 RETURNEE FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD ASSESSMENT

Assessment conducted by WFP in partnership with UNHCR and MIDIMAR in Musanze and Karongi districts. Data collection took place in September 2012.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS........................................................................................................... 1
LIST OF FIGURES................................................................................................................. 1
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................... 2
SUMMARY ............................................................................................................................. 3
1 INTRODUCTION................................................................................................................ 4
2 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND KEY QUESTIONS ..................................................... 5
3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY .............................................................................. 6
  3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS .................................................. 6
  3.2 PARTNERSHIPS ......................................................................................................... 7
  3.3 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE .................................................................................. 7
  3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING APPROACH ............................................. 7
  3.5 LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS FACED .......................................................... 8
4 ASSESSMENT FINDINGS ................................................................................................. 9
  4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS .................... 9
  4.2 RETURNEE FOOD SECURITY STATUS ..................................................................... 10
  4.3 LIVELIHOODS OF RETURNEES .............................................................................. 13
  4.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE WFP FOOD ASSISTANCE ........................................ 16
  4.5 NEEDS OF RETURNEES IN TERM OF LIVELIHOOD AND FOOD SECURITY ........ 18
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............................................................... 21
6 ANNEXES ......................................................................................................................... 22

## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Location of refugee and transit camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conceptual framework for food security assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>% of household members who fled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>% of household members who returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Food consumption groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Number of days in a week each group of food is consumed by household food consumption groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Food sources for returnees who stayed less than three months (left), between 3 to 6 months (right)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coping strategies in number of days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Returnee’s livelihoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Returnee’s livelihoods based on the time they stayed in Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Livelihood activities compared to food consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Proportion of returnees who recovered their land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Means of transport of food received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The use of food aid received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Proposed time for food assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFSVA: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSI: Coping Strategy Index</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCG: Food Consumption Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCS: Food Consumption Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNSMS: Food and Nutrition Security Monitoring System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FS: Food Security</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha: Hectare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDIMAR: Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR: United Nations High Commission of Refugees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP: World Food Programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
When the Rwandan refugees return to Rwanda they go through transit centres where they receive food and non-food items from WFP and UNHCR. Currently the food ration they receive is designed to last them for three months, but according to UNHCR monitoring reports, returnees declare that the food distributed to them is not enough to ensure a smooth transition between the time of return and their integration into local communities.

The purpose of this assessment was to verify this information, to look into what the main needs of the returnees are in terms of food security and livelihoods, what the effect is of the 3 months food ration provided to them at the transit centers, whether or not this ration should indeed be extended and – if so - if food aid is the best modality or if other options such as cash or vouchers should be considered.

The survey covered Musanze and Karongi districts, chosen because they had a relatively higher number of returnees according to data provided by UNHCR. Data was collected through a household questionnaire administered to 100 returnees in each district selected with the help of local authorities, as well as 2 focus group discussions and 1 key informant interview in each district.

The assessment shows that 65% of the surveyed returnee households were food insecure. This percentage is very high compared to the average of the country which was of 21% in March/April of the same year. Daily labor is the main livelihood most of households rely on (60%) followed by agriculture (28%). The rest rely on aid or gifts, petty trade, livestock, fishing or gathering and monthly salary or pension. Very few of them rely on begging and tontines.

Except those relying on agriculture and petty trade who showed a better situation compared to others, the food security situation was comparable for all livelihoods. This is probably due to the fact that within 6 months from return, livelihoods cannot develop to a point that the returnees show socio-economic differences across livelihood profiles.

All returnees who participated in the assessment reported that the three months food ration did not last them long enough to bridge the gap until they could start producing / working for their own food and complete their integration process within the local society.

Because they had returned since a short time (maximum 6 months in the sample), returnees felt they were not trusted much by their neighbors and this restricted their livelihood opportunities. For example they would not be even given animals to manage and very few of them would have access to loans or credits from the market. Providers (mainly neighbors and traders) would only extend credit to them if they had some assurance that the returnees would be able to reimburse. Returnees also reported a limited access to land and 51% of them stated that they did not recover their household assets (including land) that they had before leaving the country.

In order to have time to address all these challenges, many returnees suggested a 6 months food ration. According to the returnees it would allow them to bridge the gap until they could be able to access their own food. They also declared that non-food assistance received from UNHCR played a big role in their move to Rwanda as it prevented them to sell food to buy basic household items.

This assessment found that most returnees were open to receiving cash and/or vouchers to satisfy their food needs. However, means of disbursing the cash and/or voucher between food provider (WFP), returnees and traders need to be thought through thoroughly as returnees are not used to cash transfers. Many returnees did not have a bank account, very few of them had a mobile phone and none of them had ever made or benefitted of a mobile cash transfer.

1 CFSVA and Nutrition Survey 2012
2 because of the delays in receiving the ID card which is required in registering a bank account,
1 INTRODUCTION

During the 1994 genocide, millions of Rwandans fled the country. According to UNHCR-Rwanda statistics from 1994 to July 2011, more than 3,336,000 Rwandan refugees returned to Rwanda through an organized voluntary repatriation programme with the assistance and support of the international community. Once back, the returnees are reported to be generally resettled in their areas of origin. Three transit centres have been established to receive returnees before they are transported to their respective destinations and helped to reintegrate the society.

Figure 1: Location of refugee and transit camps

At the transit centres, initial assistance to the returnees is provided by UNHCR and WFP; when they arrive at the transit centres, returnees receive food from WFP for three months and some household items such as blankets, carpets, plastic sheeting, plates, cooking pot and spoons from UNHCR. After that, the support to the returnees is taken over by the Rwandan government under the framework of the government’s Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). Local authorities assist returnees in following issues since they arrive:

- Returnees benefit from different government programs such as one cow per household (Girinka), provision of seeds the ubudehe scheme.
- Those returnees from households in ubudehe classes 1 and 2 are exonerated from paying the community health insurance (mutuelle de santé)
- Local authorities assist returnees in recovering their land
- Local authorities provide ID cards which help returnees in accessing other services
- When there are work opportunities such as construction, road rehabilitation, and other GoR activities that involve community workers, returnees and other poor people are contacted first.
The cessation clause for Rwandan refugees was declared by UNHCR on 30 June 2013. In an effort to ensure sustained return and reintegration opportunities through coordinated efforts, the GoR under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs (MIDIMAR), the United Nations in Rwanda and other government ministries and international partners, developed a three year (January 2012 – December 2014) joint programme entitled “Return and Reintegration of Rwandan refugees” to address the specific needs of Rwandan returnees in the areas of return.

Since 2009, UNHCR is implementing protection monitoring activities in the areas of return by conducting periodic monitoring missions to different field locations. The main purpose of the monitoring is to confirm that the returnees have returned in conditions of safety and dignity and to identify the gaps in order to address them through a sustainable reintegration in the areas of return. According to reports from this monitoring system, the food package of three months is not enough to ensure a smooth transition between the time of return and the integration into local communities. In order to fill this gap, the 2012 – 2014 joint “Return and Reintegration of Rwandan refugees” programme mentions that WFP will provide additional ration of 3 months to all the returnees at the transit centres. With this additional ration returnees would be entitled to cumulative 6 months food ration delivered at the transit centres.

2 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND KEY QUESTIONS

This “Returnee Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment” focused on returnees who had returned to Rwanda a maximum of six months prior to the assessment.

The purpose of this assessment was to look into what the main needs of the returnees are in terms of food security and livelihoods, what the effect is of the 3 months food ration provided to them at the transit centers, and whether or not this ration should indeed be extended and – if so - if food aid is the best modality or if other options such as cash or vouchers should be considered.

The key questions of the assessment are:

1. What is the food security status of the returnees?
2. What are the main livelihoods returnees rely on and what challenges do they face in rebuilding them?
3. How is the food ration distributed by WFP used by returnees and does it address their needs?
4. What are the needs of returnees in terms of livelihoods and food security and how can they best be addressed?

