BULLETIN June 2018 ISSUE 20

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP
World Food Programme

Tajikistan

Food Security Monitoring

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Highlights

- Overall, food security remains a challenge for a large share of the households. 24 percent of households were food insecure in December 2017, a small increase from the previous year, but there are signs of improvements. Both the food consumption score and the diet diversity score have improved compared to the previous year, indicating that a larger share of households have access to an adequate and diversified diet.
- Inflow of remittances increased in 2017, after a sharp fall in 2016. In December 2017, more households had members working abroad, and fewer households experienced a drop in the frequency or amount of remittances compared to the previous year. The households were generally more positive to their economic situation compared to December 2016.
- At the same time, households share of food expenditure has increased every winter since 2014. In December 2017, three out of four households was using the majority of their expenditure on food, and 38 percent of the households used more than 75 percent of their expenditure on food.
- High food prices and fuel prices remains the most frequently observed economic shock, affecting more than three out of four households.
- More households reported that they had used coping strategies the three months prior to the survey compared to the previous year. There was in particular an increase in the share of households that used food coping strategies, like consuming less through smaller portions or fewer meals, but also more households that used other coping strategies, like spending savings or decreasing expenditure on health care and agriculture.
- Malnutrition among children living in interviewed households remains a serious concern. Food feeding habits among children shows that less than one in ten of the surveyed children between 6 to 23 months consumed the minimum acceptable diet.

Methodology and key indicators

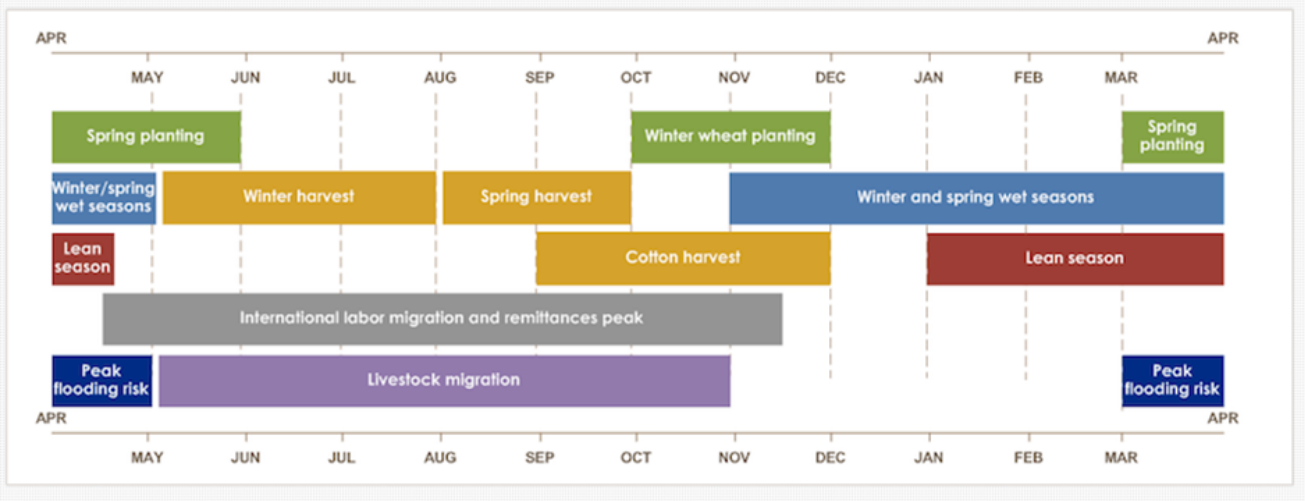
Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) has been designed and implemented for trend analysis with a monitoring purpose as a response to emergency. Under the FSMS, 1,300 households in the rural areas of 13 livelihood zones[1] are interviewed twice a year, in April/May and November/December. In each livelihood zone, 20 households in 5 villages were randomly selected in 2014. Since then, the same households have been visited.

In this round of survey (December 2017), three districts – Mastchoh, Pendjikent and Ganchi were not included in the data collection due to challenges in getting permissions within the field work timeframe. In total, 1,060 households were visited. Data are not representative for the entire population of the zone or other administrative unit, but the sample size is considered sufficient to be representative for trend analysis.

Since 2015, the FSMS has included information about child nutrition, collecting data for all children aged under 5 in the visited households. The child nutrition data are not representative at geographical level, but the results are primarily indicative of the situation for the children residing in the households covered through the study.

The food security index is based on the household's current food security status (the food consumption score) and their coping capacity (share of expenditure used on food and asset depletion).

Figure 1. Seasonal Calendar (FEWSNET 2011) *Source FEWSNET 2011*



Context and recent developments

Tajikistan is a land-locked, food deficit country with a population of eight million people, three quarters of whom live in rural areas. It is characterized by a mountainous landscape that limits arable land to just seven percent of its surface. Despite achieving lower-middle income status in 2015 and notable progress towards poverty reduction, Tajikistan remains the poorest among the Commonwealth of Independent States. The national poverty rate is 30.3 percent and 47 percent of its population living on less than USD 1.33 a day (per capita). (Tajstat 2016).

Remittances from labour migration are an important component to Tajikistan's economy, accounting for approximately 36.6 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to the latest 2016 World Bank estimates. The fall in global oil prices and the economic downturn in Russian starting in 2014, negatively affected the economy of Tajikistan and resulted in a drastic reduction of remittances. However, the economy appears to be recovering from the economic shock. According to World Bank, real GDP expanded strongly in the first nine months of 2017, rising by 6.8 percent year on year, and remittances rose by 18.4 percent in the same period[2].

The food security status of households changes throughout the year in Tajikistan. The seasonal calendar for Tajikistan (figure 1) shows that the country's lean season is from around January through mid-April or May, while the harvest seasons spans from May to December.

