# WFP Uganda

## Mobile Vulnerability Analysis & Mapping (mVAM)

## Karamoja Region Early Warning Bulletin—March 2019

***mVAM ISSUE #17***

## About mVAM

The mobile vulnerability analysis &mapping (mVAM) was first introduced in Karamoja in 2016 by WFP Uganda Country Office to provide real-time analysis of the performance of food security indicators. mVAM uses mobile voice technology for remote collection of household food security data to enable WFP monitor seasonal variations.

## Survey Methodology

Live telephone interviews were conducted for households across 7 districts (Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak) of Karamoja, with a total of 849 households randomly chosen from a master list of respondents who accepted to be contacted via telephone during the face-to-face baseline. This bulletin is based on the data collected from 18th—27th March 2019. **NOTE**: *Due to the currently limited size of the sample, statistical indicators reported at the district level have a relatively large margin of error. The average sample size per district is 120 households*.

Of the 849 households reached on phone, 16 percent were female headed, while about 6 percent had either a disabled, chronically ill or elderly household heads. The mean age of the household head was 36 years, and the average family size was 7. While the mean completed years of education for household head was 5 years, about 32 percent never attended school.

## Situation Overview

Household food stock levels were below-normal. Only 17 percent of the overall surveyed households in March 2019 reported having some food stocks in their households, compared to 41 percent in March 2018. Less than 10 percent in Napak, Moroto and Kotido had food stocks.

There was a slight deterioration in household food consumption patterns in March 2019 compared to the same period in 2018. In March 2019, slightly more than half (53 percent) had adequate food consumption, while 47 percent reported inadequate food consumption (38 percent borderline and 9 percent poor).

Nearly all surveyed households employed negative food-related coping strategies including *consuming less preferred foods* (100 percent), *reducing number of meals* (99 percent) and *limiting portion sizes* (99 percent). Overall, application of negative food-related coping strategies was slightly more severe compared to the same period in 2018.

The retail prices for staple foods (sorghum and maize grain) have been gradually increasing since October 2018, due to scarcity of food. The average retail prices for sorghum and maize grain were 13 and 7 percent higher than at the same time in 2018.

In March 2019, total moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) admissions remained below the 2018 first quarter average levels by 16 percent. However, severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admission was significantly higher than the 2018 first quarter average by 45 percent, partly due to a relatively below average harvest in 2018, and/or increased outreach services.

*Fighting Hunger Worldwide*

## Household Food Stocks

The overall food stock levels were reportedly low, with March data indicating only 17 percent had some in their households (**Fig 1**). While stock levels in Abim were slightly more than half (53 percent), Napak, Kotido and Moroto were worse off, with levels below 10 percent. Food stock levels among female headed households was slightly below the regional average.

Figure 2 reveals food stocks were mainly sourced from *own production* (59 percent), followed by *markets* (39 percent). In Amudat (82 percent), a significant proportion of households derived their stocks from markets.

Compared to the same period in 2018, the overall food stock levels were below by 24 percent (**Fig 4**). The decline was mainly in Kaabong (50 percent), Kotido (36 percent) and Moroto (32 percent) (**Fig 5**).

The deterioration is attributed to rising food prices which are driven by scarcity on markets. March data shows high food prices (15 percent) and floods, heavy rains or drought (51 percent) as the two major shocks experienced by households (**Fig 3**).

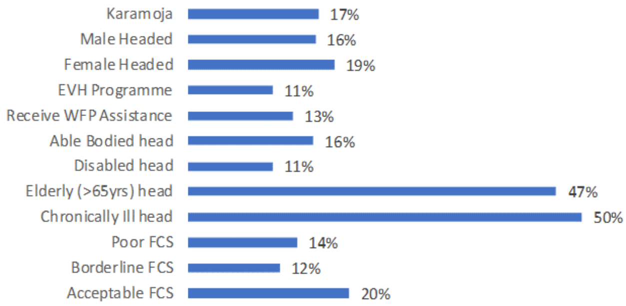


*Figure 1: Food stock levels*

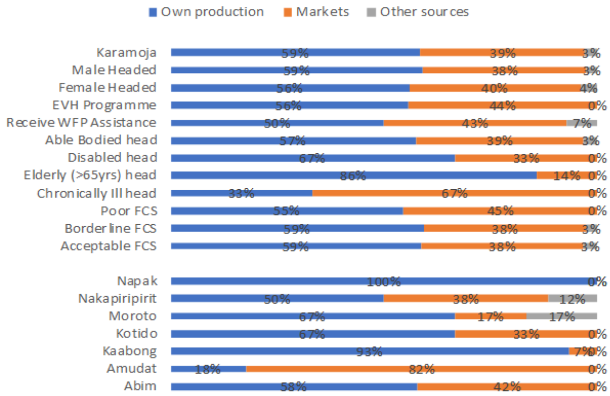


*Figure 2: Main sources of food stocks*

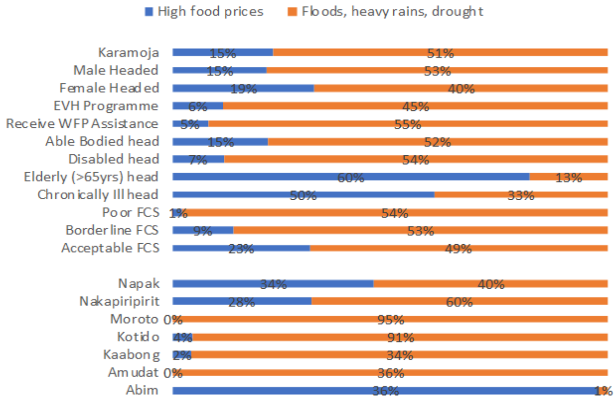


*Figure 3: Two top most shocks experienced, March 2019*

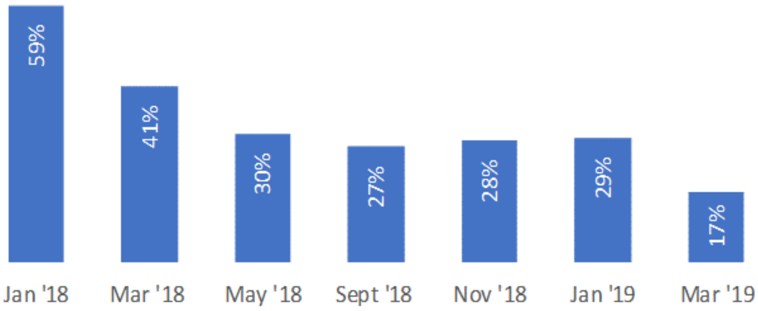


*Figure 4: Trends on food stocks, Karamoja (2018-2019)*

> *"There is nothing like food, we didn't harvest last season because of too much sunshine in our community which destroyed all our crops"*, a female in Losakusha, Kotido

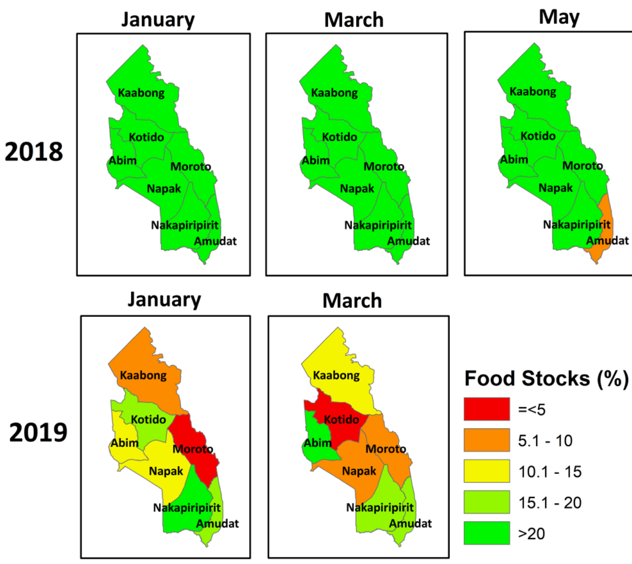


*Figure 5: Trends on households with food stocks, by district (2018-2019)*

## Household Food Consumption

Compared to the same period in 2018, the March 2019 data indicates a slight deterioration in the overall household food consumption patterns (**Fig 7**).