This report is limited to the description of the state of livelihoods and food security returnees and follows the logic of the Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework to identify determinants of food insecurity. After analyzing the state livelihoods and food security situations, recommendations are provided for improving food security of returnees during the first months of their return.
3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS

The RFSLA analysis is based on the Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework that oriented the selection of indicators for analysis, and the design of field assessment instruments.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security is divided into three components: food availability, food access and food utilization.

Food availability is the quantity of food that is physically present in a country or area through all forms of domestic production, commercial imports and food aid.

Food access represents the households’ ability to regularly acquire adequate amounts of food through a combination of their own stock and home production, purchases, barter, gifts, borrowing or food aid.

Food utilization refers to: a) households’ use of the food to which they have access, b) intra-household food distribution, and c) individuals’ ability to absorb nutrients – the conversion efficiency of food by the body.

Livelihoods are the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live. The resources can consist of individual skills and abilities (human capital), land, savings, and equipment (natural, financial and physical capital, respectively) and formal support groups or informal networks that assist in the activities being undertaken (social capital). Livelihood strategies are activities and choices that people make, using their asset base, in order to achieve the most optimal livelihood outcomes. Such livelihood outcomes may include food security, general well-being, ensuring schooling for children, or being able to afford or access health services. A livelihood group is composed of people who utilize similar livelihood strategies.

Coping strategies are the ways a community, household, or individual adjusts their livelihood strategies in response to a shock or risk. This does not describe a regular situation but a response to a shortfall of food that can

![Conceptual framework for food security assessment](image-url)
be described as a shock. These coping strategies can be short-term alterations of consumption patterns or one-off responses such as asset sales. Long-term alterations of income earning or food production patterns might also be a response to a shortfall of food, but will not be included in the term “coping strategy” in this report.

Coping strategies may involve short-term changes in behavior, such as switching diets, consuming less expensive foods, or borrowing money. When normal coping and response strategies are exhausted, households will use negative crisis strategies, such as selling productive assets (e.g. female livestock). Repeated shocks and the use of crisis strategies to manage their effects can lead to increased vulnerability and a decrease in food security at the individual and household levels.

3.2 PARTNERSHIPS

The survey was conducted by WFP in close partnership with MIDIMAR and UNHCR.

3.3 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The survey covered two districts of Rwanda: Musanze (Northern Province) and Karongi (Western Province). These districts were selected because they had a relatively higher number of returnees according to returnee monitoring data provided by UNHCR and MIDIMAR (see Annex 1). In addition they were chosen to be relatively different from each other geographically.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING APPROACH

The survey combined secondary data review with qualitative and quantitative primary data collection. In each district, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted. One included both male and female and another with women only. Each group included between six and eight returnees. In addition to that, one key informant interview was conducted with local leaders in each district. The Focus group discussions enabled to collect qualitative data about how the received three months food ration was used by returnees, what issues the returnees faced in terms of livelihoods and food security and to look into what they perceived as being their needs in these areas as well as the best ways to address those needs (including by exploring the option of giving cash and/or food and modalities thereof).

In addition, to quantify the information from the focus group discussions, a household questionnaire was administered to a sample of 200 returnee households. Before the starting of the survey, 100 returnee households to participate in the assessment in each of the two districts were selected randomly from the lists provided by UNHCR. After realizing that most of returnees’ names on the lists were not known in their villages (see section 3.5), those who participated in the assessment were selected in the field with the help of local authorities. (the full questionnaire and Focus group discussion checklist are presented in Annex 2).

The questionnaire for the quantitative data collection was administered by six enumerators, three per district. One WFP staff supervised data collection, conducted qualitative focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Quantitative data collection was done using PDAs. Field data collection took 6 days in total between the 3rd and the 8th September 2012.

The questionnaire collected household data about household:

- Demographics
- Access to land, loans, participation in associations, etc
- Assets, livelihoods
- Food security, coping strategies, expenditures
- Received assistance from the government, NGOs, other organizations, friends and relatives
3.5 LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS FACED

Before data collection, UNHCR provided the lists of returnees from Karongi and Musanze district who had returned between January and July 2012. However, those lists were based on returnee reporting in the transit centres and in many instances were not accurate. For example returnees often reported names of sectors and cells from before the administrative reform of 2006, and many village names had changed. One WFP staff went to the 2 selected districts for 4 days with the lists to update the reported locations according to the new administrative names.

Even with up-to-date location names, the main challenge met in the field was to find the returnees on the list provided by UNHCR. In the two selected districts 92% of returnees that were selected from that list were not known by local authorities. When enumerators went to sector offices to check if they could have accurate lists, local authorities informed them that they faced the same problem using the MIDIMAR lists. According to local authorities and returnees met during data collection, some returnees declared fake names in order to collect food and other items provided when they arrived in the country and then return to the DRC. According to key informants, in most cases, these people are not originally from the areas they declared crossing the border.

Following advice from district authorities, the original lists were dropped and returnees were identified in the field with the help of cell and village authorities. Because of this as well as the fact that these households were selected in only two districts of Rwanda, the 200 interviewed returnee households cannot be considered to be representative of 7,256 returnees from the all 30 districts of Rwanda registered from January to July 2012. The findings from this assessment should therefore be considered largely as indicative.

As households of returnees were scattered in different villages of the sectors, reaching them took a long time for enumerators. Enumerators had to walk long distances from one village or cell to another to find returnees.
Although data were collected in two districts chosen to be relatively different from each other, results were not very different between districts. Similarly no big differences in food security and livelihoods could be evidenced between returnees who had returned since less than three months and those who had been in Rwanda between 3 and 6 months, suggesting that overall the situation is the same for most returnees who have returned since less than 6 months regardless of the areas they returned to.

### 4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS

Out of the 200 households of returnees visited during the assessment, 61 percent were male-headed and average household size was 5 people in the household. This is close to the average household size in Rwanda which is 4.6 according to the 2010 EICV. 21% of heads of households are widow/widower (among them 95% are women) and 28% had never attended school. 91% of heads of households were between 18 and 60 years old.

Among all returnees in households who participated in this assessment, 47% where female, 49% were less than 18 years old and 2% were above 60 years.

45% of returnee’s households declared that all household members had fled. 44% reported that all household members came back while 41% said only some household members had returned (some children and parents).

**Figure 3: % of household members who fled**

**Figure 4: % of household members who returned**
48% of returnee households returned in location they were living before fleeing while 52% did not. Returnees mentioned the following reasons for not returning to their areas of origin:

- Returnees had no land to return to in their area of origin
- Returnees were affected by the government policy of settling people in grouped settlements known as ‘imidugudu’
- Returnees preferred to live in areas where they could find a job
- Returnees were living with hosting families

### 4.2 RETURNEE FOOD SECURITY STATUS

#### 4.2.1 HOUSEHOLD FOOD CONSUMPTION

Food consumption was aggregated into food consumption groups based on dietary diversity and frequency of consumption. 22% of returnee households had poor consumption, 43% borderline and only 35% had acceptable food consumption (Figure 5). This means that 65% of returnee households had unacceptable food consumption and could be considered food insecure. This percentage is very high compared to the average of the country which was of 21% in March/April 2012 (CFSVA, 2012).

**Figure 5: Food consumption groups**

Based on food consumption for the past 7 days recall period, the most frequently eaten food items were starches (6 days on average), pulses and vegetables (4 days) and cooking oil (3 days). Sugar, fruits, milk, meat or eggs were rarely consumed by returnee households.

Food insecure households consumed mainly starches (5 and 6 days per week for poor and borderline food consumption households respectively), pulses (1 and 3 days per week), vegetables (2 and 3 days) and rarely cooking oil (Figure 6). Fruits, milk, meat and sugar are only consumed in households with acceptable food consumption.³

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³ Frequency of consumption of various foods by different food consumption groups is very similar to the described in the 2012 CFSVA and nutrition survey.
Among returnee households, there was no significant difference in food consumption based on demographic characteristics (age, gender and marital status of the head of household), land ownership, the time spent after the return (less than 3 months or up to 6 months) and the recovery of household assets. According to information collected during focus group discussions, this reflects the fact that returnees need more than 6 months, sometimes up to one year, to adequately integrate into the society and that within that period all returnees face the same challenges and therefore do not show socio-economic differences or food security patterns.