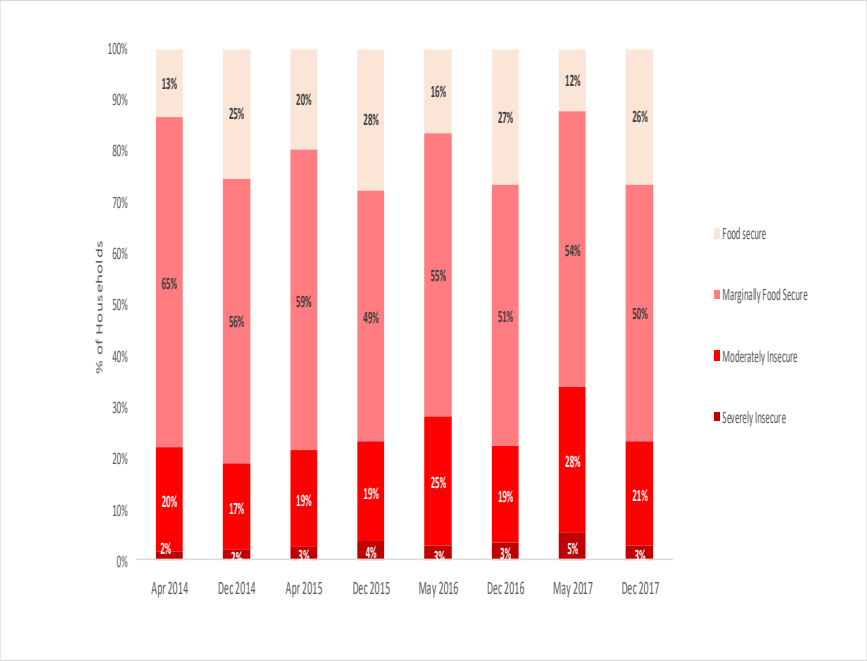
Overall Food Security

Food Security Index

The food security index takes into account both the household's current food security status as well as their coping capacity in event of shocks. In December 2017, 24 percent of the surveyed households in the rural area were food insecure (moderately and severely), which is slightly higher compared to December 2016 (22 percent) and 2015 (23 percent).

In the last three rounds of the FSMS, the prevalence of food insecurity was much higher among female headed households (33 percent in December 2016) compared to male headed households (20 percent in December 2016). However, the gap has narrowed considerably, and the prevalence of food insecurity in female headed households and male headed households were not significant differently in December 2017, at 25 percent and 23 percent respectively.

Figure 2. Food Security Index[3]



Only 3 percent of the households were severely food insecure in December 2017, which is similar to previous years. The prevalence of severe food insecurity shows no seasonal pattern, and has remained close to 3 percent except for a peak in May 2017 when 5 percent of households were severely food insecure.

When asked whether the household had experienced any problems satisfying their food needs the last three months, only 41 percent reported that they have had no problems, while 7 percent often had problems and 3 percent most of the time had problems with satisfying their food needs.

1.Livelihoods Zoning "Plus" Activity in Tajikistan (2011): http://www.fews.net/sites/default/files/TJ percent20Livelihood percent20Zone percent20Descriptions percent20English.pdf
2.http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/963071514451761441/pdf/122285-WP-Tajikistan-PUBLIC.pdf
3.Food Security Index takes into account (1) food consumption score, (2) livelihood coping strategy categories, and (3) food expenditure share (https://resources.vam.wfp.org/CARI).

Food Consumption Score[4]

Figure 3. Food Consumption Score

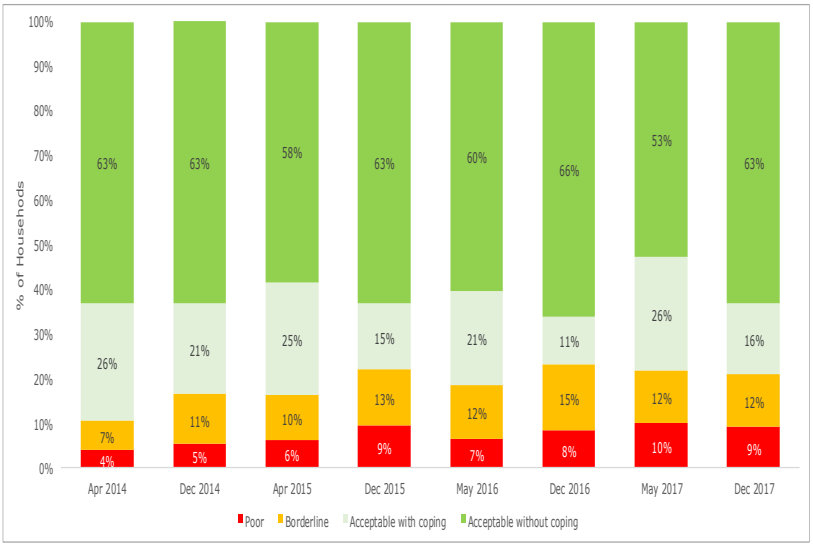
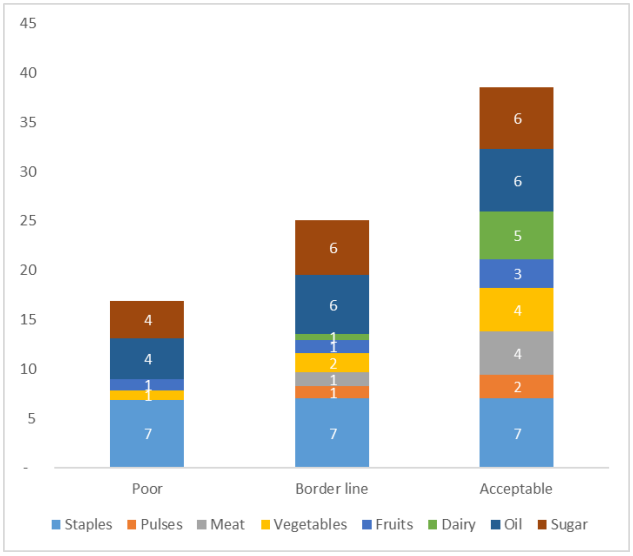


