

Food security remains poor despite the harvest

Key points:



Most households in Torit are selling their productive assets, consuming inadequate food and resorting to other negative coping strategies.



Households in Yambio have poor food security and are frequently spending their savings to purchase food, as insecurity has prevented farmers from growing crops.



Overall, negative coping strategies are more prevalent in urban areas, where almost 80 percent of households reported moderate or high levels of negative coping.



In Greater Equatoria, households are worried about rising food prices and the outbreak of the fall armyworm. They are skipping meals or going for entire days without food to cope.



WFP/Sabine Starke

Situation update

Conflict continues in South Sudan, intensifying population displacement and food insecurity. There are currently 1.9 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries (source: [OCHA, August 2017](#)).

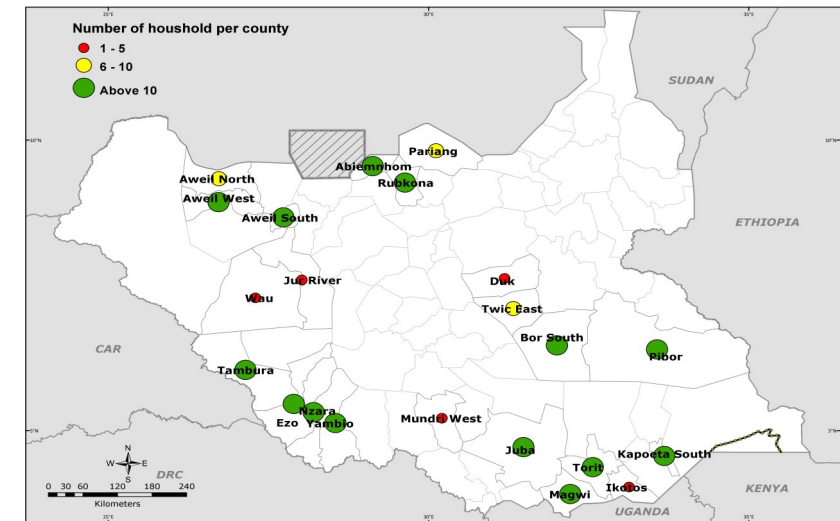
The impacts of insecurity are compounded by economic decline and inflation, which are undermining household purchasing power. Despite the arrival of the first harvest season for sorghum, maize and ground nuts within the green belt across Greater Equatoria, food prices remain high because late rains, insecurity and the fall army worm have hampered agriculture production.

Methodology

mVAM conducted its second round of household-level food security monitoring in South Sudan through live call interviews. Data collection started in late August 2017 and continued for three weeks. WFP's in-house call centre collected data from a random sample of 247 households in 22 counties. Calls covered all mobile phone operators. The surveys were conducted in English, Arabic, and other local languages including Nuer and Dinka. Participants were selected from a database of household phone numbers collected by WFP. Given network constraints, a snowball sampling approach was used to reach a larger sample size, with households recruiting other households to participate.

Respondents were asked questions on their households' food consumption, negative coping behaviours, hunger scale and demographic information as well as an open-ended question on food security in their community. Responses are likely to be biased toward better-off households living in urban areas where there is adequate mobile phone coverage and better access to electricity and phone-charging services. Conflict and insecurity have made some areas inaccessible by telephone. This introduces an element of bias in the survey that we account for when interpreting the data. This bulletin reports indicative patterns and trends rather than precise estimates.

Map 1: Number of surveyed households by county, September 2017



Source: mVAM, September 2017



Poor food security among households in Torit, Juba and Yambio

Data indicate that households living in the counties of Torit, Juba-Munuki, Bor South and Yambio have a high prevalence of inadequate food consumption: over 50 percent of households reported poor or borderline consumption. Except in Bor South, the same households were resorting frequently to negative coping strategies to meet their basic food needs.

Overall, surveyed households are mostly relying on starches and vegetables to meet their daily food needs. Proteins and pulses were consumed once or twice a week by 60 percent of households, but more than 75 percent reported consuming no fruit or dairy products at all.

Around 96 percent of respondents said they had used at least one food-based coping strategy in the seven days before the survey. The coping strategies most frequently used by 86 percent of households are eating less preferred food and reducing the number of meals eaten in a day.

Respondents were also asked whether they had resorted to using their assets and/or savings to feed their household over the previous 30 days. Around 36 percent had sold productive assets (animals, seed, land, etc.) and 24 percent had spent savings to cope with a lack of food or money to buy food.