However, there was a slight improvement in the food consumption patterns in March, compared to January 2019. Data indicate slightly more than half (53 percent) of the surveyed households had adequate food consumption, whereas 47 percent had inadequate food consumption (9 percent poor and 38 percent borderline) (**Fig 7**). This was driven by a minimal increase in the consumption of protein rich foods, particularly vegetables and milk (**Fig 8**).

Comparing districts, households in Amudat, Kaabong, Moroto and Kotido had significant proportions of households reporting inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline) (**Fig 9**), partly due to increasing prices for staple foods.

Female headed households had slightly better food consumption compared to their male counterparts. However, households with disabled and chronically ill head were worse off, with the proportion of those having adequate food consumption far below the sub-regional average.

Figure 8 shows *cereals*, *vegetables* and *oils/fats* were the most consumed food items. Overall, there was an improvement in the consumption of cereals, vegetables and milk or diary products in March, compared to January 2019.

*"People are suffering, most of them are relying on consumption of wild vegetables as the only food because they can't afford to buy food. Food is too expensive"*, a male in Tapac, Moroto

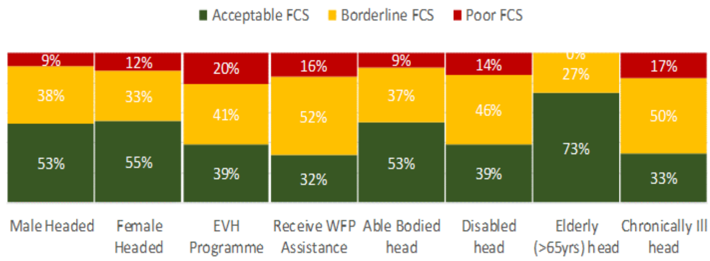


*Figure 6: Household food consumption by gender and vulnerability, March 2019*

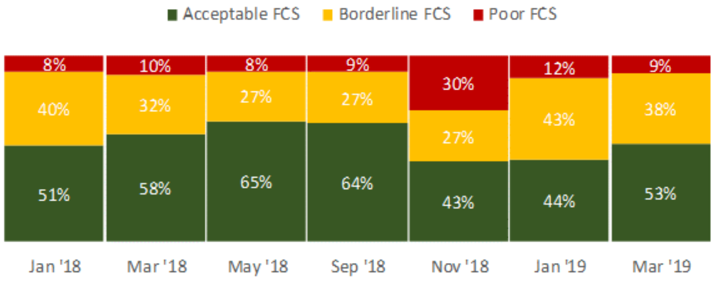


*Figure 7: Trends of food consumption patterns, Karamoja (Jan 2018-Mar 2019)*

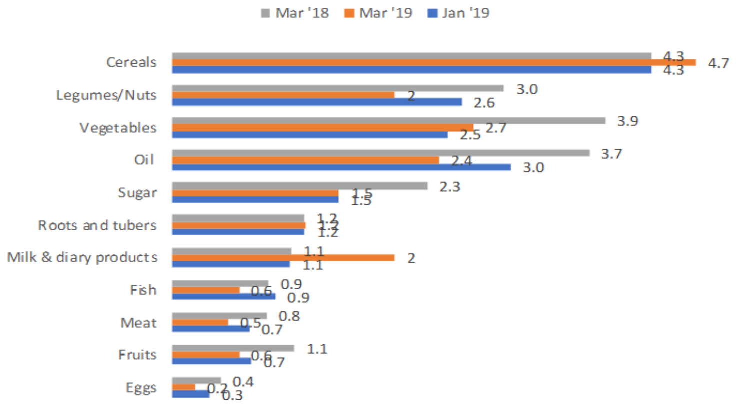


*Figure 8: Mean Household Dietary Diversity (Jan 2018 - Mar2019)*

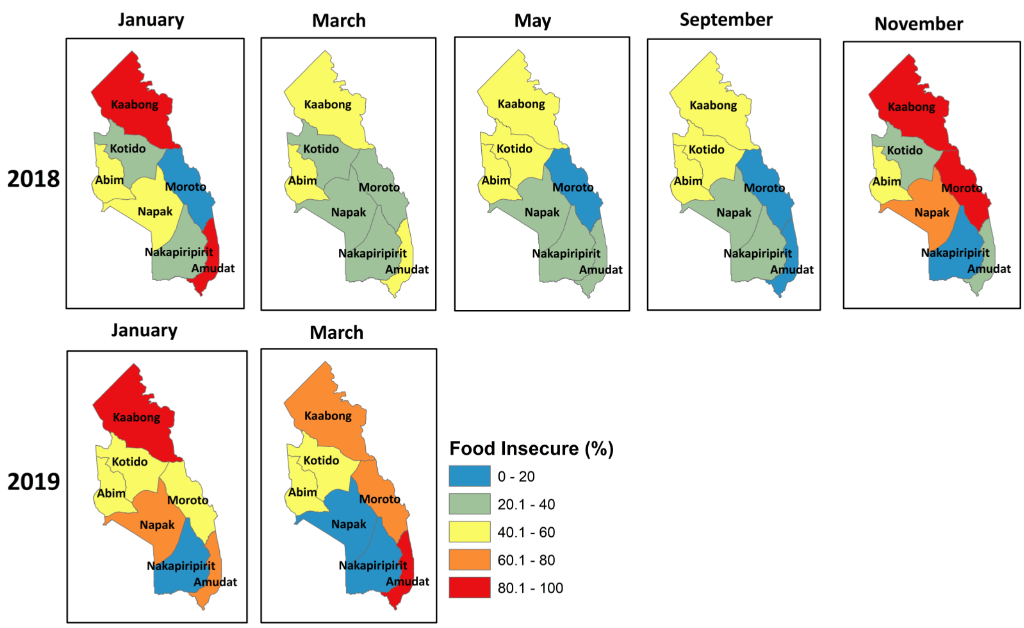


*Figure 9: Trends on households with poor or borderline food consumption, by district (2018-2019)*

## Household Food Coping

In Karamoja, households are increasingly employing negative food related coping strategies, with almost all having adopted at least more than one coping strategy.

March data shows nearly all surveyed households consumed *less preferred or expensive foods*, *reduced number of meals* and *limited portion sizes at meal time* (**Fig 12**). Overall, use of negative food-related coping strategies was slightly higher compared to the same period in 2018 due to depleting stocks coupled with reportedly high food prices.

In March, the overall average rCSI remained almost at the same level as January 2019 (**Fig 13**). The average rCSI was above the sub-regional average in Abim (22) and Amudat (25), while household in Kotido (18) and Moroto (18) reported the least.

About 7 in 10 households reportedly sold productive assets to meet their food needs (**Fig 11**), with proportions significantly higher in Napak (100 percent), Nakapiripirit (98 percent), Moroto (95 percent) and Amudat (94 percent). Similarly, almost 8 in 10 households with adequate food consumption reportedly sold productive assets to buy food.

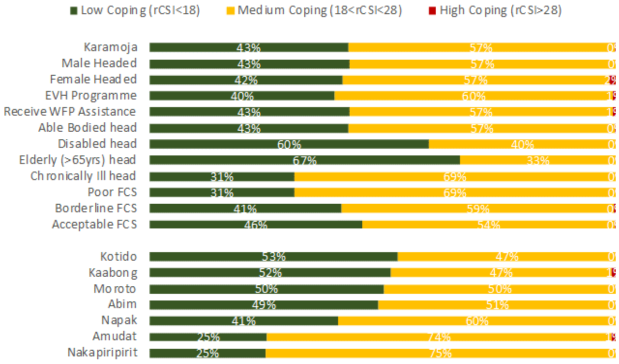


*Figure 10: Households food coping*

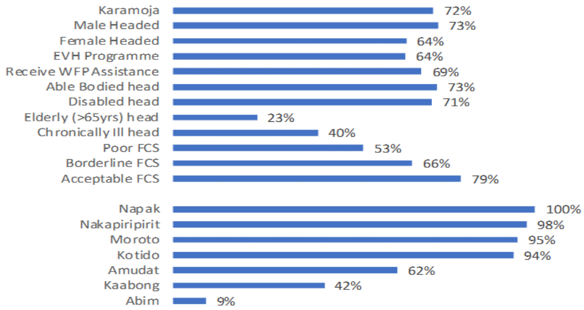


*Figure 11: Sold productive assets to buy food*

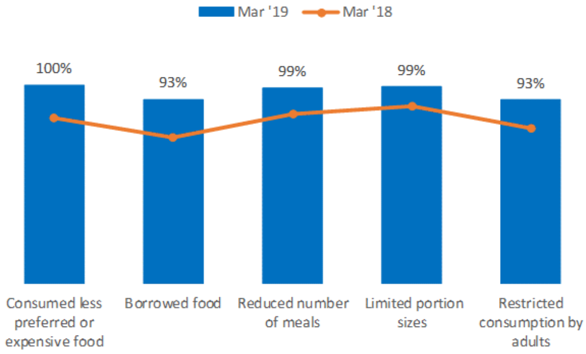


*Figure 12: Applied food coping strategies*

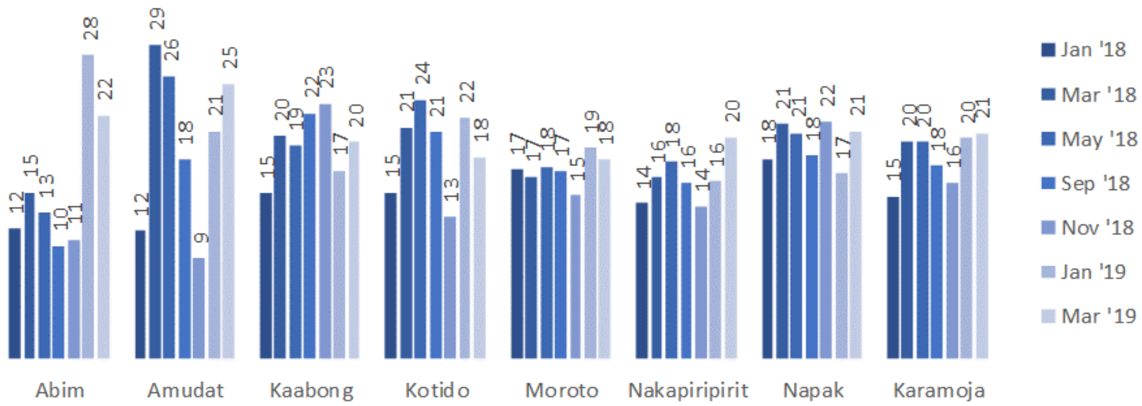


*Figure 13: Trends on the mean rCSI (Jan 2018-Mar 2019)*

*"The food security situation is really bad, locals have been forced to consume wild fruits and leaves for survival"*, a female in Loodoi, Kotido.

***The Reduced Coping Strategy Index (RCSI) measures food insecurity by considering the activities undertaken by households to manage food shortages. More information on rCSI can be found at http://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/6.***

## Household Incomes

More than half (56 percent) of the households in March reportedly had no income earners (**Fig 14**), and about 43 percent had at least 1 to 3 members.

Overall, majority (72 percent) of the households continue to derive incomes through unsustainable income sources (29 percent *sale of food crops,* 26 percent *brewing* and 17 percent *selling firewood/charcoal*) (**Fig 15**).

Comparing genders, male headed households mainly earned from selling firewood (32 percent), whereas their female counterparts primarily derived their incomes from brewing (46 percent).

Following an increase in the demand for food, coupled with rising food prices, more households are selling food crops to earn incomes. The proportion of those selling increased from 14 percent in January to 29 percent in March 2019. Moroto (92 percent) and Kotido (89 percent) had the highest.

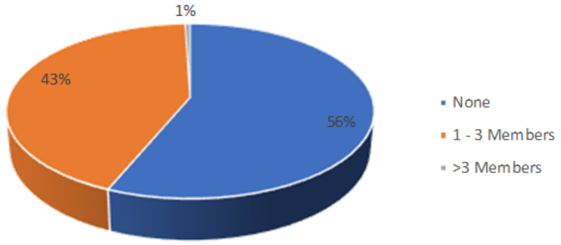


Figure 14: Household income earners

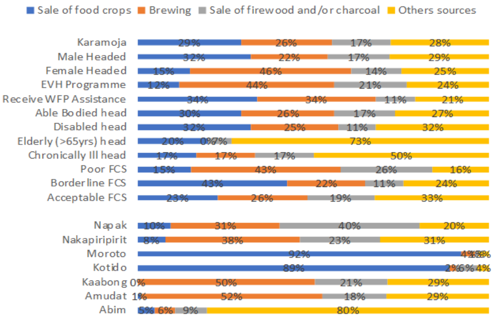


Figure 15: Main income sources

*"There is serious hunger, people don't have enough to eat and even for those who have, they sell it (food) expensively, limiting others who don't have enough money to buy food"*, a male respondent in Loyoroit, Abim.

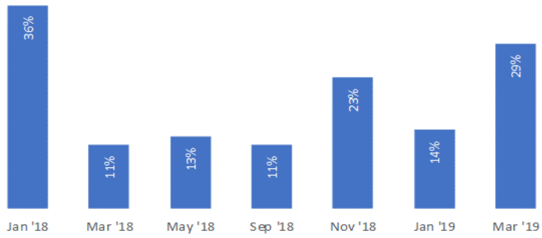


Figure 16: Trends on food crop sale

*Other income sources encompasses*: *Fishing/Hunting; handicrafts; gift/begging; food assistance; remittances; sale of cash crops; sale of livestock and other animal products; sale of Cash Crops; agricultural wage labor; non-agricultural wage labor; petty trade; pensions, government allowances; salaries; and mining.*

## Household Debt Prevalence

The overall debt prevalence in March reduced by 26 percent (from 58 percent in January). Abim (68 percent) and Kaabong (51 percent) had the highest debt prevalence in March (**Fig 20**).

The debt prevalence was at similar levels among male and female headed households (**Fig 17**). For households with disabled (57 percent) and chronically ill (67 percent) heads, the debt prevalence was above the sub-regional average.

The main reason for debt was – *to buy food* (49 percent) and *paying schools fees and other education-related costs* (24 percent) (Fig 18). In Nakapiripirit, slightly more than half (56 percent) borrowed to buy agricultural inputs.

The proportion of households borrowing to meet their food needs were at similar levels as January 2019, but above the same period in 2018 by 12 percent (**Fig 19**), indicating households are more stressed this year compared to 2018.

At district level, the highest proportion of households borrowing to meet their food needs in March was in Moroto (92 percent), Kotido (80 percent) and Amudat (72 percent).

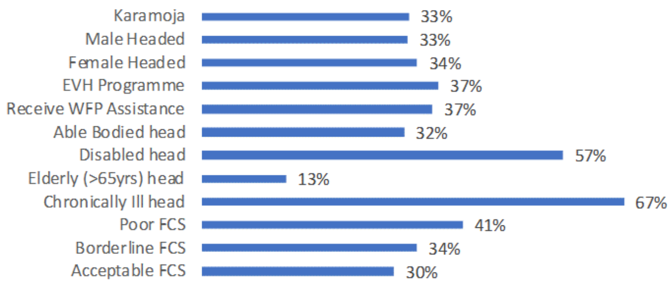


Figure 17: Debt prevalence

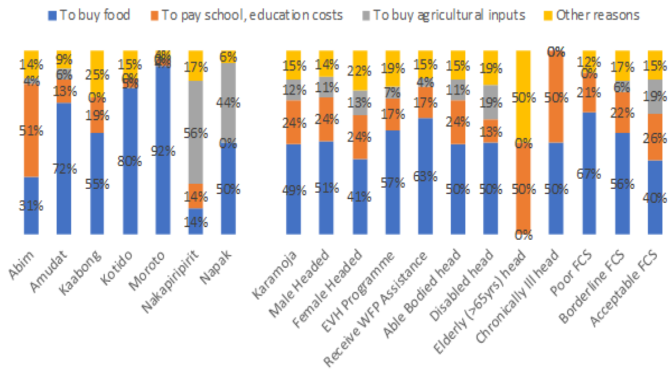


Figure 18: Main reasons for borrowing

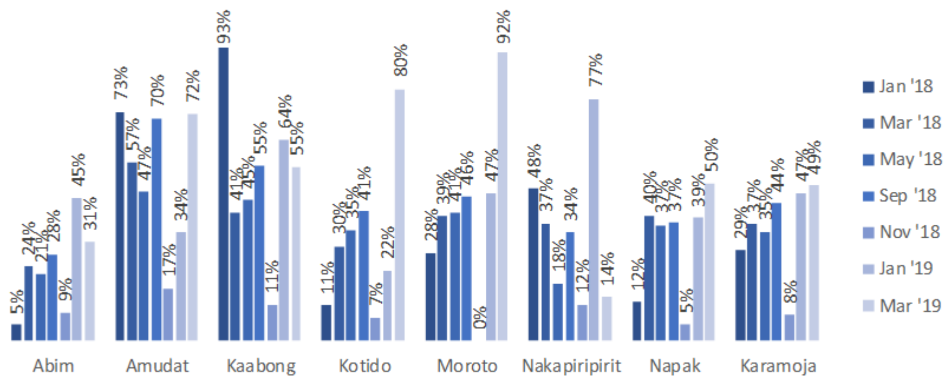


Figure 19: Trends on household dependence on debt for food (Jan 2018-Mar 2019)

Other reasons for debt include: invest in business; cover health expenses; buy animal feeds or fodder or vet services; buy or rent land, buy or rent animals, buy or rent or renovate a flat/ house, pay for social events/ ceremonies, and to clear an outstanding debt.