Figure 4. Number of days the food groups were consumed during the week

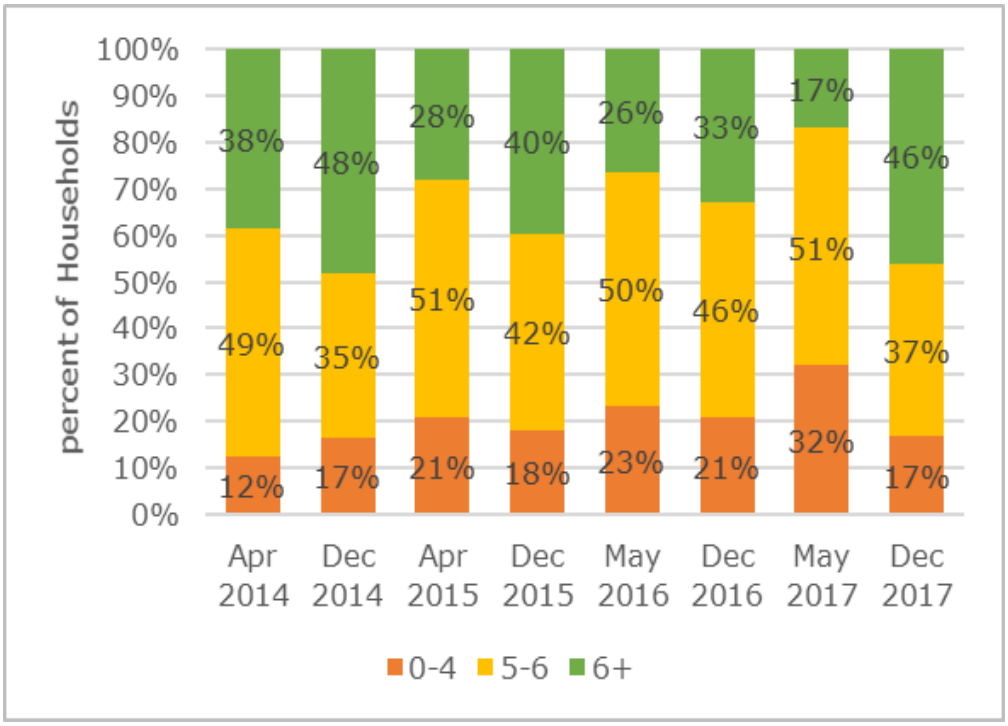


The Food Consumption Score (FCS) shows that 21 percent of the surveyed households experienced poor or borderline food consumption in December 2017. This is a small improvement compared to December 2016 (23 percent), but a larger share of households used coping mechanism to ensure an acceptable diet.

The 9 percent of households that have a poor Food Consumption Score have very little variation in their diet and consume predominantly staples, oil and sugar. On average they consumed fruits and vegetables only once per week, and most did not consume meat or dairy products.

Dietary Diversity Score

Figure 5. Dietary Diversity. Number of food groups in the diet.



The figures for December 2017 shows an improvement in the dietary diversity score compared to the last two years. In December 2017, almost half of the interviewed households have consumed more than six food groups, compared to one-third in December 2016. Nevertheless, 17 percent of the interviewed households have limited diversity in their diet, consuming food from four or less food groups. The prevalence of a poor diet is higher among household headed by women (23 percent) compared to households headed by male (15%).

4. The FCS is a proxy of households' food access and a core WFP indicator used to classify households into different groups based on the adequacy of the foods consumed in the week prior to being surveyed."

Households economic situation

36 percent of household reported that their economic situation had become worse since the previous year, while 22 percent said it was better. This is a more positive response than in December 2016, when 50 percent of households described their situation as worse compared to 2015.

Income sources

Figure 6. Households main and secondary income source

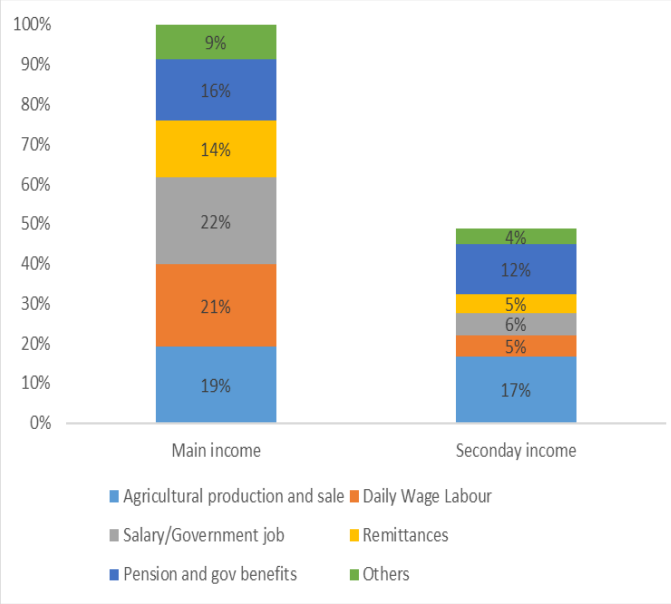
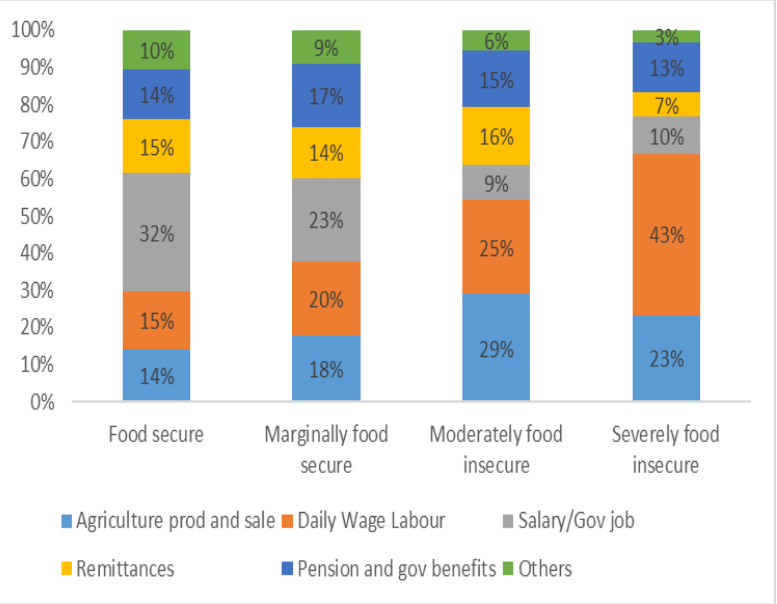