Negative coping strategies more prevalent in urban areas

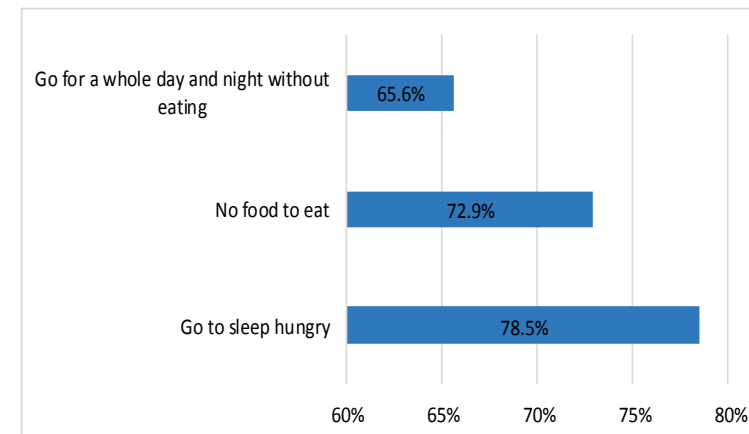
Households in urban and rural settings appear to have similar levels of food consumption. However, negative coping was more prevalent in urban areas, where almost 80 percent of households reported moderate or high levels of coping compared with 54 percent in rural areas. This is probably associated with households having better access to own production in rural areas, especially during the harvest season.

Households led by women seem to have a higher prevalence of negative coping than those led by men, yet both reported similar levels of food consumption.

Over 70 percent of respondents living in Kapoeta South, Pibor, Bor South and Juba reported moderate or severe hunger. All displaced respondents said that hunger was moderate or severe in their households.

More than 70 percent of all households said that they had no food to eat and went to sleep hungry at least once during the 30 days preceding the survey (see Figure 1). Forty percent of households went to sleep hungry between three and ten times in this period, and 36 percent had no food to eat between three and ten times.

Fig. 1: Share of surveyed households who had no food to eat, went to sleep hungry or went a whole day without eating, September 2017



Source: Source: mVAM, September 2017

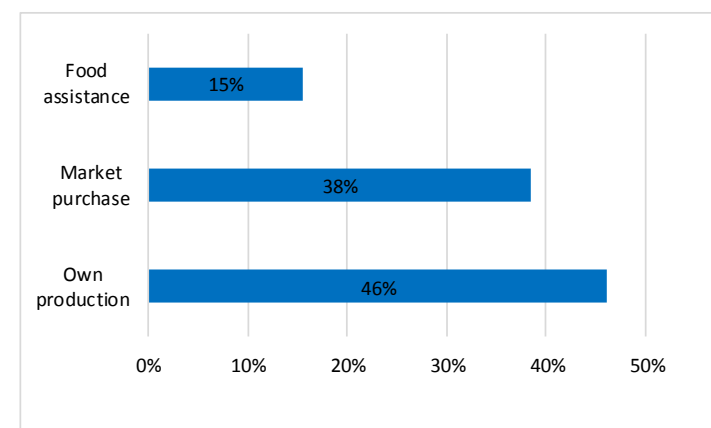


Income levels fall for most households compared to last year

Households had spent an average 70 percent of their total expenditure on food in the previous month – leaving them with little to spend on other basic needs. Almost 70 percent of households reported a drop in income compared with 2016. Respondents said that their main income sources derive from agricultural production or the sale of animal products, followed by regular wages and temporary employment.

The majority of surveyed households reported accessing food through their own production, followed by market purchase and food assistance (see Figure 2).

Fig. 2: Main sources of food, September 2017



Source: Source: mVAM, September 2017



Households worried about rising food prices and low crop production

At the end of the survey, households were asked to report on the main food security problems in their community. Households were concerned about the high cost of food in the market. In Western Equatoria, food was reportedly available thanks to the harvest season; however, it is inaccessible to non-agricultural households because prices are soaring. Several households, particularly in Yambio and Ezo counties, mentioned that the harvest was poor because of late rains and increased insecurity, which has prevented farmers from accessing their lands. In Magwi, households were concerned about food security because of poor rains and the outbreak of fall armyworm that has eaten produce.

Fig. 3: Word cloud



In the words of the respondents

- "The situation is difficult as most of the people rely on the market and the prices are too high for many to afford. Many people often sleep hungry" – Male respondent from Juba county
- "Many people are suffering because food commodities are very expensive. Also many people are unable to access their farms due to insecurity" – Female respondent from Yambio county
- "Food is now available unlike some months ago however the market prices are too expensive for people to afford especially for those who did not cultivate" – Male respondent from Ezo county

Source: mVAM, September 2017



For further information

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mVAM Resources:

Website: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/

Blog: mvam.org

Toolkit: <http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM>



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