Key points:

- Inadequate food consumption is on the rise in Khanaqin district in Diyala governorate.
- More households resorted to negative coping strategies in December, especially returnees.
- Household purchasing power in Mosul improved in December as falling food prices coincided with a rise in unskilled labour wages.

Situation Update

On 9 December, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the complete liberation of Iraq from extremist groups, including areas near the Iraqi-Syrian border. The official end of the conflict brings to the fore priorities such as holding general elections, which are scheduled on 12 May 2018, and the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of displaced families to their homes.

In a press release published on 13 December, IOM announced that more than 2.84 million displaced Iraqis have returned to their areas of origin, mostly to Anbar and Ninewa governorates. However, more than 2.78 million people remain displaced, and hundreds of thousands are living in camps and improvised shelters. While IOM findings indicate that 90 percent of displaced Iraqis are determined to return home, displaced people report an ongoing lack of security as the main obstacle to returning to their places of origin, whether because of continuing conflict, or the presence of unexploded ordinances, landmines and militias. Concerns over economic security also persist, with 80 percent of displaced people and 63 percent of returnees citing access to employment as one of their top needs.

Source: WFP, OCHA and IOM
In December, mVAM interviewed IDPs, returnees and resident households affected by the conflict in selected districts of Ninewa (Telafar, Sinjar, Mosul and Makhmur) and Diyala (Khanaqin).

The results show a deterioration in the food consumption of surveyed households in Diyala, where 32.7 percent were found to have poor or borderline food consumption compared with just 6.3 percent in November. The share of households with inadequate food consumption in Diyala currently exceeds that in Ninewa governorate (25.4 percent) (Figure 1).

Levels of inadequate food consumption in districts of Ninewa remained similar to November. Only Mosul showed a slight increase in poor consumption from 4 percent in November to 7 percent in December (Figure 2).

Similarly, no significant changes were seen between November and December in the food consumption of displaced, resident and returnee households in Ninewa.
Surveyed households were asked if there were times in the seven days before the survey when they did not have enough food or money to buy food. The percentage of households who reported using food-related coping strategies rose in both Diyala and Ninewa in December (Figure 3). The share of households relying on food-related coping strategies increased in all surveyed districts of Ninewa compared with November and continues to be the highest in Telafar (35 percent) followed by Mosul (32 percent) (Figure 4).

In Ninewa, the use of negative coping behaviours increased after a month of decline among IDP, resident and returnee households. The increase was particularly significant for IDPs and returnees (Figure 5).
In December, household access to the public distribution system (PDS) was similar in the two surveyed governorates. The worst access was in Diyala, where 80 percent of households said they had not received rations in December compared with 63 percent in November.

In Ninewa, around 70 percent of all surveyed households did not receive PDS in December. PDS access has improved in Ninewa among IDPs, residents and returnees, with fewer households reporting that they did not receive rations in December compared with November. Significantly more displaced households reported receiving full or partial rations in December (Figure 7).
In December, all monitored foods continued to be cheaper in Mosul than in the rest of Ninewa (Figure 8), making the food basket 13 percent cheaper in the city. In particular, wheat flour was 26 percent cheaper in Mosul than elsewhere in the governorate.

In Mosul, the prices of all surveyed foods fell in December except for rice, which became 5 percent more expensive. At the same time, the price of unskilled labour rose by 10 percent (Figure 9). Inside the city, food prices are generally behaving similarly in the east and the west (Figure 10) although meat is still 18 percent cheaper and fresh milk 14 percent cheaper in the west. Overall, the food basket is cheaper in eastern Mosul (IDQ711) than in western Mosul (IQD730) and cheaper than in the rest of Ninewa (IQD829).

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1 The minimum food basket monitored by WFP contains five foods: wheat flour, sugar, rice, vegetable oil and onions. The quantities are adjusted against the survival caloric intake needs.
Purchasing power improves in Mosul

In December, unskilled labour wages were an average 23 percent lower in Mosul than in the rest of Ninewa. They were 36 percent lower in western Mosul than in eastern Mosul. A 10 percent rise in unskilled labourer wages in Mosul and a simultaneous drop in the prices of main foods translated into better household purchasing power in December. An unskilled labourer’s daily wage could buy almost the same number of food baskets in Mosul (20) as in rest of the governorate (22.5). However, an unskilled labourer could buy 22 food baskets in eastern Mosul and almost 16 in western Mosul because of lower unskilled labour wages in the latter part of the city (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Wage-to-food terms of trade (in food baskets) in Mosul and in Ninewa governorate, December 2017

![Bar chart showing wage-to-food terms of trade in Mosul and Ninewa governorate]
Food availability improved

Food availability improved in December in both western and eastern Mosul. All main foods were available or widely available in all surveyed locations in the city.

Table 1. Commodity availability analysis – Mosul district, December 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Al Qayyara</th>
<th>AI Shirah</th>
<th>Hay Al Wara</th>
<th>Hay Al Aminah</th>
<th>Hay Al Assa</th>
<th>Hay Al Azhar</th>
<th>Hay Al Zabah</th>
<th>Hay Al Meraq</th>
<th>Hay Al Aithnah</th>
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Source: mVAM, IMST December 2017

Methodology – mVAM remote data collection

In December 2017, mVAM conducted household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews. Data were collected from 891 respondents via Korek, a major mobile network operator, between 11 and 31 December. WFP monitored respondents living in several locations in the governorates of Ninewa and Diyala. Respondents were drawn from Korek’s database. The data were weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household.

In addition, in collaboration with Islamic Relief Worldwide, key informant interviews were conducted, covering 12 locations in eastern Mosul and 7 locations in western Mosul.

For further information:

Sally Haydock       sally.haydock@wfp.org
Arif Husain         arif.husain@wfp.org
Hazem Almahdy       hazem.almahdy@wfp.org
Asif Niazi          asif.niazi@wfp.org

mVAM Resources:
Website: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/
Blog: mvam.org
Toolkit: http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM