This report was produced by Action Against Hunger’s UK MEAL Team in collaboration with the Middle East Regional Office, and was designed by Kim Winkler.

November 2019

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IN 2018, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER...

WHERE WE WORK

TURKEY
SYRIA
IRAQ
JORDAN
LEBANON
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY
EGYPT
YEMEN

IN THE MIDDLE EAST

IN 2018, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER...

- **4.9M** people reached
- **51,207** people received food aid (in kind)
- **27,368** people received nutrition treatment
- **8,288** people treated for severe acute malnutrition

**WHERE WE WORK**

- TURKEY
- SYRIA
- IRAQ
- JORDAN
- LEBANON
- OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY
- EGYPT
- YEMEN

**IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

**REGIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2018 MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL OFFICE**

**FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS**

- **257,255** people reached
- **51,207** people received food aid (in kind)

**WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE**

- **90,328** hygiene kits distributed
- **7,117** water points improved

**NUTRITION & HEALTH**

- **169,749** people received reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health services
- **27,368** people treated for severe acute malnutrition

**MENTAL HEALTH & CARE PRACTICES**

- **7,523** people reached
- **1,138** people received MHCP kits, including baby kits and play kits

**OTHER SECTORS**

- **ADVOCACY**
- **PROTECTION**
- **SHELTER**
- **RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISM**

**FOOD ASSISTANCE**

- **1,965** people reached
2018 in the Middle East

2018 was in many ways a hectic year in the Middle East, largely characterised by important contextual milestones that have driven our programmes and our desire to cover as many needs of people living in hardship as possible. Syria has seen an important shift in balance of powers, with a major offensive carried out by the government to retake authority over some of the areas under rebel and extremist control. Lebanon held administrative elections in May - nine years after last was held and with a new system in place - which led to a new balance of parties within the government. The June 2018 elections in Turkey didn’t lead to any substantial change, in spite of the debt crisis that had been disturbing the country’s economic stability throughout the year. All three countries have been heavily affected by the Syrian refugee and displacement crises, which further contributed to the rise in political instability, economic decline and social tensions.

In Palestine, the decision of the US government to move their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and consequently also considerably reduce funding to humanitarian programmes for Palestinians highly impacted prospects for any significant advance in the long awaited US-facilitated peace plan. In neighbouring Egypt, presidential elections held in March 2018 fortified the expected continuation of the existing political setup. This regional interlacement characterised by sectarian tensions, refugee crises, an unclear roadmap by international actors (Russia, USA, China...) that augments the sense of confusion, required an increased dedication by our teams, and, consequently a major upscaling in our programming. Despite these challenges, Action Against Hunger brought about a number of accomplishments: for example, we introduced strong protection programming in Lebanon; engagement through increased partnerships in all missions; introduction of shelter activities in our Syria response portfolio; launching of successful entrepreneurship and business programmes with a very special gender-sensitive approach in the oPt; a genuine look at the localisation agenda through continuous exchanges with our partner in Turkey; and civil society engagement programmes in Egypt.

Yet in spite of our efforts to cover all needs that arise, more hardship for the people in the Middle East is expected; it is heartbreaking for our organisation to witness that the situation continues to be challenging, and that the projections for the future in all countries that we are covering in the region are not looking all too positive.

This is why we are particularly proud that, over the years, our teams have been a source of safety and reliability for the people undergoing hardship in the region, always ready to provide support wherever and whenever the needs persist. As an experienced organisation, we calibrate the various types of our response to specific needs, and adjust the volume of programming in order to be able to serve as many people in hardship as possible; this, coupled with dedication of our colleagues on the ground, has rendered remarkable outcomes in terms of our delivery of services.

CHIARA SACCARDI
Desk Officer for Middle East
Madrid, Spain
Since mid-2015 Action Against Hunger Egypt operates in the regions of Upper Egypt, Luxor, Greater Cairo, and Qalyubeya. Despite the efforts and progress that Egypt has devoted in regaining social and economic stability under the framework of the Egypt 2030 strategy and the UN SDGs, the livelihoods of the most vulnerable population are still not resilient enough for them to cope alone with health, social and economic needs and challenges.

Particularly in 2018, Action Against Hunger’s programming in Egypt continued with 2 interventions covering a range of sectors in a cohesive and matching way, including nutrition with health and water, livelihoods with strengthening of the civil society.

Through these projects, the organisation has been able to benefit more than 150,000 people, namely women, children, farmers and youth, urban population in underserved areas, with improved access to health and nutrition services, diversified medical equipment, awareness raising, access to a newly built water treatment station, a new water well and a laboratory, multi-sectorial projects in the fields of vocational training, agriculture, livestock, micro-businesses, environment, food security and water, which improved the socioeconomic livelihoods of the mentioned target groups. Moreover, Action Against Hunger increased greatly the capacity and knowledge of 61 grassroots organizations which are now more capable and accountable towards their communities and the Egyptian regional and local government.

During 2018 our most proud achievement has been a triplet: to have built consistently the capacity of our own staff, a diverse team of 15 Egyptian; who in turn implemented the projects and benefited the Egyptian population; the transfer of knowledge to the Egyptian partners with whom we collaborated in project implementation, receiving at the same time their know how and expertise that is being incorporated into our own knowledge and institutional strengthening.
TRUE EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY WORK

Meeting Aziza Adam is an incredible treat! The 50-year-old has been through a lot in her life, having grown up in a small village in Esna in Egypt – in a society mainly dominated by men and their ways of living. Aziza is the president of the village council and runs the association “Women, environment and child development in East Homaïdat”, which she founded herself in 2008 and which is today funded by the GRASP project. But the road to the place where she is today has been paved with sharp stones, riddled with obstacles and barriers. Nonetheless, she greets everyone with a wide smile. It is quite obvious that she is smiling a lot, the fine lines around her eyes are a clear evidence of that.