The insufficient integration of returnees into the society is also illustrated by the high percentage of returnees who do not know their ubudehe category (71%). Even those who knew it, they did not show the difference in food consumption.

4.2.2 FOOD SOURCES

According to the focus group discussions, during the first days after their return, except for some refugees who received food from relatives or neighbors, they had no other source of food than the 3 months food ration received from WFP at the transit camp. As soon as returnees had access to money, the major share was used to buy additional food.

On average, according to the household survey, the monthly expenditures on food were representing 59% of all household expenditures. Classically, households spending more than 65% on food (44% of returnee households who participated in this assessment) are vulnerable to food insecurity as they have little to spend in other crucial outlays in education, healthcare and other basic needs. Households allocating less than 50 percent on food purchases are more flexible to purchase other needed items and are relatively better-off.

According the 2012 CFSVA, the market constitutes the first source of food for Rwandan households (65%) followed by household own production contributing an average of 30%. In general, the market is the major source of food for returnees (60%) followed by gifts from relatives and own production (15% and 11% respectively). As expected returnees who are in the county for less than 3 months rely more on gifts and aid than those who have been in the country; the longer the returnees have been in the country the less they rely on gifts and food aid from WFP and the Government of Rwanda and the more they rely on the market and own production (Figure 7)
On the question about who in the household decides what to do with the food ration received when returnees leave the transit camp, all groups reported that the wife and husband decide together on how the food will be used. They said also that it is mainly females who are likely food managers as they are the ones who cook.

Regarding the use of the money, some returnee households have alternative source of income such as petty trade, daily labour and other do construction (builders). The money earned from these activities was reported to be used in buying food, hygienic items, clothing, education expenses (school fees and items), health care (mutuelle de santé), house rent and construction, buying land or hiring labour. When asked who takes decisions in spending the money that earned by the household, all groups declared that both husband and wife decide together how to spend their money.

### 4.2.3 SHOCKS AND COPING WITH SHORTAGE

The most reported shocks were weather related such as drought, floods, landslides or hailstorms (30%), followed by serious illness or accidents of household members (20%). This are followed by shocks which are specific to returnees such as theft/lost of household assets (16%), insufficient food assistance (13%) and land not recovered (8%). Among 48% of households who reported shocks, 31% showed acceptable food consumption while 40% of households who did not face any shock had acceptable food consumption.

About 70% of returnee households declared that they faced problems of accessing food in the past 7 days. When they faced food shortages, coping strategies mostly adopted by returnee households were ‘limiting portion size at meal times’, ‘reduce the number of meals eaten in a day’, and ‘rely on less preferred and less expensive food’ (Figure 8). The Coping strategy index is a quick and simple indicator of household food security behavior that reveals how households manage or cope with shortage of food. The CSI measures the frequency and severity of actions taken by households in response to a perceived food shortage. A high CSI means more stress and potential declining food security in a household. Compared to the average of the country (around 7 based on FNSMS of September 2012 and 5 based on 2012 CFSVA), returnees households showed a high CSI of 20.
4.3 LIVELIHOODS OF RETURNEES

4.3.1 RETURNEES RELY MOSTLY ON DAILY LABOUR, FOLLOWED BY AGRICULTURE

Livelihoods most reported by returnees are daily labour, agriculture, aid or gifts, petty trade, livestock, fishing or gathering and monthly salary or pension. Very few of them rely on begging and tontines. Daily labor is the main livelihood for most households (60%) followed by agriculture (28%). Based on the 2012 CFVSA, this is very different from the rest of Rwanda population where overall 40% of the households are ‘low income’ agriculturalists, 14% of households rely on ‘agriculture and unskilled daily labour’, while 13% rely on ‘agriculture and livestock raising’. Returnees that have been in Rwanda longer tend to rely less on aid and more on agriculture. However the part of daily labour remains largely predominant.
On average, 61% of returnees declared to rely on more than one livelihood activity. Regarding farming and livestock activities, 64% of returnees who participated in the assessment declared that they cultivate land and 80% among them own land. For those owning land, only 7% have more than 0.5 hectare. Although 64% of returnees declared that they cultivate land, only 28% rely on agriculture as the main livelihood while the remaining rely on other livelihoods (Figure 9).