Figure 7. Household primary income source and food security



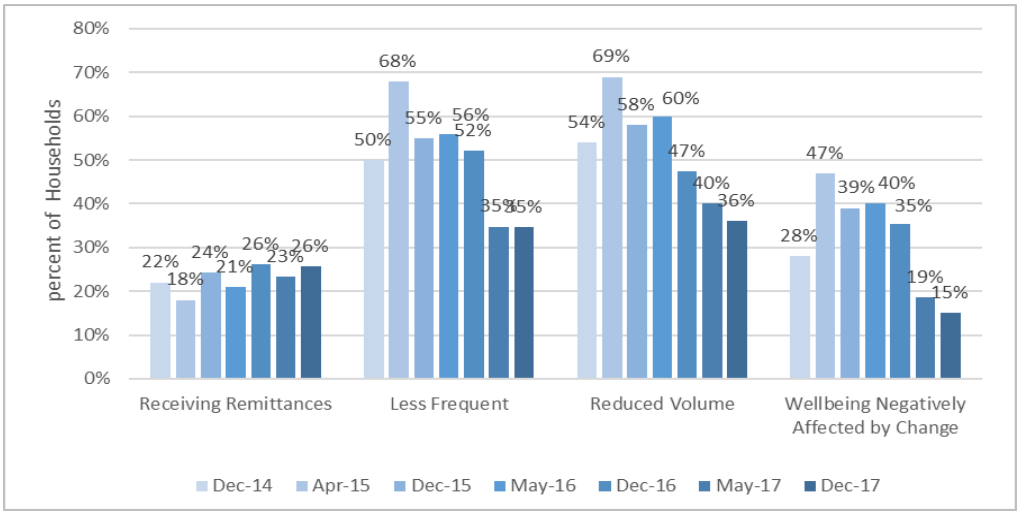
Salary and governments job were the most common primary income source (22 percent) among the interviewed households, followed by daily wage labor (20 percent). Remittances is the main income of 14 percent of the households, while 4 percent rely on remittances as secondary income. Only 49 percent of households reported to have more than one income source. Of all interviewed household, 17 percent had agricultural production as a secondary income source.

Figure 7 shows the primary income source according to households' food security situation. Among the food insecure households, daily wage labour and agriculture production were the most important income sources, while for food secure households it was salaries and government jobs.

Remittances and Wellbeing

In December 2017, 36 percent of households had family members working outside the country, an increase of 4 percentage points from the previous year. The share of households that received remittances remained at 26 percent in December 2017, the same as in December 2016. However, fewer households report that they have been negatively affected by reduction in remittances. According to the latest figures from the World Bank, remittances rose in 2017, after a significant fall in the previous year.

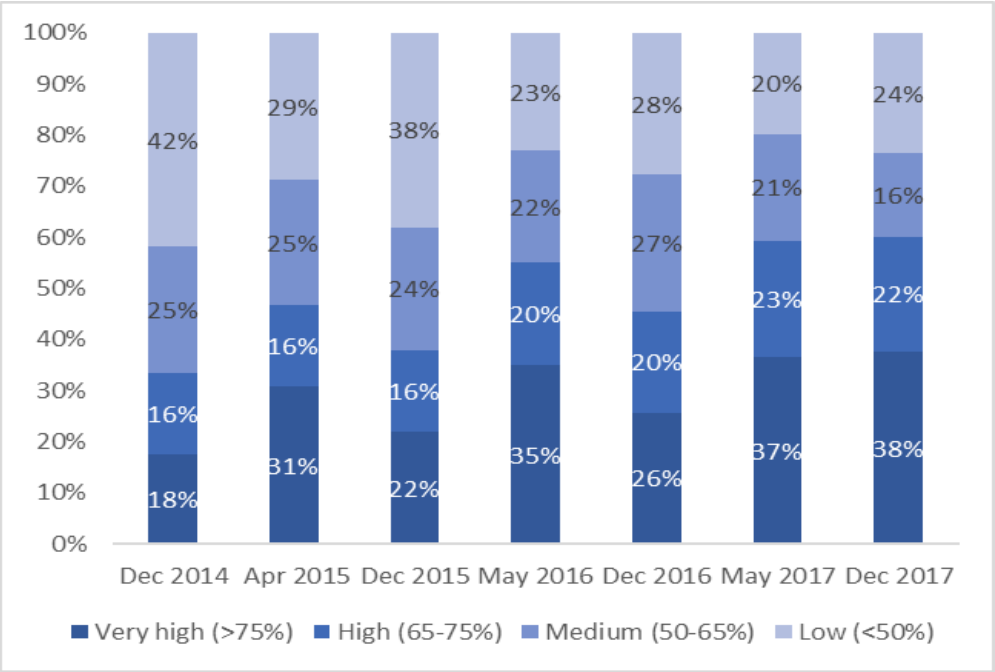
Figure 8. Changes in remittances received and household wellbeing



In December 2017, only 15 percent of households reports that their well-being was negatively affected by change in remittance in December 2017, compared to 25 percent in December 2016. There was also an improvement in the percentage of households that experienced less frequency and reduced volume of remittances, falling to 35 percent and 36 percent respectively, compared to 52 percent and 47 percent in December 2016.

Food expenditure share

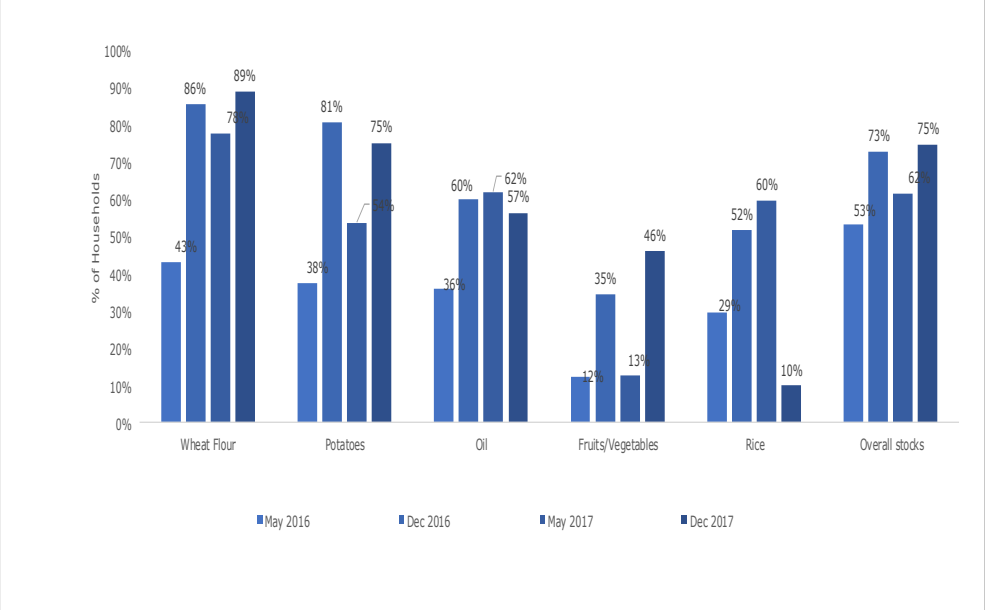
Figure 9. Food expenditure share



Households that spend a large share of their expenditure on food are considered to be economically vulnerable. In December 2017, 38 percent of households in the survey used more than 75 percent of their expenditures on food, while 60 percent of households spent more than 65 percent on food. Among the severely food insecure, more than 73 percent use a very high share of their expenditure on food. The share of households spending more than 75 percent of their budget for food has increased every winter since 2014, reflecting an increase in vulnerable households.