“WHEN A PERSON HAS A GOAL, THEY WILL NOT RISE ALONG THE ROAD,” says Aziza as she starts telling us her story. She grew up in a family with three girls and four boys. Her parents were not rich, and at the time education of boys was preferred to that of girls. Even worse, the society was all set to thinking that girls should stay at home, learn to run chores and marry to give birth to children, take care of the family and make sure that the house is spotlessly clean. At the same time, Aziza’s parents were for those who could afford it, and as her village didn’t have a school of its own, it was expensive to educate children and parents didn’t come along. Her parents, as many parents who were not too well off, therefore chose to educate boys, leaving girls to take the traditional role in the household. Aziza was only allowed to go to prep school: “Neither my sisters nor I could go to school, only two of my brothers went to school and have middle school degrees” she says. In prep school she learned how to read and write, and was then taken out of school at long before she was pregnant and gave birth to her children at her parents’ home and never looked back. His family had repeatedly tried to persuade him to return, but he wouldn’t budge. He remarried shortly after he left and established a new family with his new wife. Not too long after, the family kicked her out of their house – she became homeless with three small children.

When we ask her how she felt at the time, she answers that she was in shock: “I had two options: to either neglect my children and leave them in the streets to strangers to be influenced by all bad things out there, or to take care of them, raise them very well, challenge all situations and circumstances, and defeat all the hard times so that my children can serve the community rather than be dependent on it.” She decided then and there that she will never give up. Shortly after she ended up on the street, she challenged her husband’s family in court and won her case; she was allowed to move into a small house with two rooms.

With only 40 EGP (roughly $2) in her pocket, she needed to come up with a way to make a living and feed her kids. “I approached one of the tradesmen selling chickens and asked him if I could buy off a few chickens from him and resell. The man said ‘no’ to my money, and said to take the chickens, sell them, see if I liked doing that and come back to buy more if I did. So, this is how I started my business,” explains Aziza. She then started buying chicks to raise and sell them for more and not given without much work,” says the 50-year-old.

As she was going through all her hardship, she felt that her example, her insistence to survive, and her refusal to depend on others could serve as an inspiration to others. This is why in 2008 she founded the association that she is running today. Initially, the association was doing charity work, giving food and basic necessities to those most in need. However, after assessing that the community needs support beyond handouts, they soon shifted to a more long-term support, such as helping people register their identities, resolving land issues, cleaning streets and waterways, building water and sanitation facilities in individual households, etc. The support from Action Against Hunger and RAED through the GRASP project that is funded by the European Union was crucial, says Aziza. When the first batch of funding came, the association got immediately to work: “Most of the population is not registered within the system, so we helped about 1000 individuals register and get their IDs for the first time,” says Aziza with pride. Of course, registering people opened up paths to seek other rights, such as claiming back their land from illegal private landholding – a frequent practice in the area.

When the GRASP project kicked off in 2016, Aziza’s association was one of many that received funding. Apart from being able to provide services to the community, the association received capacity building on organisational management, budget management and how to apply for funding. In the second phase of the project that began in 2018, Aziza and the association could significantly expand their services: “People later saw the benefits of having a clean village, as cleaning the village from solid waste was not on top of the priority list for local authorities. We also work a lot within water and sanitation, cleaning streets from rubbish, organising trucks to clean dumpsters and remove solid waste. Our village also doesn’t have a sewage system, so we are forced to frequently desludge. Here and there, we have a lot more hygiene and health awareness among the community,” says Aziza.

In parallel to the work with the association, Aziza is able to serve the community as the president of the village, and this is how she can really make change happen. She tells the story how she got the position: “I previously worked for eight years as a vice president for another village where I learned how to manage and facilitate the work of a village. It was after those eight years that the governor of Luxor issued a decree appointing me as the village manager. He knew how much effort I had put and how active I was. He knew my story. He said: ‘You deserve it, you earned it, and now you should have it’, she remembers with a smile on her face.

Although her daily tasks take up a lot of time, she remained dedicated to promoting education for girls and strengthening the role of women in the society. She was instrumental in changing the traditional views about girls’ education in her village, and now there are more girls in schools than boys. At the same time, she is also working to strengthen the role of women in the community. She started by working to ensure that women are equally represented in the association: “In the board of the association there are still more men than women, however we will change this shortly; we want more women to have a say. The new director of the association, the finance manager and the secretary are all women,” says Aziza.

When we ask her how many hours a day she works, her son Mohammad interrupts: “She works 24/7, it’s a miracle how she still manages to find time for anything else!” prompting Aziza to laugh loudly. All her children have university education – Mohammad is a teacher, her daughter is a nurse, and her youngest son is a tourist guide and speaks three languages. We ask Mohammad what he thinks about his mother’s achievements. He looks at her with pride and answers: “She took a path that I myself would not have been be able to take. She faced challenges that I would never be able to handle, I was born into this decent life that she was able to make possible for me. I will never be able to feel what she had go through in order to make our life this comfortable. She is my hero!”
In 2018, Action Against Hunger in Iraq gained registration to operate across all of Iraq. Operating out of Mosul and Dohuk, Action Against Hunger worked in camps and non-camp settings in order to meet the needs of the population, covering host communities, internally displaced persons and refugees. In Iraq, Action Against Hunger tailored its programmes to focus on Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) and Mental Health and Care Practices (MHCP). Where appropriate, Action Against Hunger integrated the sectors to strengthen the service delivery package to the targeted population.

