFDA or other donors covering the proportion of non-food needs. For further guidance refer to *Multipurpose Cash Assistance* and *Essential Complementary Activities* sections in the FY 2020 APS.

Applicants proposing LRIP must demonstrate organizational capacity and experience procuring, packaging, transporting, and delivering food baskets in the Syrian context. Applicants must show experience in food safety and quality control. Applicants proposing CVA programs should submit their standard operating procedures and market-

based analyses demonstrating CVAs are appropriate for their area of operation. Applicants must demonstrate proven experience in successfully implementing CVA programs in Syria or other similar remote management environments, and detail the complete chain of custody, including voucher control following redemption by the beneficiary, as relevant for voucher programs.

Applicants proposing “for work” activities or income-generating activities to improve household food security should refer to USAID/FFP guidance outlining suitable types of emergency Cash-for-Work (CFW), Food-for-Work, Cash-for-Assets, and Food-for-Assets activities for USAID funding in humanitarian contexts. See [FFP and OFDA Supplemental Guidance for "For Work" Emergency Activities](#).

- **Bakery interventions to increase the supply of bread as well as provide access to bread at a stabilized market price.** To support food-insecure households due to conflict, lack of physical and financial access to food, and increased community bread needs due to IDP patterns, USAID/FFP will continue to support market-based bakery interventions targeted to vulnerable communities. Applicants must demonstrate how these activities are intended to support food security through increasing the supply of and access to bread at a stabilized price, in particular to respond to changing community demands for bread (i.e., medium- to large-scale IDP flows). USAID/FFP will consider the provision of flour and yeast procured locally or regionally to bakeries inside Syria as well as inputs and financing for maintenance or minor repairs of bakeries and mills, as appropriate. Applicants should clearly justify their selection of proposed geographic areas, including an assessment of community vulnerability and needs. Applicants should also provide information on their bakery selection criteria, including information on catchment population, current bakery production including other source(s) of flour, total production capacity, storage capacity, power supply, and an analysis of the bakery’s economic viability. Applicants should outline how they intend to encourage competition and develop agreements or contracts with bakeries that will clearly articulate the conditions of assistance and how bread prices will be determined and adjusted throughout program implementation. Applicants should include information on the bakeries’ use of revenue collected from bread sales (e.g., reinvested into the bakery, used for maintenance, used to purchase local flour, etc.).

Proposed USAID/FFP-supported flour/bakery programs should respond to identified needs of communities affected by the crisis, and should be distinct from flour/bakery programs primarily designed to strengthen local authorities.

USAID/FFP seeks applicants for medium-term—no less than nine months—bakery support with a flexible response to shift resources as supply and demand change due to population movements and increased geographic access. USAID/FFP will consider activities that provide up to 50 percent of an existing bakery’s flour inputs and will not

support starting up new bakeries. Applicants must justify all flour contributions, and how filling a gap in the short to medium term will improve food security in vulnerable populations. To reduce the potential for dependence on USAID/FFP inputs (i.e., flour and yeast), USAID/FFP requires an exit strategy for all bakery programs. To strengthen sustainability, USAID/FFP prefers bakery owner reinvestment into the bakeries and, where feasible, for applicants to demonstrate a reduction of inputs provided over time.

- **Restoring livelihoods and agricultural production to improve economic access to household food security. FFP’s primary focus will remain emergency assistance, monthly assistance and bakery support.** Where feasible, USAID/FFP will consider continuing to support efforts to promote livelihoods in Syria as a means of restoring productive assets, enhancing self-reliance, and more sustainably improving household food security. As per the current APS, USAID/FFP may respond to identified needs by providing targeted assistance packages that support value chains and include critical inputs such as seeds, tools, and/or fodder. All agricultural distribution activities should include a training component that addresses culturally appropriate production techniques and sustainable resource management practices.