Food stocks

Figure 10. Household food stocks

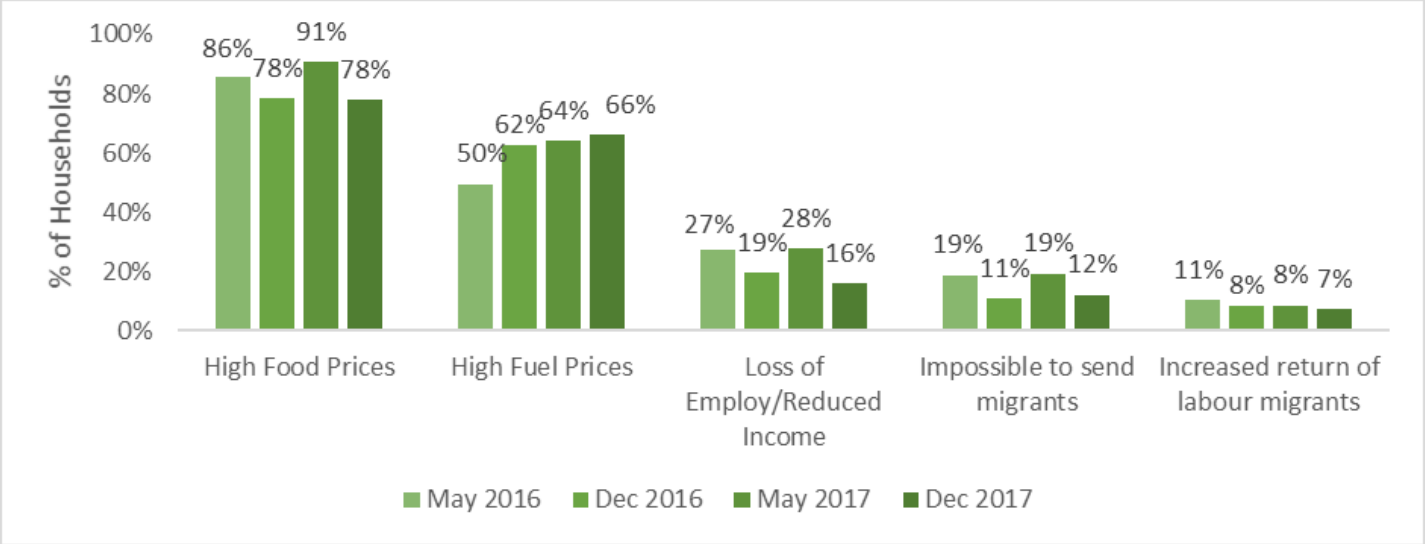


The percentage of households with food stocks is similar to the previous winter. In general, more households (75 percent) reported to have stored food at home in December 2017 compared to the same period of 2016 (73 percent). However, 69 percent of the households with stocks said they would not be able to build enough stocks for the coming month, mainly because of lack of income (89 percent). Most stocks are purchased at the market (61 percent) while 30 percent of households got most of their stock from own production. Figures 8 shows that the most common type of stocks at the time of the survey was wheat flour (89 percent) and potatoes (75 percent).

Shocks and Coping Strategies

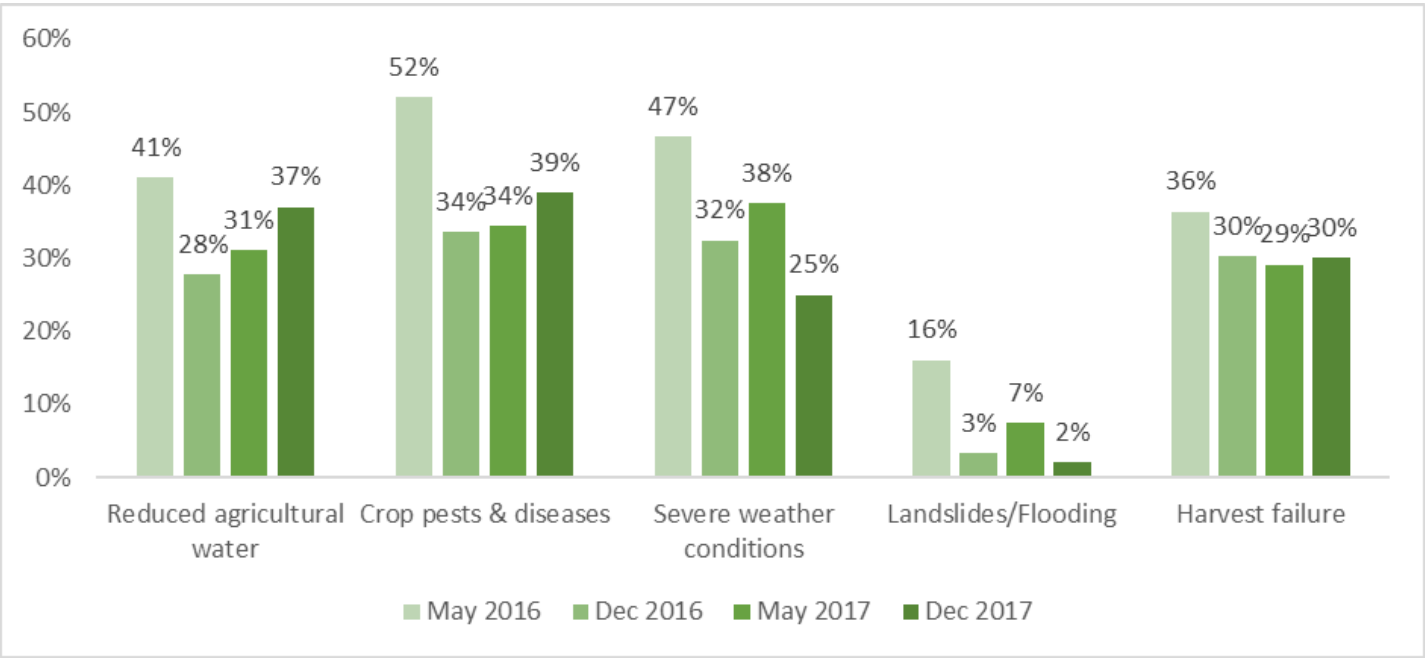
More than half of the households reduced their food consumption the previous three months due to shocks, and only 10 percent of households had fully recovered economically. 19 percent of the households reported that the economic situation after the shock had not recovered at all.

Figure 11. Economic Shocks Experienced



As in previous years, high food and fuel prices are the most frequently reported economic shocks. In December 2017, 78 percent of households had experienced high food prices and 66 percent of households experienced high fuel prices. Of households that could not send migrants abroad for work (12 percent), the main reason was denial of entry permit or lack of money.

Figure 12. Natural Shocks Experienced



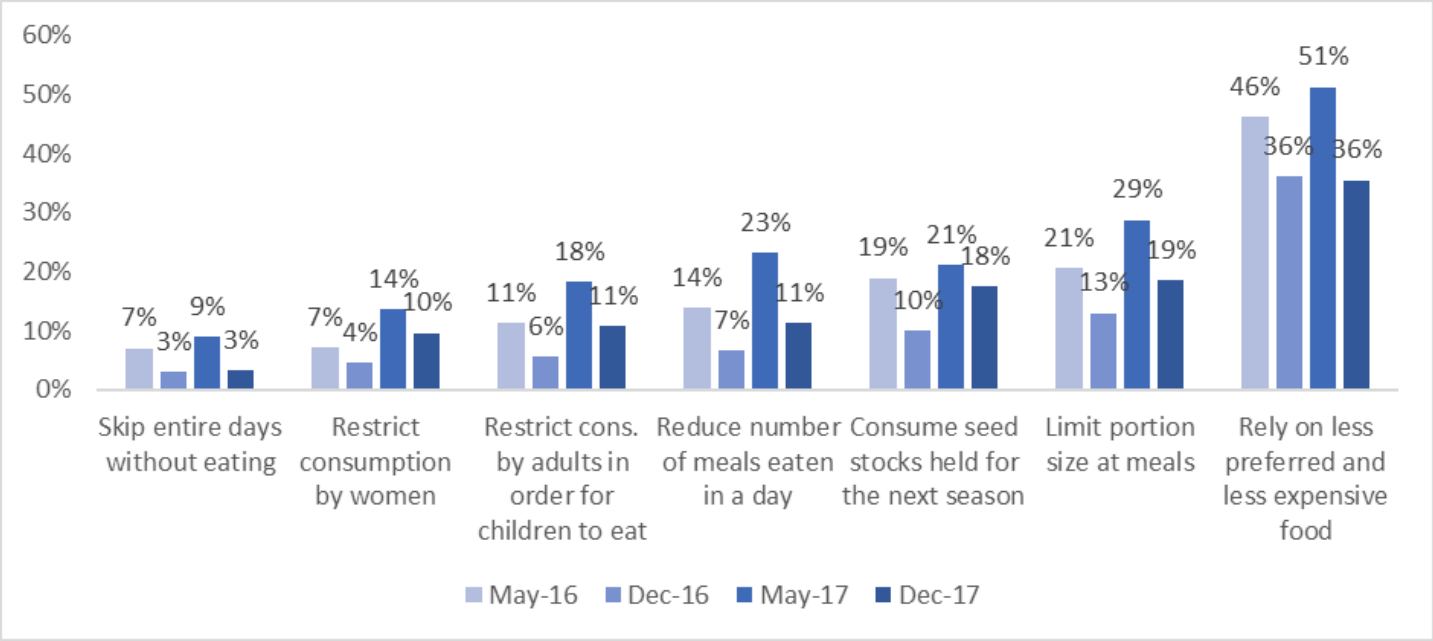
The majority of the households participating in the FSMS own livestock (74 percent) or cultivate the land (71 percent), making them more vulnerable to natural shocks.

In December 2017, 37 percent of the households reported that they had been affected by reduced agriculture water in the previous three months, compared to 28 percent the previous year. There was also an increase in crop pests and disease, from 34 percent to 39 percent between December 2016 and 2017, while 30 percent of households had experienced harvest failure. However, fewer households (25 percent) had experienced severe weather conditions compared to the previous two years.

Coping Strategies

In response to economic and natural shocks, the households adopted different types of coping strategies. Overall, more households are using food consumption coping strategies in December 2017 compared to December 2016. 18 percent of households consumed seed stocks held for the next season, an increase of 8 percentage points from December 2016. In addition, a larger share of households is reducing the number of meals eaten, limiting the portion size, restricting consumption by women, and restricting consumption by adults in order for children to eat.

Figure 13. Food consumption coping strategies



Asset depletion strategies refers to coping methods where a household reduce expenditures or sell existing assets. In December 2017, around one quarter of the surveyed households responded that they decreased expenditures for health care in their dealing with natural and economic shocks, and more than one out of six households also decreased agriculture expenditures.

Figure 14. Asset depletion strategies

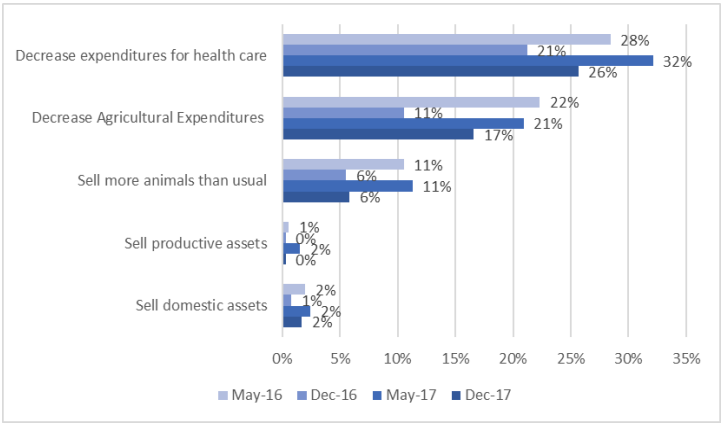
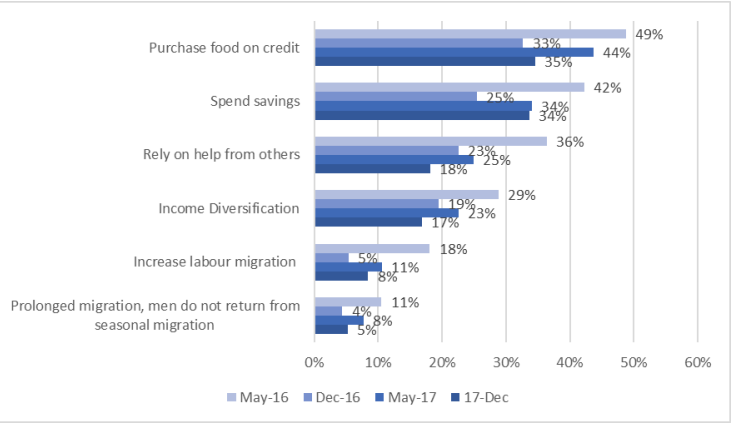