In summary, the FSL programme focused on access to job opportunities through Apprenticeship schemes, creation of Businesses through Business Grants and training, as well as financial injections into the local economy through Cash for Work. The WaSH programme continued to ensure assistance to vulnerable populations through a combined package of WaSH activities that included rehabilitation, construction of water networks and drainage systems, provision of water tanks where needed, distribution of hygiene kits, and water conservation awareness campaigns, amongst others. Under MHCP, the team provided specialized psychosocial and psychological support for individuals and groups, as well as awareness raising sessions in relation to mental health issues.

In each of these sectors, Action Against Hunger has worked closely with the key stakeholders, including the capacity building of, and the coordination and cooperation with, the respective Directorates – Directorate of Labour, Directorate of Water and Directorate of Health.

"ACTION AGAINST HUNGER IRAQ WAS PROUD TO EXPAND ITS REACH TO INCLUDE BAGHDAD AND FEDERAL IRAQ TO ALLOW ACCESS TO VULNERABLE POPULATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. TOWARDS THAT END, WE HAVE PIONEERED SEVERAL PROJECTS LINKING WAsh AND FSL, AND DESIGNED MODULES WITHIN FSL FOCUSING ON MUCH-NEEDED EMPLOYABILITY FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED PARTICIPANTS"

Tom Vincent, country director
Rahma Sabhan is an 18-year-old woman living with her parents, four sisters, and a brother in Al-Arbagya neighbourhood in the eastern part of Mosul. Rahma lived her formative years in the height of the city’s occupation by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) in Mosul. After ISIS took over Mosul in June 2014, the city was kept under a strict rule, with the situation particularly difficult and restrictive for women. Women were not allowed to move around without a male guardian, and young girls like Rahma were not permitted to go to school – Rahma, who is a very smart and ambitious young woman, missed years of studying.

When the Iraqi government pushed ISIS out of the city in December 2017, Mosul was hardly recognisable. Severe damages were inflicted on private and public structures during the military attempts to retake the city. Community and livelihood infrastructures were severely impacted, especially in western Mosul and many families who returned to the city reported lack of livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, the majority of individuals affected by the Mosul crisis showed symptoms of psychological distress. Accordingly, Action Against Hunger received funding from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to design a multi-sectoral project in Mosul aimed at lessening the hardship of people. One of the main components was providing temporary employment (cash-for-work), with specific highlight on participation of women. Rahma was one of 44 people selected to take part in the 21 days long employment project. The cash-for-work scheme focused on rehabilitation of community and sports centre in Al Noor neighbourhood in eastern Mosul. The activities included waste collection and cleaning, tree planting, painting, rehabilitation of toilets and showers, and much more.

But in a society that is primarily led by the male population, a project where men and women would work side by side seemed rather controversial at first. Rahma says that this was what got her mother worried in the beginning: “It was very difficult for me as a young girl to go out and work in the community and sports centre, in an environment where there are men. In the beginning, my mother kept warning me not to speak with men during my work,” said Rahma.

However, as the project took off, Action Against Hunger made sure to create a safe environment for everyone by promoting peacebuilding and community cohesion. Through group activities, Action Against Hunger emphasized the importance of providing a peaceful environment between male, female, youth, adults, and people from different tribal backgrounds:

“THE ACTION AGAINST HUNGER TEAM MADE SURE THAT THE ENVIRONMENT IS SAFE FOR US WOMEN; THEY TOOK INTO CONSIDERATION CULTURAL BARRIERS, AND PROVIDED A SUITABLE ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT, SAFETY, AND JOY FOR US TO WORK WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY.

The whole team became like a family, and men treated us like their sisters. This made me and my mother less worried, and made me feel comfortable, respected, and most importantly safe,” said Rahma. Rahma also emphasised that participation in this project helped boost her self-esteem: “The project had a positive impact on me and I transferred that positive impact to others, especially other women.

We were divided into groups, but everyone was asking me to join their group saying that I am young, active, and smart”, said Rahma. An additional boost to her self-confidence was the fact that she finally got her own income. Apart from getting a few small necessities for her siblings, she was able to help pay off her mother’s hospital fees after a surgery: “(Taking part in) this project not only helped me learn to depend on myself and my work, but it also changed the way that my family sees me; they now believe in me and my skills,” says Rahma. After the cash-for-work, part of the project was finished, Rahma enrolled in Action Against Hunger-run apprenticeship project that was also funded by OFDA. She was able to get a job as a saleswoman in a shopping mall in eastern Mosul and continues to have a stable income.
Eight years into the Syria conflict, more than 1.3 million Syrians sought refuge in Jordan. 671,047 are registered refugees and approximately 83% are living in non-camp settings. The crisis has continued to strain the Jordanian economy and infrastructure, increasing unemployment and availability of water with clear gender and age gaps in access to key opportunities for building resilience.

The Jordan mission was established in 2013 as a response to the Syrian crisis that has forced Syrians to find refuge in Jordan, which created more challenging conditions for vulnerable Jordanians. Since then, Action Against Hunger has grown in size and scope. The organisation operates from its main office in Amman.

