

# COVID-19 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REPORT

## Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches

### Project Overview

This project distributed hygiene kits to 3800 families in response to Syria's economic situation and the COVID-19 pandemic and targeted poor, underserved, rural and urban areas of Aleppo, As-Sweida, Damascus, Daraa, Hama, Homs, Lattakia, and Tartous governorates with large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs). The content of the kits included the items shown in the table.

No.	Item	QTY
1	Dish Washing Liquid (800 g)	3
2	Clorox (1 Liter)	3
3	Liquid Soap (450 g)	3
4	Tissues	3
5	Laundry Detergent (4.5 kg)	1
6	Shower Gel (1 Liter)	1
7	Gel Cleaner and Sanitizer (1 liter)	1
8	Shampoo (600 ml)	1
9	Leaflet	1

The project also distributed 1300 high quality blankets (3.5 kg) to 650 vulnerable families in response to the harsh winter, dreadful conditions, fuel shortage and its soaring black market price.

FMEEC, through its network of local church and community-based partners, implemented the project on several levels, including family registration and beneficiary selection based on vulnerability and need. The project utilized vulnerability criteria to select beneficiaries and give priority to female-headed households, families with individuals with disabilities, and large families.

### Project Rationale

As the Syrian crisis has entered its ninth consecutive year, the needs of the people across Syria are never as overwhelming. Vulnerable populations in areas which experience cold

conditions during winter continued to need seasonal support. Also, these populations are suffering to cover their basic daily requirements, in light of the unprecedented rise in prices. Therefore, the purchase of prevention means against the coronavirus constitutes an additional burden that exacerbates their suffering.

The objective of this 2020 Syria winterization and hygiene response is to reduce the vulnerability of crisis-affected people, especially women and children, during the harsh winter season and protect them from contracting COVID-19.

FMEEC provided core relief items specific to winter and hygiene kits necessary to protect extremely vulnerable families from COVID-19.

No.	Hub Location	Governorate	Partner	No. of Hygiene Kits Distributed	No. of Blankets Distributed
1	Aleppo	Aleppo	Armenian Evangelical Church	225	200
2	Aleppo	Aleppo	National Evangelcial Church	200	
3	Yazidiya& Emaar Husn	Tartous (Rural)	National Evangelcial Church	100	
4	Rural Lattakia	Lattakia	CBO (Community-Based Org.)	200	165
5	Lattakia	Lattakia	National Evangelcial Churches	100	
6	Rural Hama (Masyaf)	Hama (Rural)	Local NGO	150	285
7	Mashta el helu	Tartous (Rural)	Greek Orthodox Church	300	100
8	Homs (Old HomS)	Homs	Church of Alliance	150	100
9	Homs (East HomS)	Homs	Greek Orthodox Church	400	100
10	Homs (North HomS)	Homs	Maronite (Center for Differently Abled Chidren)	100	
11	Wadi Nassara	Homs (Rural)	Greek Catholic Relief Center	300	
12	Tartous	Tartous	Greek Orthodox Church	275	
13	Tartous	Tartous	Syrian Orthodox Church	150	50
14	Damascus	Damascus& Rural Damasus	Greek Orthodox Church	500	
15	Damascus	Damascus	National Evangelcial Church	100	
16	As-Sweida	As-Sweida& Daraa	Greek Orthodox Church	400	300
17	Hafar	Homs (Rural)	National Evangelcial Church	100	
18	Banyas	Tartous	National Evangelical Church	50	
	<b>Total</b>			<b>3800</b>	<b>1300</b>

## Activities Summary

Activities included beneficiary needs assessment and identification; distribution of winterization items to vulnerable families in need; distribution of hygiene items to vulnerable families,; monitoring visits and/or calls to beneficiary households; and final report preparation and writing.

FMEEC partners selected the most vulnerable individuals as beneficiaries of the 2020 winterization and COVID-19 response, prioritizing female-headed families and families with members suffering from disabilities or chronic diseases.