Figure 15. Livelihood diversification strategies



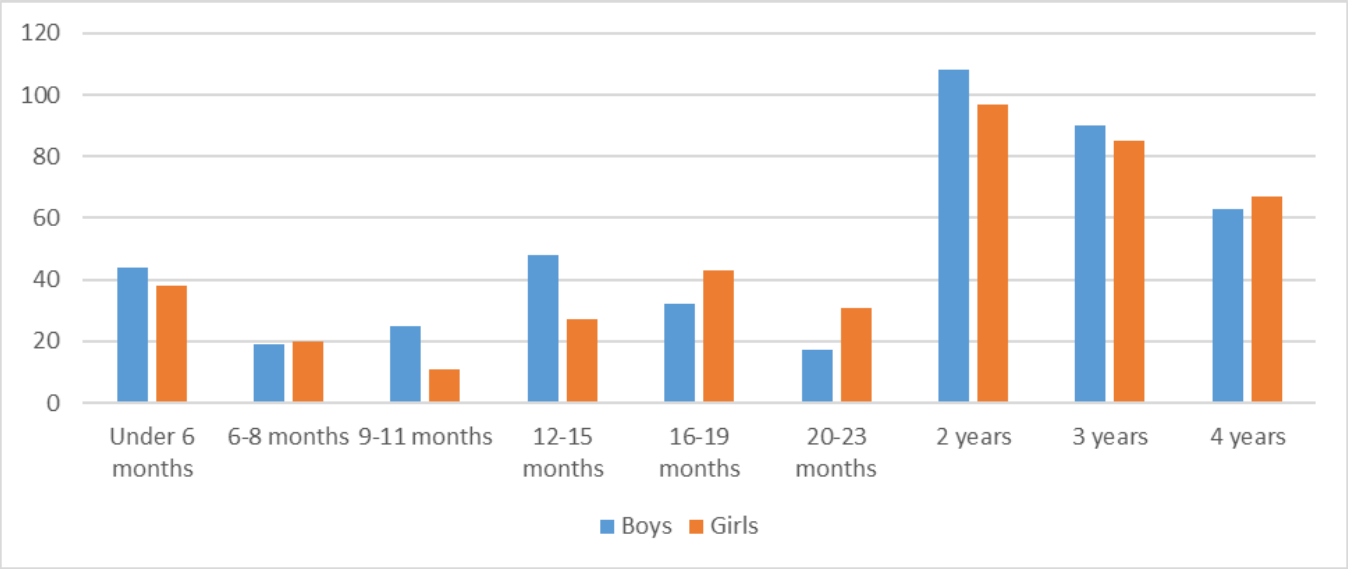
Among the livelihood diversification strategies, the most common means of coping the last three months were to purchase food on credit (35 percent), and to spend savings (34 percent). Only 17 percent of households reported that they still had savings in December 2017. Although it is an increase from 12 percent the previous year, without savings, the households are more vulnerable to economic and natural shocks.

Child Nutrition

Demography

The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) collects data for children under the age of 5 in the interviewed households for the purpose of child nutrition monitoring. For this round of the survey, data was collected for 865 children under the age of 5. Figure 16 shows the disaggregation by age group and sex. Almost 60 percent of the children are

Figure 16. Number of surveyed children, by age and sex

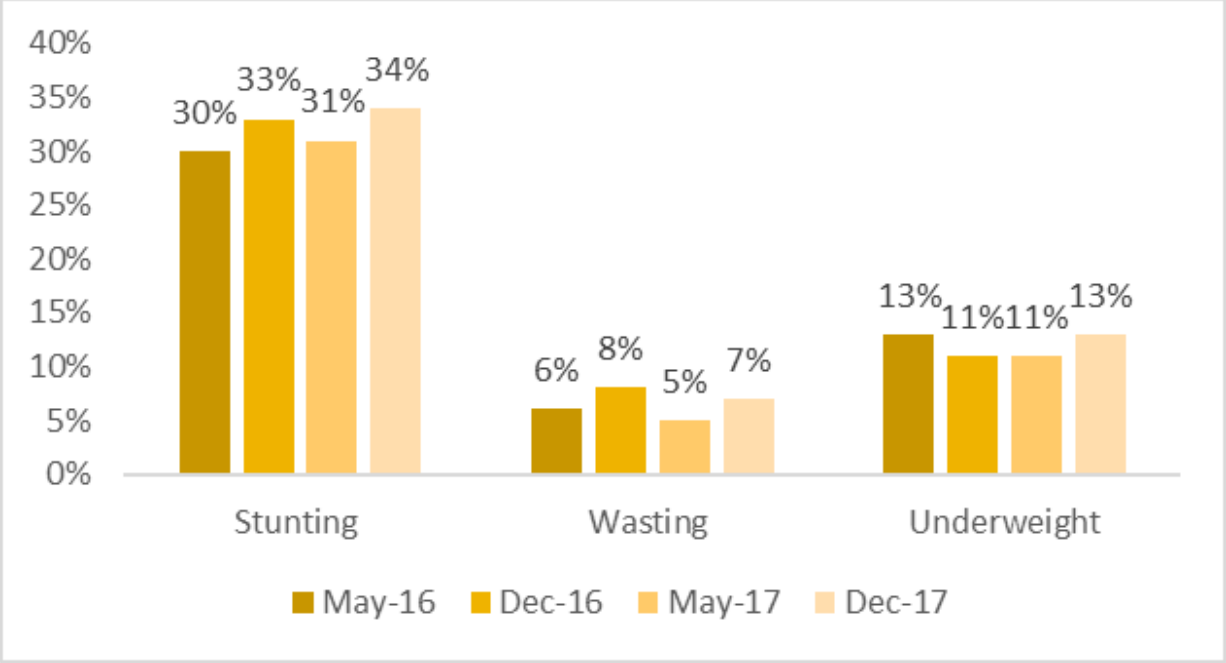


Stunting, wasting and underweight

The anthropometry measurement was performed for the children aged 6 to 59 months (783 children). The data represent the nutrition situation of the households in the survey only and therefore is not representative of the larger population and cannot be considered an update of population representative statistics on malnutrition. Anthropometry data are collected to capture a trend in surveyed households only.