In 2018, the mission further solidified its programming across the country. Several projects received governmental approvals and began implementation throughout the year, in addition to Action Against Hunger bolstering its existing programming by agreeing to new projects with UNICEF, UNOCHA, and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Throughout the years, the Jordan Mission has been working diligently on projects related to Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) across the country. This year, we implemented our first project in Madaba, an integrated watershed management project in partnership with GIZ. We also launched a multi-sectoral Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WaSH) and mental health intervention funded by Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the mission’s first step into supporting mental health in Jordan. Two other major consortia with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) began scaling up activities related to water connections and rehabilitations for the most vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugee households in host communities, as well as for public facilities in Irbid Governorate.

In Action Against Hunger’s role as the lead WaSH agency in Azraq Refugee Camp, we continued our partnership with UNICEF and worked toward increasing community ownership of WaSH services within the camp. With the support of UNOCHA, we also expanded the greywater network in the camp, laying the groundwork for sanitation options that better suit cultural norms and community preferences. Action Against Hunger also invested in a barrier analysis, sanitation assessment, and promoting behaviour change to contribute to substantial improvements to the WaSH situation in the camp.

Moreover, Action Against Hunger also began implementing a project, co-funded by Ville de Paris and Taiwan ICDF, in Azraq Town creating a municipal composting unit through cash for work to improve solid waste management and create income-generating opportunities in the community. This served as the first phase of improving the solid waste management value chain, a process that is planned to continue in the coming years.

In October, the Nassib border crossing between Jordan and Syria reopened, despite the still unstable conditions inside Syria. Intentions surveys from UNHCR continued to show that Syrian refugees in Jordan see conditions inside Syria as remaining unsuitable for principled return.
NURSE SANA - SPREADING AWARENESS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND CARE PRACTICES IN IRBID

Action Against Hunger’s Mental Health and Care Practices (MHCP) team work with different Primary Healthcare Centres to help spread awareness to nurses about the different techniques and tools to help assist people who are suffering from psychological and mental illnesses by offering them different trainings and workshops.

“I was happy and excited because the topic that the training revolved around was helpful and interesting,” said Sana, an Associate Nurse who has worked for 12 years at the Malaka Primary Healthcare Centre in Irbid. She was one of the nurses who participated in the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) and the Mental Health Gap Action – Intervention Guideline Programme (mhGAP-IG) implemented by Action Against Hunger.

“As a result, we had many achievements accomplished with clients we worked with who have benefited tremendously from these trainings,” commented Sana enthusiastically. These trainings are part of Action Against Hunger’s “Empowerment of Syrian Crisis-Affected Iraq Internal Displaced Populations and Institutions of Neighbouring Governments”, the mission’s first MHCP project, which is part of a multi-sectoral WaSH and MHCP intervention funded by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) which began on June 2018.

When she first took the course, she noted how much the knowledge she gained helped her excel in her job. “Honestly, when I took this training, I benefited a lot from it personally and professionally,” she said. She was able to support others through her work and expressed how vital these trainings are for everyone working in the primary healthcare field and how incredible the outcome was. “We later worked in the field and we began to observe and discover cases that people needed more help or that people need us to educate them, share information with them, or needed our support in offering mental health services in order to solve these psychological problems they were dealing with on a daily basis.”

Throughout her time at the Malaka Primary Healthcare Centre, she usually sees 5 to 10 patients a day, sometimes even more, yet the number of psychological and mental health patients are less because there is still a growing strain on the topic of mental health in the area but, “many people are becoming more accepting of the idea that yes, I have to sit down with a Psychologist in order to educate me about the psychological problem I am suffering from in order to seek the necessary medical attention.” However, even though some people are open to the subject, there is still a sense of stigma, even though it has lessened tremendously as people have become more accepting of the idea of mental health, medical care practices, and the idea of Psychologists treating patients. “Maybe we can change the mentality towards the idea that people are in need of visiting a psychiatrist and the idea to be able to accept this,” says Sana with a smile and gleam of optimism in her eyes.

Moreover, she has come across many different patients in Malaka suffering from psychological disorder and symptoms such as Fatigue, Grief, fears, psychological stress and pressure, psychoses, depression, epilepsy, Child and Adolescent Mental & Behavioural Disorders (CMH), and dementia. “There were a lot of success stories after working with Action Against Hunger,” said Sana proudly. She recalled three cases with two women who suffered from extreme stressors and a child that suffered from emotional disorders, which lead to bedwetting, excessive crying, fears and separation from caregivers. She spoke about the effects of such psychological symptoms and how they can affect others around them, such as in one of the extreme stressors’ cases where the woman stopped her day-to-day activities in full. “Due to the extreme stressors she is suffering, she stopped working, stopped cooking, she stopped caring for her children, and so this affected her life completely,” commented Sana.

However, there are many reasons why patients are being affected by such dire psychological disorders that need immediate support. In reference to the case with the 12-year-old child suffering from an emotional disorder, Sana commented, “after we sat down with him, we were able to detect the stressor which was that he was being subjected to family problems and that he felt there was no sense of family unity in the household.”

Nurse Sana believes that, through her work, she can help others if there were more training and workshop opportunities detailing different mental health topics. “You have no idea how important this is as psychological stress is affecting so many people,” said Sana with a strained voice.

“I suggest these sessions and trainings should continue to be offered at other healthcare centres in order for them to benefit other medical workers.”