22% of returnees declared that they own or manage farm-animals. Returnees who participated in this assessment declared that it was not easy for them to have livestock because they did not have the financial means to purchase animals. Most of them said also that, due to the short time spent after they returned, they are not trusted much by their neighbors and this means that they can’t be even given animals to manage. Considering the low percentages of returnee households with more than 0.5 hectares and those owning or managing farm animals, this can be the cause of the low percentage of households relying on those livelihoods.
4.3.2 RETURNEES INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES SEEM TO HAVE BETTER FOOD SECURITY

Returnees declared that livelihood activities play an important role in their food security as through them they can earn food or money to buy food. Those who have activities which enabled them to earn money could contribute in tontines and buy livestock. Based on livelihood activities declared in the household survey, it appears that those returnees who relied on agriculture and petty trade showed a better situation compared to others as they have a relatively higher percentage of households with acceptable food consumption (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Livelihood activities compared to food consumption

4.3.3 WHAT CHALLENGES DO RETURNEES FACE FOR THEIR LIVELIHOODS?

During focus group discussions, all returnees reported they felt they were facing more challenges compared to their neighbors. Especially those who fled when they were young and who married in exile reported not to have enough means to take care of their family members.

The main reported challenge was insufficient land for cultivation. Those who came back and didn’t find their families (due to death and other reasons) also seemed not to have enough means to take care of themselves. Some returnees did not recover the properties they left behind when they fled. Those who did not recover their land declared that they found their land sold by other family members or people who didn’t flee. According to the results of the household survey, among returnees who participated in this assessment 57% recovered the totality of their land and 30% recovered a part of it. (Figure 12).
Regarding other assets, only 28% of returnees recovered their houses and any of them recovered the livestock or other household belongings.

Apart from losing their assets, returnees who participated in focus group discussions declared that they are more affected by high food prices compared to other people who are settled for a long time as they do not have cash to buy food and no land to cultivate and compensate to their daily consumption. In addition to that, it takes a long time to get the identity card (around 6 months). Those who don’t have IDs cannot move to look for a job or other income generating activities. All this pushes returnees to drain the food and other items they received as assistance when they come back, trying to cope with difficult situations.

### 4.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE WFP FOOD ASSISTANCE

#### 4.4.1 FOOD RECEIVED

During the assessment returnees said that they received maize, beans and oil at the transit camp. From there the returnees transport food received mainly with the UNHCHR car, other cars, on foot or by bicycle (Figure 13). 48% declared that they paid for transport.

**Figure 13: Means of transport of food received**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNHCHR car</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cars</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On foot</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other methods</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelbarrow</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>
All returnees who participated in this assessment reported that the three months food ration were not enough for them to be integrated in the local community and start producing / working for their own food. There were even some who reported not having received anything due to empty stocks when they were leaving the transit center. They said that the food quantity always changed according to what centers have in stock and the number of beneficiaries to share the stock. Another factor is that they have to grow food to be able to do without the food aid, and no crops can be grown and harvested in three months. This also depends on seasonality issues as people returning in the lean season cannot be compared to those coming during or immediately after harvest. In addition, returnees do not start to cultivate immediately after their arrival. Focus groups discussions with them showed that most of returnee households can stay one whole month without any other source of food except that provided by WFP.

Regarding the quality of food received, returnees were most satisfied with the oil (86% of returnees appreciated the quality of the oil) followed by the maize (80%). 75% of interviewed returnees said that they were satisfied with the quality of pulses received. According to returnees, beans are hard to cook and maize is attacked by weevils sometimes.