The study measures the three key indicators – chronic malnutrition (stunting), acute malnutrition (wasting) and underweight. The indicator values remain stable, as the differences are negligible based on the sampling standard error. Malnutrition continues to be an issue of serious concern among the surveyed households – the proportion of children aged 6 to 59 months that are stunted is above 30 percent, which is considered a high severity of malnutrition. Wasting and underweight were recorded as 7 percent and 13 percent, respectively, both of which are interpreted as poor levels.

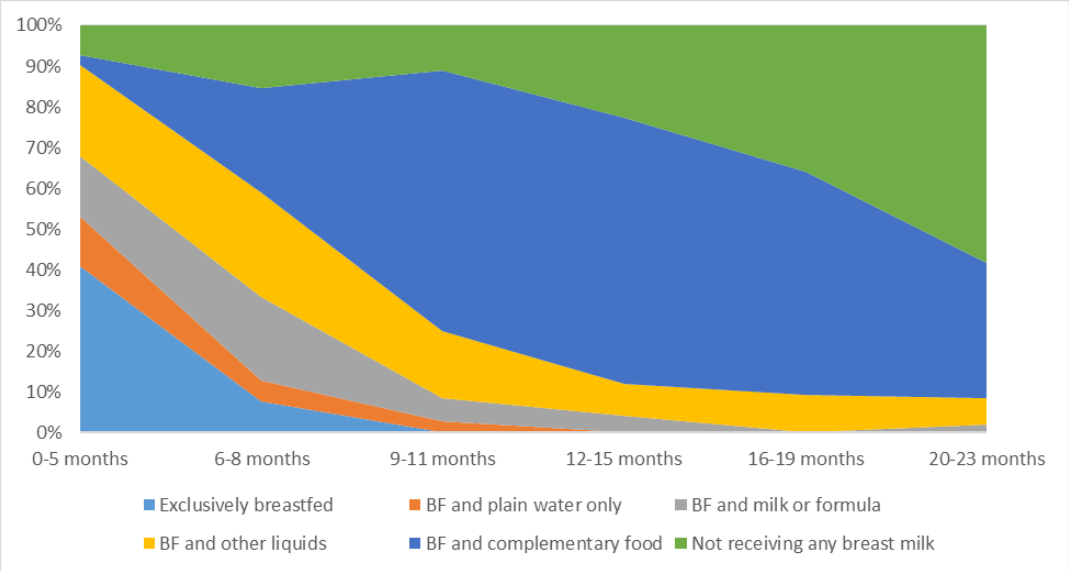
Figure 17. Prevalence of Acute and Chronic Malnutrition among Children aged 6-59 months



Infant and young child feeding practices

The FSMS collects data about the children's consumption of food and liquids the day before the survey. Figure 17 shows the feeding patterns for children by age groups, based on their consumption the day before the survey. The graphs distinguish between children that were not breastfed the previous day, children that were exclusively breastfed and breastfeeding in combination with complementary food or liquids. For the youngest age group, 0-5 months, 93 percent for the children were breastfed. The majority of the children were breastfed until the age of 16 -19 months old.

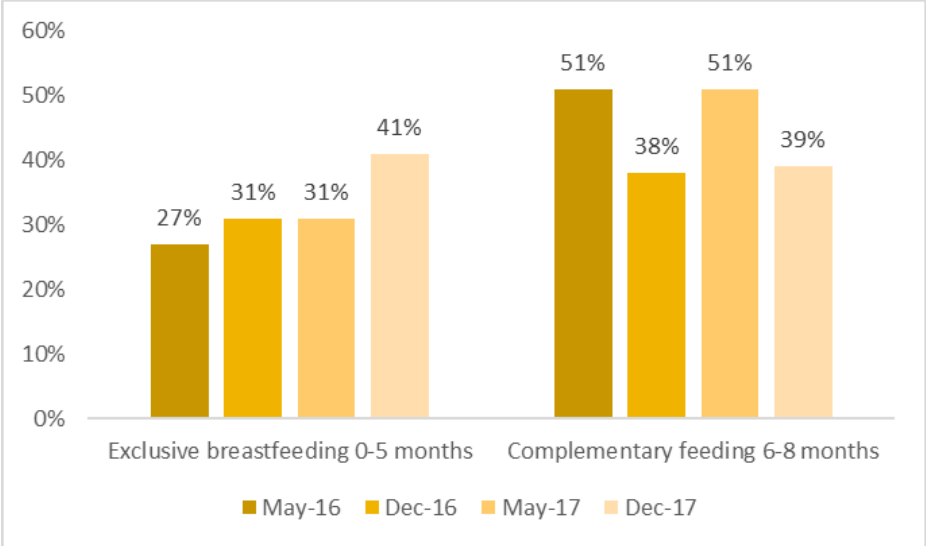
Figure 18. Breastfeeding practice by age



The WHO guidelines recommends exclusive breastfeeding for children between 0-5 months. The FSMS found that although the majority of the infants were breastfed, only 41 percent children 0-5 months were exclusively breastfed. Although low, this is an increase of 10 percentage points compared to previous year.

Figure 19. Exclusive breastfeeding and introduction of complementary feeding

It is recommended that introduction of complementary feeding (giving solid or semi-solid foods in addition to breast milk) starts at the age of six months as exclusive breastfeeding is no longer sufficient to maintain the child's growth further. In December 2017, 39 percent of children aged 6-8 months received semi-solid or solid food the day before the interview (30 percent of breastfed children). This is similar to level in in December 2016, while there seems to be a seasonal pattern where children are more likely to receive complementary feeding in spring.



Minimum acceptable diet for children aged 6-23 months

A diversified and healthy diet is especially important for children between 6 to 23 months old, as it directly affect their nutritional status, health and development. The minimum dietary diversity index measures the share of children that consume 4 or more different food groups during the previous day. In December 2017, only 45 percent of the surveyed children in the age group 6-23 months met the recommendation of the minimum dietary diversity.

The frequency of the meals, including breastfeeding, is another indicator for healthy feeding practices for children. In December 2017, only 22 percent of the children received the minimum meal frequency for their age group. A large majority of the children did now have the recommended number of meals the previous day.

The minimum acceptable diet for a child requires both the minimum dietary diversity and minimum meal frequency to be fulfilled. In December 2017, only 9 percent of the children between 6 to 23 months had an acceptable diet. The numbers are almost unchanged since December 2016.

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For further information please contact:

Janne Utkilen, WFP Tajikistan:
Janne.utkilen@wfp.org

Analysis on child nutrition provided by Shodmon Hojibekov, UNICEF Tajikistan:
shojibekov@unicef.org