She hopes that in the future she is able to decrease the number of sick patients and decrease the number of psychological and mental health problems. With this, she hopes to open the door to help change the mentality and still evident stigma in the community by spreading awareness about the different mental health and psychological support systems there are in Irbid. “I really love my job and enjoy the work as I am able to help others in need,” said Sana with a smile on her face.
Lebanon is among the most diverse countries in the Middle East with a hyperactive cultural, social, economic and political life, often influenced by regional and global politics. The country also faces several humanitarian and developmental challenges such as the significant influx of refugees and weak infrastructures. As the refugee crisis is about to enter its ninth year, the needs of estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees (SyR) continue to grow. Refugees face massive socioeconomic difficulties and suffer deep vulnerabilities, all while the pressure on the hosting communities is rising and the future is becoming increasingly uncertain.

Action Against Hunger established its presence in Lebanon in 2006, initially supporting the internally displaced population following the armed conflict of July 2006. In 2011, we expanded our operations to provide humanitarian assistance through food security, water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH), protection, livelihoods, and nutrition. Our interventions use a comprehensive approach encompassing humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience components, covering the South, Nabatieh, Bekaa, and in hard-to-reach areas like Aarsal, Mashari El Qaa in Baalbek El-Hermel, and Chebaa.

Nine years into the Syrian crisis, tensions among host and refugee communities are still increasing. Syrian refugees’ vulnerabilities remain high in Lebanon and show no positive improvement, despite unprecedented levels of humanitarian funding for the Syria crisis. 68% of the Syrian refugee households live below the poverty line and 90% continue to use negative food-related coping strategies.

During the formation of the new Lebanese cabinet in January 2019, the return of refugees to Syria was a central issue and a returns plan was to be developed. Since then, pressure on refugees has intensified. Action Against Hunger and other humanitarian actors in the country are concerned about the current living conditions that refugees face in Lebanon, and by the lack of evidence regarding the safety of returnees in Syria.

In 2018, our operations had a significant impact particularly in the field of WaSH, as it was one of the first organisations to work on this sector inside the Informal Tented Settlements and to provide WaSH services integrated with food security, livelihoods and nutrition.
OPENING HORIZONS WITH FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

Entering Rana Al-Raja's tent in one of the refugee villages in Arsal, the destitution is hard to miss: simple mattresses neatly lined up along every wall in the tent, a thin bamboo rug in the middle, and a few pillows and blankets neatly piled up in one of the corners. Rana had two women visiting when we came, but they quickly went back to their own tents; Rana explained the two often babysit the two older girls when she is out for errands. As we are saying our greetings, Rana hardly takes her eyes off her 1.5-year-old boy, who is gently sleeping in her arms.

Rana is a single mother of four, with the youngest girl Aya only 6 months old. Her husband left when she was two months pregnant with Aya – the two in disagreement over whether to return to Syria or not. Rana, thinking primarily of her children, was clearly against. He hasn’t been in contact since, but she heard from others that he went to Idlib and remarried shortly after he arrived there.

The family lives on monthly financial support of 175$ that get recharged on the card every month I receive from Action Against Hunger possibilities more versatile: “KACHE completely changed the quality of life for us. Before, I couldn’t buy clothes for my kids, and they all continue to grow quickly. With 175$ that get recharged on the card every month I can buy food, nappies, mattresses, gas, clothes, furniture, pay electricity bills, etc.” says Rana. While she still owes money and needs cash to pay for hospital and medication costs for her children, Rana says that

THE POSSIBILITY TO INDEPENDENTLY DECIDE WHAT KIND OF FOOD TO BUY AND TO BE ARE ABLE TO PAY ELECTRICITY AND WATER BILLS HAS REALLY BEEN REVOLUTIONARY.

In the ten months that she has been receiving the monthly instalments, she was able to breathe easier knowing that her debt is not increasing as fast as it used to. She has been able to plan better, diversify the meals for her children and pay off piled up bills. It’s not a luxury life, as Rana says, but knowing that the majority of costs are taken care of, it’s much easier to be able to focus all her attention to helping her children get healthy again.

But life was not always as hard for Rana. Back in Syria they had a beautiful house, and although they weren’t rich, they had enough for a decent life without all too many worries. When she was a young girl, her mother was seriously ill, and with her being the only one to take care of her, she says that her biggest regret is not going to school. She got married at 23, and her husband was a daily worker with an income that could cover the costs of everything they needed, and even luxuries such as weekend trips and outings with friends and family. When the war began, they lost everything, and were forced to move from one place to another inside Syria to escape the fighting. Her husband couldn’t find work, and with only one child at the time, it was less burdensome to depend on other people’s generosity to survive. But, as Rana says, this kind of life was never really sustainable. The final straw that made them decide to finally leave Syria was when the bombing intensified: “When the thought that we would not be able to protect our daughter finally sunk in, we both agreed that going anywhere where our daughter would no longer be able to hear the bombing would be much better, even if we had to struggle to survive.”

When asked what she would like her life to look like in the future, Rana answers just like any parent would:

“I NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET EDUCATED, SO I WANT MY CHILDREN TO BE ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL. I WANT THEM TO HAVE THE FREEDOM AND THE OPTION TO FIND THEIR OWN PATH TO A BETTER FUTURE.”
2018 marked 51 years of Israeli military occupation and 11 years of the imposed land, air and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip. With the lack of peace or reconciliation process on the political horizon and shrinking humanitarian space, the situation remains highly volatile across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, settlement expansion and related annexation policies, combined with home demolitions and destruction of humanitarian aid structures, continued to decrease access to essential services for vulnerable Palestinian communities.

In the Gaza Strip, the blockade combined with intra-Palestinian political divide led to an infrastructural crisis and a chronic lack of basic service delivery. The exacerbated isolation coupled with Israeli-imposed restrictions on movements of people and goods continued to stifle Gaza’s economy, raising the unemployment rate to 52 per cent, forcing almost a million Palestinians into food aid dependency. Punitive measures introduced by different duty bearers, at times, left power-starved Gaza with as little as 4-6 hours of electricity on average per day.