### **1. What went well with the assistance we provided?**

- 3800 hygiene kits were distributed to extremely vulnerable families selected according to FMEEC vulnerability criteria in 9 Syrian governorates.
- 3800 families (Approx. 18000 individuals) had access to hygiene items which they could never afford due to the economic collapse and the weakened purchase power (An average monthly income for a public-sector employee is between 50000 to 65000 SYP equaling from 25 to 30 USD).
- 650 families had access to warmth in the extremely cold winter.
- Partners reported that the assistance helped reduced tensions among family members by freeing up limited resources to purchase other household essentials.
- Partners conveyed to FMEEC testimonials by the vast majority of beneficiary families describing the program as “remarkably successful,” specifically in terms of timely distribution of necessary items, high quality of items, effective method of implementation, and scrupulously fair selection of beneficiaries.
- Partners also noted that the hygiene assistance has certainly helped reduce tensions between host communities and IDPs, since both groups were targeted based on vulnerability.
- The church committees (and the strong presence of women on the committees) were a success, as they helped partners identify new families in need of assistance and with project decision-making.
- Partner hubs treated all beneficiary families with honesty and dignity resulting in increased trust between the partner staff, volunteers and beneficiaries.
- The hygiene basket contents were diverse and of good quality.
- Through personal connections, FMEEC staff were able to coordinate with other NGOs active on the ground to avoid duplication and shared information to reach marginalized families.
- No infections were recorded among FMEEC staff or beneficiary families because FMEEC staff followed the appropriate precautionary measures during the distribution process.
- COVID- 19 leaflets distributed helped raise awareness among beneficiaries and their families, who also applied better COVID-19 precautionary measures.

## **2. How did we involve the gifts and skills of the church?**

All of FMEEC's church and CBO partners have functioning project committees that include active congregants in addition to community members in the church vicinity to select beneficiaries and ensure actual participation. These committees consult with members of the congregation, ongoing beneficiaries, and even host community members on targeting. FMEEC encourages its partners to perform continuous reviews of the vulnerability of beneficiary and non-beneficiary families during projects implementation to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals are reached.

## **3. How was the church or congregation involved in the activities?**

Answered above

## **4. What did not go well? Were there obstacles? What would we do differently next time?**

- Partners agreed that the need for assistance is greater than what is available. As the priest and head of the project committee in Homs stated, "because there are more and more and harder cases...you feel that you are handcuffed...you want to help." The priest and head of the project committee in Tartous (a stable area throughout the war) stated that the number of individuals in need has increased due to the dire economic situation.
- Minor delays in the delivery of the baskets occurred due to challenges associated with Syria's dire economic situation, COVID 19 precautionary measures, the rise of daily confirmed cases and deaths of COVID-19 in Damascus and Aleppo governorates, circumstances out of the control of FMEEC.
- The closure of restaurants, cafes, and markets, and the suspension of many occupations, whether entirely or partially as part of the preventive procedures to contain the coronavirus, left hundreds of thousands of day workers jobless, many of whom are still so and have thus become caught in the poverty trap.
- The dramatic devaluation of the Syrian pound caused the Syrian markets to be in a state of chaos. Some importers, wholesalers and traders refrained from selling under the pretext of instability of the exchange rate while others closed their stores. This coupled

with the devaluation of the Syrian pound led to a dramatic increase in prices, forcing more and more families into poverty and thus dependence on assistance. The already vulnerable population of Syria now live in grinding poverty.

- Some non-beneficiaries complained about being excluded, feeling they were left out. These complaints were followed up, and FMEEC partners shared information with them and the communities on the vulnerability criteria adopted and on the vulnerabilities faced by the beneficiary families on the assistance list.
- Raw materials shortage affected the availability and prices of items.

## **5. How were the participants involved in project design and implementation?**

FMEEC hubs actively work towards involving the beneficiaries and ensuring they know that their participation and their feedback is important for the program to be successful. FMEEC staff encouraged beneficiaries, especially women, at partner locations to express their opinions and suggestions regarding the contents of hygiene baskets. They were encouraged to share if they had any complaints or feedback regarding the hygiene baskets or anyone from the partner distribution teams. (Note: Most of the volunteers are from beneficiary families themselves.) FMEEC staff conducted male and female focus group discussions, individual interviews, home visits, phone calls, and surveys to promote beneficiary participation and obtain feedback on the project. During the reporting period, no official complaints were registered.

FMEEC hubs regularly meet with beneficiary families in order to gather suggestions and feedback.

Hubs' committees conducted regular meetings to discuss updates, selecting new beneficiaries or excluding some families and replacing them with new eligible families. Notably, the role of women participating in committees has been redefined and become crucial.

Due to this project being an emergency response, beneficiary families' input on the project design was limited to their provision of information during the needs assessment phase and hygiene kit contents. Beneficiaries were involved in the monitoring process, and there have been occasions in which beneficiaries alerted the implementing partner to other families in need, who then join the waiting list to become beneficiaries as well. Home visits and phone calls ensure that feedback was received from families, allowing them to voice their experience of the project and make suggestions for improvements.

## 6. What did we learn about the community as a result of participant selection?

With a basic food basket cost of 23.5 times what it was before the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, most families are suffering to cover their basic daily requirements. For these families, buying subsidized essential commodities, such as bread, is a challenge by itself as people have to stand in crowded queues for long periods to save some money to meet other expenses.

Syrian employees who depend on other sources of income to patch their salaries (of 38 USD at best) and day-workers were both affected by the COVID-19 measures as many businesses had to shut down. Most daily wagers ended up being with no financial support.

More Syrian people are to face growing levels of poverty and food insecurity as the gap between expenses and income is still widening.

A very small proportion of IDPs have returned, but most others are still displaced because their homes have been heavily damaged. Food and hygiene prices, rent, and transportation costs, coupled with fuel shortages and high fuel prices in the winter, place huge burdens on IDP families.

The project was implemented in 18 hubs located in 8 Syrian governorates.

Homs	The fighting between opposition and government forces in Homs from 2011 to 2014 resulted in mass displacement. Some families were displaced to other governorates while others went to other parts of the city. Some IDPs have returned after their dwellings were rehabilitated. However, others remain displaced because their dwellings were heavily damaged. FMEEC targeted a high number of crisis-affected families, including IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable families in around 15 districts of the city.
Rural Hama	Conflict and insecurity that continued in northwestern Hama until late August 2019 placed severe strain on families living in Masyaf and surrounding villages located at the front-lines of the conflict. Many IDPs and host communities in Masyaf and its rural areas have experienced multiple layers of displacement. These areas received IDPs from northwest Hama and are expected to receive others from Idlib.

Aleppo	Aleppo, with a pre-crisis population .3 million, used to be the industrial center of Syria. By July 2012, fighting had reached Aleppo and it became one of the main battlegrounds in the conflict. Conflict-induced displacement, high violence, a lack of services, and poor economic conditions resulting from the repercussions of the conflict and sanctions make life extremely hard in Aleppo.
Tartous	FMEEC targeted vulnerable host communities and IDPs whose homes were destroyed and cannot be rehabilitated in Aleppo, Homs, and Idlib. Tartous received significant numbers of IDPs at the beginning of the war since it has always been a relatively safe location.
Lattakia	FMEEC targeted underdeveloped villages (in southeast rural Lattakia) whose families had been poor before the conflict and have become now much poorer and suffering from hunger. The area is also host to thousands of IDPs from surrounding areas that have been battlefields for years throughout the Syrian conflict.
As-Sweida; Daraa	<p>Located at the front-lines of the conflict, As-Sweida remained insecure almost all throughout the conflict and was a target of recurrent attacks by ISIS. As-Sweida is still rather insecure due to friction between the different population groups with high kidnapping and assassination rates. As-Sweida has also received large numbers of IDPs from neighboring Dara'a and other hotspot areas. Daraa hosts a large IDP population.</p> <p>The people of As-Sweida and Daraa are suffering to cover their basic daily requirements, in light of the unprecedented rise in prices. Therefore, the purchase of prevention means against the coronavirus constitutes an additional burden that exacerbates their suffering. FMEEC's local partner is serving three camps in both areas of southern Syria.</p>
Damascus; Damascus Suburb	<p>Scarce job opportunities, the devaluation of the Syrian pound, increased fuel sanctions, and a stagnant economy are the main triggers of vulnerability in Damascus and Damascus Suburb. IDPs from Basatin Al Razi and Darayya have been displaced for years and are still only returning to their areas of origin in small numbers. FMEEC's partner targeted Darayya IDPs in Suhnaya.</p> <p>Some people are returning to Arbin and Harasta but lack of basic</p>

	resources. Mezzeh Jabal, Jaramana, Al Zahera, Madamiyet Elsham and Dweilaa are poor areas that host many IDPs.
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**7. Roughly, how many percent of the identified participants were church members?**