### 4.4.2 MOST FOOD ASSISTANCE IS CONSUMED

Respondents reported that the major part of food received is eaten at home and some is sold in order to handle other household needs or to buy other types of food. Also, some do exchange that food against other types of food in order to balance diet and to feed children who can’t eat maize grains (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: The use of food aid received**

![Figure 14: The use of food aid received](image)

### 4.4.3 ROLE OF NON FOOD ITEMS RECEIVED

Apart from food, returnees receive other types of assistance from other organizations during the reinstallation period. UNHCR provides some household items such as blankets, carpets, plastic sheeting, plates cooking pot spoons etc. Those who were soldiers in rebel groups (in DRC) are given some money by the Rwandan demobilization commission when they return. During focus group discussions, returnees declared that the received non-food assistance played a big role in their food security as it allowed them not to sell their food to buy mentioned items.

As described in the introduction, the government also supports the returnees in their integration process (girinka, ubudehe, community works, ID provision...) but most returnees declared that outcomes from these efforts come late so that they cannot help them during the the first 6 months after their return, when they need most assistance.
4.5 NEEDS OF RETURNEES IN TERM OF LIVELIHOOD AND FOOD SECURITY

4.5.1 FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

As specified earlier, all returnees declared that food rations they received did not last them long enough to be integrated and start producing/working for their own food. Most of them said that it is the only food they have, and it lasts them between one and two months.

The following ideas came up during focus group discussions on how to improve the food security situation of future returnees:

- To increase the ration to six months instead of three. This is based on the fact that after 6 months people who can work would be better integrated and able to work for their own food production. Returnees said that all crops they grow cannot be harvested before 4 months after sowing. This proposition does not differ from information collected with the quantitative questionnaire. Most returnees (81%) suggested to have at least four months’ worth of food ration (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Proposed time for food assistance

- To provide seeds so that they can farm as alternate to the aid
- Others recommended to be given start-up investment to enable them start small businesses

Returnees recommended to add sugar, soap, and other basic items to the provided aid during the first six months. This would allow them to consume all food received instead of selling a part of this in order to have money to buy those basic items.
4.5.2 OPPORTUNITY FOR USING CASH OR VOUCHERS?

Through focus group discussions and key informant interviews, this assessment explored the possibility of providing cash and/or vouchers instead of food.

4.5.2.1 ABOUT CASH

Except one mixed group of men and women in Karongi which was in favour of food aid, all other focus groups said that distributing cash would be better than providing food. The group which did not support the distribution of cash said that they would be tempted to buy items other than food.

The following advantages of distributing cash instead of food were identified during group discussions:

- With cash it is easy to buy any type of food according to household needs
- It is easier to carry money than to transport food
- Once cash is used, returnees can buy food and household items (such as land, livestock, etc.) or pay for other needed services
- A part of cash received can be used as start-up investment in small businesses
- Returnees can participate in cooperatives or associations

Regarding the negative side of cash instead of food, all groups converged on the problem of market prices. They declared that since market prices tend to increase there is a risk that inflation could reduce the quantity of food that households can purchase with the money received. In addition to market prices, they mentioned that money can be easily lost or stolen. Below are some other disadvantages of distributing cash identified by the returnees:

- Cash may cause quarrels between household members: All respondents reported that switching to cash would imply changes in the decision making at the household level and that it could cause quarrels in their families based on who will manage the use of that cash. Some respondents said that this can happen in case it is the man who takes all decisions in cash management while others declared that this was no issue as long as it was clear that the purpose of the cash was for household daily consumption usage.
- Money can be spent faster and most likely on unplanned things (easily wasted) such as clothes, alcoholic drinks. This may lead to situations where returnee households have no money to buy food. Groups mentioned that children and women would be the most affected by bad management of the received cash by men, and that female headed households would be likely to benefit more from the cash than those who are male headed.

Regarding the implementation of a cash programme the following should be taken into account: Based on information from focus group discussions, returnees are not used to cash transfers; most returnees didn’t have a bank account. Those who didn’t have an account mainly declared that this is due to the lack of the ID card which is required in registering a bank account. Also, very few of returnees had a mobile phone and none of them had ever made or benefited from a mobile cash transfer.