FFP will also consider non-agricultural livelihood activities designed to create income-earning opportunities for vulnerable and food-insecure households who have depleted households assets and lack economic access to food. Livelihoods activities should protect gains made through food transfers and are considered Essential Complementary Activities per the FY 2020 APS, which states that the activities must not exceed 20 percent of the total proposed budget of any application (including all supporting costs such as staff salaries and fringe benefits, equipment, other direct costs, etc.). For additional guidance refer to *Essential Complementary Activities* in the FY 2020 APS.

Applicants proposing emergency livelihoods interventions must demonstrate that the areas selected for these activities are reasonably stable and not expected to see large-scale conflict or displacement that will put programmatic assets at risk of destruction, seizure, or abandonment. Furthermore, applicants should demonstrate evidence of due diligence that verifies land and property rights before initiating livelihoods activities. USAID/FFP advises consultation with USAID/FFP Field Officers based in Adana, Turkey, and Amman, Jordan, in advance of proposing livelihoods programming.

FY 2020 Approach

- **Harmonization of food assistance modalities:** USAID/FFP prefers country-wide harmonization of food assistance modalities including local and regional procurement of monthly food baskets, RTERs, food vouchers, and cash assistance. Modalities should be aligned with FSL Cluster recommendations and with the geographically relevant SMEB

recommendations. USAID/FFP requires that partners coordinate food baskets, RTERs and CVA with FSL Cluster specifications, contents, and packaging to strengthen our ability to manage and oversee assistance, reduce costs, and ensure a *do no harm* approach. Standardization of assistance eliminates comparisons of food parcels or CVA value across different areas and perceptions amongst beneficiaries of preference or politicization based on geographic location.

- **Flexible, evidence-based approach:** USAID/FFP expects applicants to determine modality based on context, and encourages an approach that maintains flexibility to shift between modalities as needed. Throughout the conflict in Syria, border closures, changing market trends, banking accessibility, shifting conflict lines, and sanctioned-group-related risks have all shaped the appropriateness of in-kind, voucher and/or cash transfer activities to meet critical food needs. Applicants should indicate their flexibility, where feasible, to shift between modalities across all activities. In addition to modality flexibility, USAID/FFP also encourages applicants to define broad geographic areas of operation with clear criteria to determine geographic shifts based on changing needs.
- **Coordination with USAID/OFDA:** USAID/FFP expects applicants to highlight coordination of proposed programming with any existing USAID/OFDA-funded activities, and encourages applicants to highlight the efficiencies to be achieved through coordinated programming.
- **Beneficiary targeting and accountability to affected populations (AAP):** USAID/FFP supports the FSL Cluster standard operating procedure (SOP) agreements with local authorities to ensure distributions are free of political influences and are based on transparent vulnerability criteria. Applicants should demonstrate effective mechanisms to inform on AAP concerns including communication and outreach, issues/questions on distributions, basket contents/quality, monitoring, and targeting. Applicants must clearly articulate their methods and systems for conducting vulnerability analyses, beneficiary targeting, and post-distribution monitoring. Applicants should be prepared to undertake 100 percent beneficiary verification for regular assistance activities (i.e. monthly assistance, livelihoods activities), but it is not required for one-off assistance (i.e. rapid response). Please also refer to the section *Accountability to Affected Populations* in the FY 2020 APS.

Duty of Care Guidance

Given the high-risk environment, especially for Syrian staff, working on humanitarian programs, USAID/FFP requires applicants to include Duty of Care standards to allow for swift response to

acute staff needs during and after hostilities. Applicants, and any potential sub-awardees, should include common Duty of Care based on the Syrian INGO Regional Forum's 2018 standards.

Risk Mitigation Guidance

As described in USAID/FFP's FY 2020 APS, all applicants are required to complete an analysis of risks as they relate to the proposed modalities and relevant mitigation measures. Specifically, the assessment should examine potential risk related to fraud, corruption, and mismanagement. For more detailed information on this requirement refer to the *Organizational Risk Assessment* in the FY 2020 APS.