38%

**8. How did we work in conjunction with community groups, civil society or government?**

FMEEC staff coordinated with other NGOs and key stakeholders throughout the project through personal relations and networking. FMEEC’s partners also collaborated with each other and other humanitarian actors at the local level.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East (GOPA) mainly supported psychosocial and child support programs, although it distributed hygiene kits once to a number to families affected by the COVID-19 lockdown registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs in certain areas.

- In Safita, the Orthodox Church distributed hygiene items to certain families at Easter. FMEEC’s local church partner coordinated with the Orthodox Church and local municipality to avoid duplication.
- In Mashta el Helu, Al Bustan Association distributed a small amount of cash to widows and female-headed families but not regularly. The Greek Orthodox Church in Mashta el Helu also distributed hygiene baskets to 80 vulnerable families at Easter.
- In As-Sweida, the head of FMEEC’s local church partner closely coordinated with the only other church in the area.
- In Masyaf, FMEEC’s local church partner coordinated closely with another church providing assistance in the area (that is not supported by this project) to prevent the duplication of assistance
- In Damascus, FMEEC’s local church partner coordinated with other churches in the project areas to avoid duplication.



FMEEC's project manager, coordinators, and other team members coordinated with church partners very frequently—sometimes on a daily basis—through calls or monitoring visits, while the partners are also in contact with each other.

#### **10. How did we help the church and/or the community become better prepared and more resilient to future disasters? What did we learn? What more could be done?**

- Over time, the FMEEC team has grown in professional capacity. The team was able to effectively target beneficiaries based on need and vulnerability during the project. Representatives from the partner hubs have traveled to Lebanon in October 2019 and March 2020 for general capacity building and gender trainings and psychosocial support debrief sessions, which also provided a forum to coordinate and share ideas and lessons learned with each other.
- It is always important to assess the relevance and success of the project by obtaining feedback from beneficiaries and other stakeholders on whether needs are being met and the project is being implemented at a level of high quality.
- While the overall security situation in Syria has relatively stabilized, Syria's economy is ailing. The spread COVID-19 and Caesar Act sanctions, amid crippling shortages and soaring prices, are plunging ordinary Syrians into a deep and lethal quagmire.
- A key lesson learned was that while the project did succeed in reducing the vulnerability of conflict-affected Syrians, it did not meet all the needs of beneficiary households due to a combination of harsh conditions, the dire shortages, and prohibitive prices.

#### **9. A Story of a Family Served by this Program**

Mahmoud Hammoud, his wife Sukaina Ali Al Aqrab and their children were displaced from the city of Al Raqqa when their home was destroyed by ISIS in 2014. Mahmoud and Sukaina headed for Homs.

Upon arrival, the family rented a small but decent apartment in Al Arman neighborhood. Mahmoud found a low-paid job with a salary that was barely enough to provide for his family. Knowing that the situation in the city of Raqqa improved, Mahmoud went there in 2017 to inspect the damage of his home but disappeared without any trace, leaving the family without a provider.

Sukaina was left with seven children: Ziad in grade three, Maysa and Mohammad twins in grade two, Yousra in grade one, Dima 5, Hadeel 3, and Afifa one and a half years old. Sukaina, also, had to take care of her disabled mother-in-law and of Sidra 16, the daughter of her co-wife who disappeared in mysterious circumstances.

Unable to find work because there was no one to take care of the kids, Sukaina moved with her dependents into an unfurnished place. The dwelling was small and lacked basic necessities. In the first few months, Sukaina used up the savings she had. They family then endured dreadful hardship, living off the help of Sukaina's brother-in-law for rent and of neighbors who occasionally sent food or leftovers to the elderly woman and kids.