Despite such complex environment, the mission was able to have a very positive impact through its programmes, fortifying its role as a humanitarian organisation of reference.

Our projects evolved around following key aims: protecting communities from forcible transfer, protecting and restoring livelihoods, providing highly vulnerable communities with immediate access to water, providing immediate cash assistance, avoiding loss of livelihoods and therewith the consequent regress into dire vulnerability when suffering a shock, and covering most basic needs to populations suffering shocks.

Among other initiatives, our projects included business entrepreneurship, economic empowerment of women, and production of rainwater master plan for Gaza.

"IN 2018, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER OPT CONDUCTED TWO STUDIES ON MEN’S ROLES AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES BOTH IN GAZA AND IN THE WEST BANK. WE CONSIDER THEM AS OUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT BECAUSE THE TWO STUDIES HELPED US TO BETTER UNDERSTAND, THROUGH MEN’S OWN EXPERIENCES, HOW NARRATIVES OF MASCULINITIES ARE CONSTRUCTED IN PALESTINE AND HOW THEY CAN AFFECT OUR WORK IN THE FIELD. THANKS TO THESE STUDIES WE CAN NOW INTEGRATE A MASCULINITIES-INFORMED GENDER APPROACH TO OUR PROGRAMMING IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK."

Lucas Honauer, country director
Muhiee Abu Sabha is a herder living in the Al Fakheet community in Masafer Yatta with his wife, three daughters and two sons. Muhiee's family owns 30 sheep and rely on herding as their main source of income.

Masafer Yatta is a hamlet cluster in South Hebron (Area C of the West Bank) consisting of 14 herding communities and 1,400 inhabitants. It was declared a 'restricted military zone' ('Firing Zone 918') by the Israeli Military in the 1970s, putting the communities that were established long before this at constant risk of displacement and restrictions to the development of basic infrastructure, such as piped water systems, electricity, road networks and other public facilities.

As a result, families have resorted to adopting negative coping mechanisms. For instance, using poor quality water cisterns for domestic water consumption (drinking, cleaning and washing), reducing overall domestic consumption to less than 30 l/c/d, and reducing their herds in order to decrease livestock consumption. The closest cistern to Muhiee’s house is about 2 km away:

“IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO TRAVEL 2 KM WITH THE HERD TO THE CLOSEST WATER CISTERN AND STAY THERE ALL DAY. I USED TO LEAVE THE HOUSE AT 6 AM AND ONLY RETURN AFTER THE SUN SET”.

Muhiee was obliged to purchase trucked water during poor rainy seasons and whenever the cistern became empty: “I used to buy 3 M3 of water every day and pay 100 ILS to meet my domestic and livestock needs! This amount is a huge burden that obliged us to cut our expenditures on different basic needs”.

MUHIEE ABU SABA - IMPROVED ACCESS TO WATER IN THE MASAFER YATTA CLUSTER

In October 2018, Action Against Hunger, in collaboration with the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and the Masafer Yatta village council, implemented a water infrastructure project, connecting all households with a piped water supply. Each household now has access to a permanent supply of high-quality water at a cost of 5 ILS/M3. As a result, the rate of domestic water consumption has increased by more than 80 l/c/d, while the cost of water for both domestic and livelihood consumption decreased by 80%. Since Muhiee’s house has been connected to the new water infrastructure, the family now has a regular supply of water at a cost of just 5 ILS/M3:

“I DON’T NEED TO TRAVEL AND LEAVE MY FAMILY ALL DAY ANYMORE. WE HAVE A TAP IN OUR HOUSE THAT SUPPLIES US WITH CHEAP AND GOOD QUALITY WATER”.

This has improved Muhiee’s family’s economic condition as water expenditure no longer constitutes a significant expense in the household budget.

“We are not concerned about water cost anymore. With this low price, my wife is not concerned when she bathes the children and cleans the house, and I am thinking about maybe enlarging my herd to improve my family income”.

The case of Muhiee is similar to the cases of more than 240 families in Masafer Yatta who were suffering from the limited access to water that affected different aspects of their daily lives.
2018 was characterised by the offensives carried out by the Syrian government and its allies in areas that were still in hands of other parties to the conflict. They managed to limit, although not put an end to, the presence of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and gradually re-gain control of important regions such as East Ghouta in Damascus, Daraa governorate and parts of the Idlib governorate.

In spite of active conflict partially decreasing, Syria calling for refugees to return and passing laws to facilitate reconstruction, access of humanitarian aid only partially improved, and Syria still represents a vulnerable context. Dynamics of the conflict in North-East one of the priority areas for AAH, makes the humanitarian situation more challenging for scaling up operations while no agreement among parties in the conflict cannot be foreseen.

Despite this complicated context, our teams in the country achieved optimal results: activities reached 10 out of 14 governorates, with high coverage of hard to reach areas and capacity to deliver aid in areas just recently accessible. Action Against Hunger provided assistance to more than 1.5 million people, with interventions ranging from immediate emergency response to providing assistance in agriculture and supplying basic WaSH services in order to improve living conditions.

Action Against Hunger WaSH programmes in Syria offered a combination of delivery modalities, ranging from emergency life-saving support interventions such as water trucking (coupled with installation of water tanks and distribution of jerry cans) to longer-term solutions, such as rehabilitation of boreholes or of the existing water or sewage networks. In 2018, Action Against Hunger also installed its first solar water pumping systems. When a hygiene crisis was detected, Action Against Hunger engaged in prompt distribution of gender- and age sensitive emergency hygiene kits to mitigate the effects of the situation, preventing disease outbreaks and covering everyday needs.