4.5.2.2 ABOUT VOUCHERS

As for cash, the mixed group of women and men in Musanze was the only one who did not support vouchers. Other groups were favorable because they thought food would be easily available from the local market.

The main advantages mentioned of vouchers mentioned by the group discussions are given below:

- Vouchers can help limit food waste as a certain limit of food withdrawal can be set per day and this will help for the food to last longer
- Vouchers can help in real time services (whenever they need food they will get it);
- Households can have food of good quality
- There will be no transport cost as unlike when food is distributed
- No loss or theft in case vouchers are registered on returnees’ own names;
- Vouchers cannot be easily used to buy non-planned items like beer.

Regarding problems which can arise in case vouchers are distributed, all groups mentioned

- Risk of theft/loss of voucher cards,
- Traders might refuse to supply and satisfy returnees’ needs as they might prefer to make money selling food to those who pay cash instead, poor customer care from traders, traders may try to cheat and give less quantity by faking their measures
- Market access: some returnees were worried about the distances they would need to go through to reach traders who would accept their vouchers
- Limit access to other household items: as vouchers do not offer the possibility of buying other needed items
- For some returnees, illiteracy would be a constraint (in determining when the voucher expires, content, etc.).
- Possible misuse of vouchers: in case traders accept to change voucher in cash, returnees said that voucher can be misused to buy unplanned items like alcohol. In case this happens it is mostly women of children would suffer.
The assessment shows that 65% of the surveyed returnee households were food insecure. This percentage is very high compared to the average of the country which was of 21% according in March/April of the same year. No significant differences could be evidenced between returnees that had returned for more or less than 3 months. This indicates clearly that the returnee households require additional food assistance.

Daily labor is the main livelihood most of households rely on (60%) followed by agriculture (28%). The rest rely on aid or gifts, petty trade, livestock, fishing or gathering and monthly salary or pension. Very few of them rely on begging and tontines. Except those relying on agriculture that showed a better situation compared to others as well as the ones who relied on petty trade, the food security situation was comparable for all livelihoods.

Returnees reported irregularities in food distributions in the transit centres.

Over 80% of the food received by the returnees was consumed directly and less than 10% sold, exchanged, lost or stolen.

All returnees who participated in the assessment reported that the three months food ration did not last them long enough to bridge the gap until they could start producing/working for their own food and complete their integration process within the local society. In order to have time to address all these challenges, many returnees suggested a 6 months food ration; it would allow them to bridge the gap until they could be able to access their own food, and requested for additional non-food items to be distributed. Most returnees were favourable to the idea of receiving cash or vouchers instead of food.

Finally, during this assessment tracking returnees on the list provided by UNHCR proved to be a major challenge. Most of names on the lists were not known to local authorities or the population. According to local authorities and returnees met during data collection, some returnees declare fake names in order to collect food and other items provided when arrive in the country. After getting the assistance these people return to DRC. In most cases, these people do not come from the areas they mention when they cross the border.

Based on the above, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Increase the food ration to 6 months
2. Consider using cash or vouchers instead of food
3. Monitor the distribution of food in transit centers in order to ensure that returnees receive the planned food ration.
4. Include seeds in other non-food items provided to returnees
5. Speed up the process of obtaining the ID cards so that returnees can be easily integrated into various socio-economic activities within a short time.
6. Include returnees in special programmes designed for vulnerable people such as ubudehe sheme, loans and other assistance during the first months of their arrival
7. Facilitate the access to finance institution to returnees and sensitise them to use their services.
8. Follow up on returnees registered. This can be done jointly by UNHCR, MIDIMAR and local authorities. Currently, repatriated returnees are not handed over to local authorities. When they leave the transit center, those who do not live far away can join they areas of origin themselves while others are transported by UNHCR car which drops them to the area close to their place.

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4. CFSVA and Nutrition Survey 2012
### ANNEXES

Annex 1: UNHCR and MIDIMAR returnee monitoring data  
Annex 2: Focus groups and their members  
Annex 3: household questionnaire  
Annex 4: Focus Group Discussion checklist  
Annex 5: Key Informant Interview checklist