USAID/FFP acknowledges that programming in Syria entails risk. In order to ensure that USAID/FFP-funded programs in support of the Syria response may be implemented successfully, mitigating risks to the greatest extent possible, see USAID/OFDA's supplemental information on the risk mitigation measures that organizations should include in proposals for assistance for Syria programming. Applicants should review the [USAID/OFDA Proposal Guidelines Risk Assessment and Mitigation Requirements for High-Risk Environments](#), which are intended to provide supplemental guidance to applicants on addressing risk mitigation measures in proposals for programming in Syria. Organizations invited to submit a full application will also be required to respond to questions with additional analysis related to U.S.-sanctioned groups.

Please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to be aware of any partner vetting requirements for the proposed area of intervention. As a reminder, USAID retains the right to expand vetting of humanitarian programs in Syria as deemed necessary.

Due to the nature of the operational environment in Syria, USAID/FFP will contract third-party monitoring (TPM) of implementing partner activities with the intended purpose of providing additional oversight of USAID/FFP-funded awards. All awardees will receive monitoring visits and are expected to assist and coordinate with the TPM by providing distribution plans and locations in a timely manner.

Partner-Led Third-Party Monitoring

Separate from USAID/FFP-contracted TPM, all applicants are expected to incorporate independent TPM as part of the risk mitigation measures in proposals. USAID/FFP and USAID/OFDA Guiding Principles for Syria partner-led TPM include:

- Partners should prioritize TPM site visits in areas where they do not have direct access or are implementing primarily through sub-partners.
- The TPM must be conducted by a third party. They must be external to the implementing partner or consortium.
- The scope of the TPM should be limited, with a focus on output verification. Priority should be given to direct observations (e.g. distribution site visits) to observe whether activities are being implemented as planned and to receive feedback from beneficiaries.

- The TPM contractor should report to the partner on a frequent enough basis to provide useful and timely information to project management. It is recommended that they report at least one to two times per month.
- If a firm is selected for your TPM, share the name of the firm with your Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).
- Partners should incorporate findings from the TPM into their regular reporting as outlined in the award.

USAID/OFDA Proposal Guidelines Risk Assessment and Mitigation Requirements for High-Risk Environments can be found here:

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID-OFDA_Risk_Mitigation_May_2018.pdf

Local and Regional Procurement Guidance

As per the current APS and FFPIB 19-03, USAID/FFP prioritizes procurement in developing countries. Consequently, all commodity purchases must procure commodities with both source and origin in countries listed in the “Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories” level or below on the Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipients list of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) unless the country in which the commodities are to be procured is itself impacted by the same crisis. A commodity’s source is the country from which the seller ships the commodity, and origin is the country in which the commodity was produced.

See [FFPIB 19-03](#) for further details on USAID/FFP’s policy on source and origin and USAID/FFP’s complementary Syria Guidance for LRIP in *Annex I. USAID/FFP Source and Origin Restrictions for Syria*.

Application and Submission Guidance

This guidance is intended to be supplementary to the *Application and Submission Information* found in the FY 2020 APS.

Concept note submission: Applicants may discuss concept papers with USAID/FFP Field Officers prior to official submission. For contact information for USAID/FFP field staff please email FFP.Syria.DC@usaid.gov. As per the FY 2020 APS guidance, concept papers should be submitted online through the Partner Portal, which can be accessed at <https://ffppartnerportal.ofda.gov>. All applicants, including those applying for a funded extension or a modification of existing USAID/FFP-funded emergency project, must submit a concept note for consideration. All documents submitted should be in accordance with the format detailed in the FY 2020 APS.

Application submission: If invited to submit an application, applicants should submit the application to FFP.Syria.DC@usaid.gov prior to submission in the Partner Portal for review.

USAID/FFP will determine when the application should be uploaded to the Partner Portal and then will send the applicant a request to upload.

Award decisions will likely be made in mid-calendar year, subject to the availability of funding. The application process has been designed to minimize the time needed for award approval. However, given the complexities of the Syrian crisis, please expect a longer than usual review period. Please note, there is no time limit or approval deadline associated with the application review process; USAID/FFP will make award decisions as quickly as possible. In addition, USAID/FFP reserves the right to fund none, part of, or all of the applications received.

Guidance for New Applicants: New U.S. and non-U.S. applicants can find guidance on applying for funding from USAID here: <https://www.usaid.gov/pvo>.

Eligibility for USAID/FFP funding can be found on pages 12 and 13 of the FY 2020 Annual Program Statement (APS) found here: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/programs/emergency-programs>. Please note that you do not have to be registered as a PVO to receive USAID/FFP funding.

More information on new partner requirements can be found in ADS 303, particularly sections 303.3.8 and 303.3.9 here: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303.pdf>

ANNEX I. USAID/FFP Source and Origin Restrictions for Syria

USAID/FFP would like to provide a guidance update on source and origin requirements for food commodities procured locally and regionally specific to the Syria crisis. This guidance is complementary to [FFPIB 19-03](#).

Definitions

Source: A commodity's source is the country from which a commodity is shipped by the supplier.

Origin: A commodity's origin is the country in which it was grown or produced. If a commodity undergoes processing which creates a commercially recognized new commodity that is significantly different in basic characteristics or in purpose of use (e.g., wheat flour or vegetable oil), the origin is defined as the country in which the commodity was milled/refined/processed.

Per the above, wheat flour has different characteristics and is used differently than the grain. Therefore, the action of producing wheat flour produces a new commodity.

Restrictions

Procurements under USAID/FFP programs must comply with both sets of restrictions.

Geographic Restrictions: Food commodities under USAID/FFP programs must be sourced and originate either from within the country in which they will be used (e.g., locally) or in a country that is within the same continent (e.g., regionally -- in this case, Asia and the Near East). For the purposes of the Syria regional response, USAID/FFP considers North Africa to be part of the broader Asia and the Near East. Commodities that are not sourced and produced within Asia and the Near East (e.g., international procurements) will generally not be allowed under Syria awards in the absence of a waiver.

Developing Country Restrictions: USAID/FFP prioritizes procurement in developing countries. In addition to regional requirements, commodities must also have source and origin in countries that are listed at the "Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories" level or below on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of Official Development Assistance (ODA) Recipients available here: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm>. This restriction does not apply to countries that are receiving emergency assistance for the crisis to which a program is responding. Thus, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey are valid source and origin countries for this response.

Waiver

If for any reason a project cannot be implemented under these restrictions or would have to be delayed at the expense of providing urgent life-saving assistance to vulnerable crisis-affected

households, please notify the AOR for your award in writing as soon as possible to request a waiver.

Note that the waiver request will require a management review within USAID/FFP. Please provide the following documents to request a waiver:

1. An itemized list of commodity type, quantity, and intended source and origin locations.
2. A clear justification documenting why the commodities cannot reasonably be procured in a way that would meet operational needs under USAID/FFP's policy restrictions. Supporting details might include insufficient availability on local/regional markets, inability of local production to meet quality requirements, or exorbitant discrepancy in cost.

Source	Origin	Geographic Restrictions
· Local	· Local	
· Local	· Regional	
· Local	· International	· Not allowed unless a waiver is provided by USAID/FFP
· Regional	· Regional	
· Regional	· International	· Not allowed unless a waiver is provided by USAID/FFP
· International	· International	· Not allowed unless a waiver is provided by USAID/FFP

Example list of countries that fall within the USAID/FFP procurement policy as of January 2020. Please consult the OECD list and apply the restrictions prior to every procurement.

Local Procurement

1. Syrian Arab Republic

Regional Procurement (Asia and the Near East as well as North Africa)

2. Afghanistan
3. Armenia
4. Bangladesh

5. Bhutan
6. Cambodia
7. Egypt
8. Iraq
9. India
10. Indonesia
11. Jordan
12. Kyrgyzstan

13. Lao People's Democratic Republic
14. Lebanon
15. Mongolia
16. Morocco
17. Myanmar
18. Nepal
19. Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip)
20. Pakistan
21. Philippines
22. Sudan
23. Sri Lanka
24. Tajikistan
25. Turkey
26. Uzbekistan
27. Vietnam
28. Yemen