Action Against Hunger also addressed emergency needs of vulnerable individuals and rural households, whose livelihoods and food security have been affected by the conflict. Our FSL approach sought to build up their resilience by providing agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, fodder, livestock, small-scale irrigation equipment) and technical training on best practices, including distribution of home-garden kits to improve and diversify the household dietary intake. Emergency needs were met through direct distribution of emergency food parcels.

These positive results have been made possible thanks to engagement of a robust team of national and international professionals as well as due to strong partnerships with local counterparts and with funding, which ensure and facilitate the achievement of such significant outcomes.

“2018: THE YEAR OF SCALING UP THE SYRIAN MISSION. IN A COMPLEX AND CHALLENGING HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER’S SYRIAN MISSION PROVES THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO DO MORE AND BETTER TO KEEP THE DIGNITY OF THE PEOPLE WE ARE SERVING”

Antonio Aparecido Silva-Trombin, country director
Kafra Shams is a small town in Dar’a governorate, not all too far from Damascus, in southern Syria. Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, it was on the crossroads of heavy fighting. To worsen the situation, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) took over Kafra Shams in 2015, forcing the majority of what was left of the population to flee their destroyed homes. The hostilities continued for years until an agreement was reached in July 2018, allowing people to return. When Action Against Hunger made an initial assessment, 23,000 people had come back, finding the town in ruins, along with a hundred families displaced from neighbouring areas. Almost ten per cent of all households were headed by women, either because they lost their husbands or due to loss of their families’ ability to work.

With damaged water systems and equipment looted, people were forced to rely on unsafe and expensive alternatives, such as water trucking or private wells. The people - already burdened by the cost of repairing their houses and setting up livelihoods - had to find ways to access sufficient water to cover their drinking, cooking, hygiene and domestic needs. Unable to make ends meet or afford this heavy cost, many explained how they resorted to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for days, or dreaded resorting to showering less than once a week and leaving dishes unwashed for 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Turkey

Action Against Hunger started working in Turkey in 2011, responding to the earthquake in Van together with the national partner Support to Life (STL). Action Against Hunger has a long track record of emergency, early recovery and development work in the region and neighboring countries. Action Against Hunger and STL signed a strategic partnership framework, the primary goal of this partnership is to build technical and operational capacity of its local partner in response to any type of emergencies in the country. Pursuant to this agreement, and in support to response to Syria Crisis, Action Against Hunger decided to address humanitarian needs in Turkey through its partner as direct implementer, in parallel and return, Action Against Hunger provided technical and operational support in reference to project sectorial expertise and needs. A range of various capacity building training is delivered to STL team e.g. on CBI methodology, Emergency Response Plan, support on defining livelihood and advocacy strategy. Since May 2016, an Operational Advisor from Action Against Hunger has been seconded to STL to provide day to day operational and technical on-site support to relevant staff. The operational advisor is a permanent staff of Action Against Hunger having wide range of experience in humanitarian sector. Various projects in response to Syria crisis are channelled through Action Against Hunger to STL and implemented by STL team on the ground. For instance: distribution of winterization kits through cash voucher system in Mardin province and mental health, psychosocial support, social cohesion and refugees’ integration into host community projects funded by Spanish donors (Navarra and Basque government).

Over 8 years of Syrian conflict, the Government of Turkey has shifted from an emergency assistance approach to one that seeks to assist in the medium and long term, including by establishing measures to support refugee integration into the local community and access job market. The Government of Turkey has formulated its Tenth Development Plan, which focuses on improving international competitiveness, migration management, and rule of law, human development, and environmental sustainability.

The Directorate of Migration Management (DGMG) focus to develop a harmonization policy to assist refugees and migrants with diverse statuses, while encouraging integration. At the same time, some municipalities are working to strengthen their local migration governance frameworks. To support harmonization between refugees, other groups of migrants and host communities, municipal centers are offering migrant and refugee services alongside NGOs, which in turn also organize incremental integration and social cohesion activities.

The refugee component addresses the protection and humanitarian assistance needs of refugees living in camps, settlements and local communities. The 3RP resilience component addresses primarily the resilience, stabilization and development needs of impacted and vulnerable communities and aims to strengthen the capacities of national actors to lead the crisis response.

The government of Turkey has announced a presidential action plan in December 2018. This plan has included refugee protection topics and encompassing the implementation of projects that will increase the public- civil society cooperation. [2]

In Turkey, over 64 percent of refugee households living outside of camps live below the poverty line. Refugees continue to face a number of specific challenges across the region, including limited livelihoods opportunities, poor command of the Turkish language, poverty, exhaustion of savings, discrimination, limited access to social services and the adoption of negative coping mechanisms, which further exacerbates the residual protection risks they face. Broader political and social pressures can also affect stability between displaced populations and host communities in countries across the region (3RP).

Given the current dynamics, it is projected that the registered Syrian refugee population in Turkey, will remain high throughout 2019, in line with current figures. This will mean that the primary burden for the situation will continue to fall primarily on host countries and communities who have generously opened their countries for many years now (Regional Strategic Overview 2019-2020).

Despite strong leadership by GoT, these large numbers put enormous strain on national systems and capacity to meet critical protection needs. Evidence suggests that a large number of Syrian children and youth are working illegally in different sectors, often under dangerous conditions.