Father Serjius of the Greek Orthodox Church in Homs, FMEEC partner, knew about Sukaina. He with the relief committee paid the family a visit. The church started providing the family with a monthly food basket with milk in early 2019. With the beginning of 2020, the family received a winterization assistance from the church committee, and after the outbreak of COVID-19, it received a valuable basket of necessary hygiene items to help it get by through the outbreak.

FMEEC and its local partner, the Greek Orthodox Church in Homs, are very grateful to the donors for their fund-raising efforts that enabled FMEEC and its partners to address the dire need for the COVID 19 hygiene basket at this difficult time of the Syrian crisis.



## Emergency Income and Expenses

<b>Income Breakdown:</b>					
Global Ministries (UCC & Disciples)		\$41,870			
Episcopal Relief & Development		\$11,930			
Untied Church of Sweden		\$42,893			
CAM		\$24,990			
PCUSA		\$9,969			
Westminister Presbyterain Church		\$4,980			
<b>Funds Receiveds (After Deducting Transfer Fees)</b>		<b>\$136,632</b>			
<b>Funds After Withdrawal Fees</b>		<b>\$136,222</b>			
<b>Budget Line</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b># of Units</b>	<b># of Months</b>	<b>Cost Per Unit USD</b>	<b>Total Cost USD</b>
1	Direct Hygiene Program Activities				
	Hygiene kits (including boxing and transport)	3800	1	USD 25.00	USD 95,000.00
	Direct Program Activities (Hygiene Kits)				USD 95,000.00
2	Direct Winterization Program Activities NFI				
	Blankets	1300	1	USD 23.00	USD 29,900.00
	Transportation of Goods	1	1	USD 650.00	USD 650.00
	Direct Program Activities (Blankets)				USD 30,550.00
3	FMEEC and Hubs (Personnel)				
	Rent and Utilities	1	2	USD 200.00	USD 400.00
	Transport & Communications	1	2	USD 300.00	USD 600.00
	Volunteers	16	1	USD 175.00	USD 2,800.00
	Distribution Hubs Resource Transportation	16	1	USD 85.00	USD 1,360.00
	Project Manager	1	3	USD 400.00	USD 1,200.00
	Project Accounting	1	2	USD 250.00	USD 500.00
	Sub Total Personnel				USD 6,860.00
4	Admin Fees				
	Admin Fees				USD 3,828.00
	Sub Total Admin Fees				USD 3,828.00
<b>Total</b>					<b>136238</b>

FMEEC encourages that targeting of emergency response services prioritize individual participants who meet multiple criteria, i.e., an individual has more than one vulnerability characteristic. (Pls check Annex below).

We are deeply grateful for our partners, including your good selves, for your continued support for vulnerable Syrians who continue to live under most adverse circumstances! God bless you and your ministry in His name!

Sincerely,

Rosangela Jarjour  
 FMEEC General Secretary  
 Lebanon 17/9/2020

*Report: Annex: Participant Registration*

1. *Who* was involved in the identification and selection of individual participants?  
*Local Committees*
2. *How* did you ensure that you identified individuals from diverse religious backgrounds?  
*Committees are instructed to select beneficiaries based on vulnerability, regardless of religious backgrounds.*
3. **Criteria** for Participant Selection

**1. Priority Criteria**

- Female-headed households/husband was killed, is missing or absent*
- Family has member with disability or elderly members (aged 60 or above)*
- Family member has chronic illness that requires ongoing medication*
- Child-headed households (under the age of 18)*

**2. Secondary Criteria**

- Not receiving regular support from other NGOs*
- Displaced more than once*
- Families with over 7 members*

*Livelihood:*

- Family has no savings*
- Family has taken on debt to meet basic needs and/or sold productive assets*
- Family has no regular source of income*
- Only one family member is working on a regular basis*
- 2 family members or less are working on an irregular basis*

*Shelter:*

- Living in a tent*
- Living in an unfinished building or any form of inadequate shelter*
- Living with 1 other family or more*
- Paying rent equivalent to 75% (or higher) of their approximate income*

*Health:*

- Family member has serious medical condition that requires ongoing medication or an expensive procedure*
- Member(s) of the family is(are) pregnant*

*Education:*

- Children are not in school*