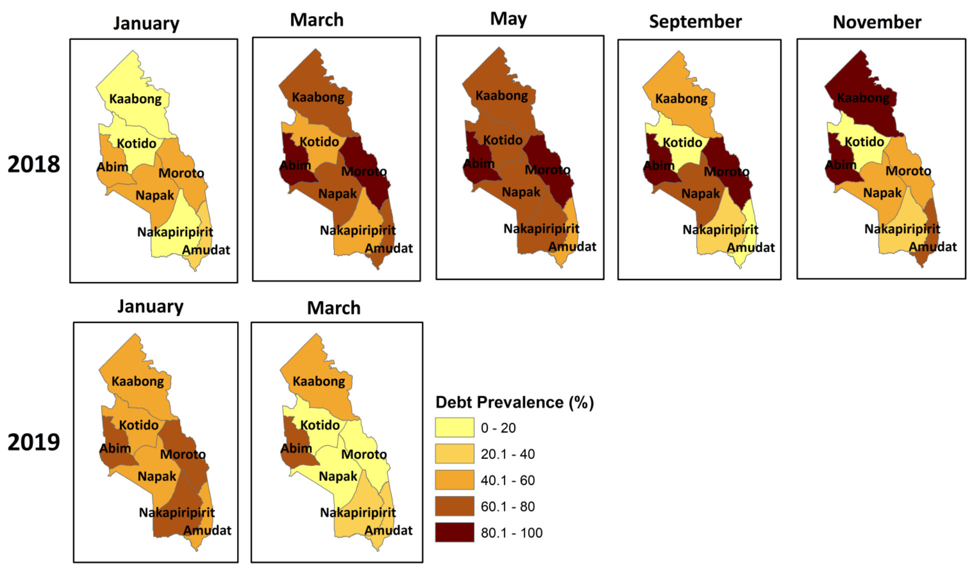


*Figure 20: Trends on the debt prevalence (2018 to 2019), by district*

## Market Prices

Since October 2018, the retail prices for staple foods (maize grain and sorghum) have been gradually increasing. Compared to February, there were observed marginal changes in sorghum (-3 percent) and maize grain (+4 percent) retail prices in March 2019.

Overall, sorghum and maize grain average prices were minimally above 2018 average levels by 13 and 7 percent, respectively, with the increase driven by scarcity on markets following a relatively below average harvest in 2018.

In April through May, retail prices for staple foods are expected to further increase as more households are going to resort to markets to access food. However, with the anticipated rains in April, majority of the households will derive incomes from agricultural labor opportunities and will be able to meet their food requirements.

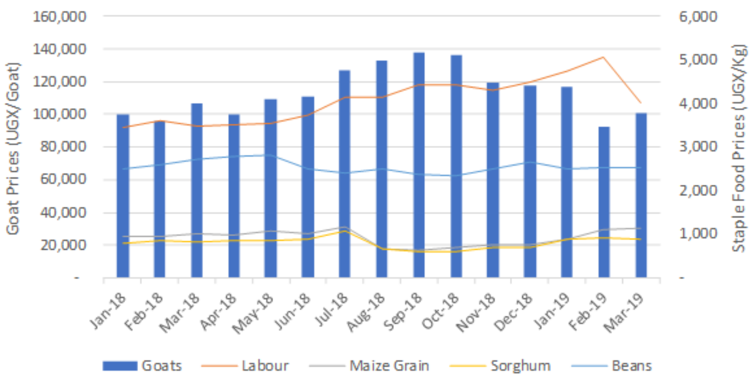


*Figure 21: Trends on food prices in Karamoja*

*"In our community, the maize and sorghum prices are high as of now because people didn't harvest anything last season, there was too much sunshine which destroyed our crops"*, a male in Rupa, Moroto

## Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) admissions

WFP implements Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP) and Maternal Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) Programme at Health Facilities in Karamoja region. Moderately malnourished children under five, and pregnant and lactating women (PLWs are identified by village health teams (VHTs) and referred to health centers for enrolment in SFP. These individuals receive specialized nutritious foods (SNF).

SAM and MAM admissions provide an indication of the levels of malnutrition in the region. In March 2019, the total MAM admission was below the 2018 first quarter average levels by 16 percent while the SAM admission remained higher by 45 percent (**Fig 22**).

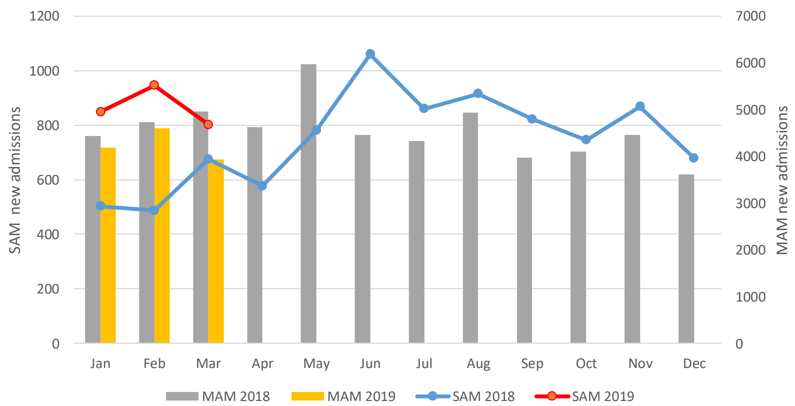


*Figure 22: Trends on MAM and SAM new admissions in Karamoja*


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