Using the NEAR Localisation Performance Measurement Framework to Explore an Existing Partnership

Support to Life is a Turkish organisation committed to supporting communities affected by disasters and emergencies by partnering with humanitarian NGOs and donors. Since 2011, Action Against Hunger Spain has been working with Support to Life and recently started to explore how this partnership could be modelled and piloted as an example of localisation and partnership which could provide learning for the future. Action Against Hunger and Support to Life came together for a workshop to further explore and formalise this relationship. The purpose was to ensure a shared vision and mutual understanding of the value of being partners. The Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) Localisation Performance Measurement Framework (LPMF) was used to evaluate whether localisation commitments had been achieved. This tool shaped an action plan and to the development of a partnership-monitoring framework for the next two years. The NEAR LPMF tool also provided a framework to divide roles and responsibilities between the two respective organisations.
Almost five years of continuous conflict, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is the worst in the world. Eighty per cent of the entire population - 24 million people - require some form of humanitarian assistance and protection. This figure represents an increase of 2 million people or 10 per cent in just 12 months.

A total of 15.9 million people, over 50 per cent of the population, are severely food insecure, despite ongoing humanitarian food assistance. Yemen assessments also confirm the presence of catastrophic levels of hunger - around a quarter of a million people are living in famine-like conditions.

Conditions are worsening at a nearly unprecedented rate. In 2014, prior to the conflict, 14.7 million people required assistance. In 2015, this number increased to 15.9 million, in 2016 to 21.2 million and in 2018 to 22.2 million. In 2019, 24.4 million people need assistance to survive. The number of severely food-insecure districts has risen by 60 per cent in one year from 107 districts in 2018, to 190 in 2019. In the last 12 months, the number of people unable to predict when they will next eat has risen by 13 per cent and is expected to increase by 20 per cent or more, unless humanitarian operations are dramatically expanded in the early months of 2019.

More than 80 per cent of Yemenis now live below the poverty line, an increase of one-third since the conflict began. Public sector salaries are either irregularly paid or unpaid at all, disrupting incomes for more than a quarter of the population. In northern Yemen, at least 500,000 civil servants have received no salaries for nearly three years.

People are now at higher risk, and less able to cope, than at any stage of the conflict. Hence, the largest humanitarian operation in the world is in Yemen. During 2018, 48 international and 194 local partners have worked together to reach an average of eight million people each month with life-saving support. However, according to the UN estimates, humanitarian partners do not have regular access to 5.1 million Yemenis.

Action Against Hunger has been present in Yemen since 2012, implementing life-saving programmes in Nutrition, Health, WaSH and Food Security in the northern governorates of Hudaydah and Hajjah, as well as Aden, Abyan and Lah governorates in the south of the country. With almost 356 staff across three bases in Sana’a, Al Hudaydah and Aden, and two sub-bases in Hajjah and Al Khokha, the primary focus of Action Against Hunger in Yemen is to alleviate the suffering caused by malnutrition, both through treating it when it appears, as well as by treating its underlying causes.

In addition, Action Against Hunger remains at the forefront of humanitarian response in Yemen, including responding to cholera outbreaks and to the ongoing displacement crisis to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable communities in some of the worst affected areas in the country. Our programmatic locations cover 13 districts in the above-mentioned governorates. In 2018, we have reached 722,884 persons with our interventions across the country.

Humanitarian assistance plays an important role in alleviating the suffering of Yemeni civilians but on its own, it is not the solution for the Yemeni crisis. Only a political solution can end the suffering of the Yemeni people, thus today it is more urgent than ever for the world leaders to put Yemeni civilians first, before their foreign and aid policies.
Abdulqader Hussein was nine months old when his father brought him for the first time to the Al Alzuhra health facility in the Hodeidah governorate. The community health volunteers are normally responsible for screening, referral and follow up of malnutrition cases. In the case of Abdulqader Hussein, this model worked well, a health volunteer named Mohamadiyah measured his Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) during a health education session in Alkhushim village and referred him to a health facility.

Abdulqader’s situation is one of many experienced by Yemeni children since the outbreak of the war. His father Mohammed used to live in Hared district and work in security management as a guard. The family was forced to flee due to the intensification of hostilities and now they are registered as IDPs in Alkhushim, with no work available. Abdulqader has five siblings (two sisters and three brothers) and the whole family is depending on a small sum they collect as beggars.

When referred to the hospital, Abdulqader was suffering from cycles of untreated diarrhea. His MUAC measured only 10.5 cm indicating severe acute malnutrition. Abdulqader’s father said THE ONLY WAY HE COULD BRING HIS SON TO THE HEALTH FACILITY WAS BECAUSE THEIR SERVICES WERE FREE OF CHARGE AS OTHERWISE HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD IT.

On 9 October 2018, after taking all anthropometric measurements such as weight, height and MUAC, Abdulqader was admitted to the Outpatient Therapeutic Programme (OTP).

In the OTP Abdulqader received his routine treatment with ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) and his mother received advise of how to use RUTF at home. She was instructed to come back for check up on a weekly basis.

With the regular follow up visits to the health facility, Abdulqader’s health status improved gradually. In the meantime, Action Contre la Faim’s Health and Nutrition officer and community health volunteers regularly visited Abdulqader’s mother at home and provided advice on health and hygiene awareness.

During his fifth visit to the health facility, Abdulqader’s MUAC had improved to 12 cm. He was then discharged from OTP to Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme (TSFP) for further follow up.

Abdulqader’s mother expressed her deepest appreciation to the community health worker Mohamadiyah who spotted the child’s illness and explained the family about available treatment options.
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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.