

mVAM Bulletin #12: March 2020

Key points



A total of 3,006 telephone interviews were conducted in refugee settlements and in the refugee hosting districts of Adjumani, Arua, Koboko, Lamwo, Moyo and Yumbe in the West Nile Region; Hoima and Kiryandongo in Mid West; and Isingiro, Kamwenge and Kyegegwa in South West Uganda.

Situation Update



In March 2020, 55 percent of households had inadequate food consumption. Especially the situation for households headed by a chronically ill as well as households in South West Uganda reported a deterioration in food consumption since November 2019.



The overall quality of diet was low with a large share of households having low dietary diversity, relying on a diet consisting of mainly cereal, pulses, oil and sometimes vegetables. Furthermore, half of all assessed households did not consume any haem iron-rich food in the past week.



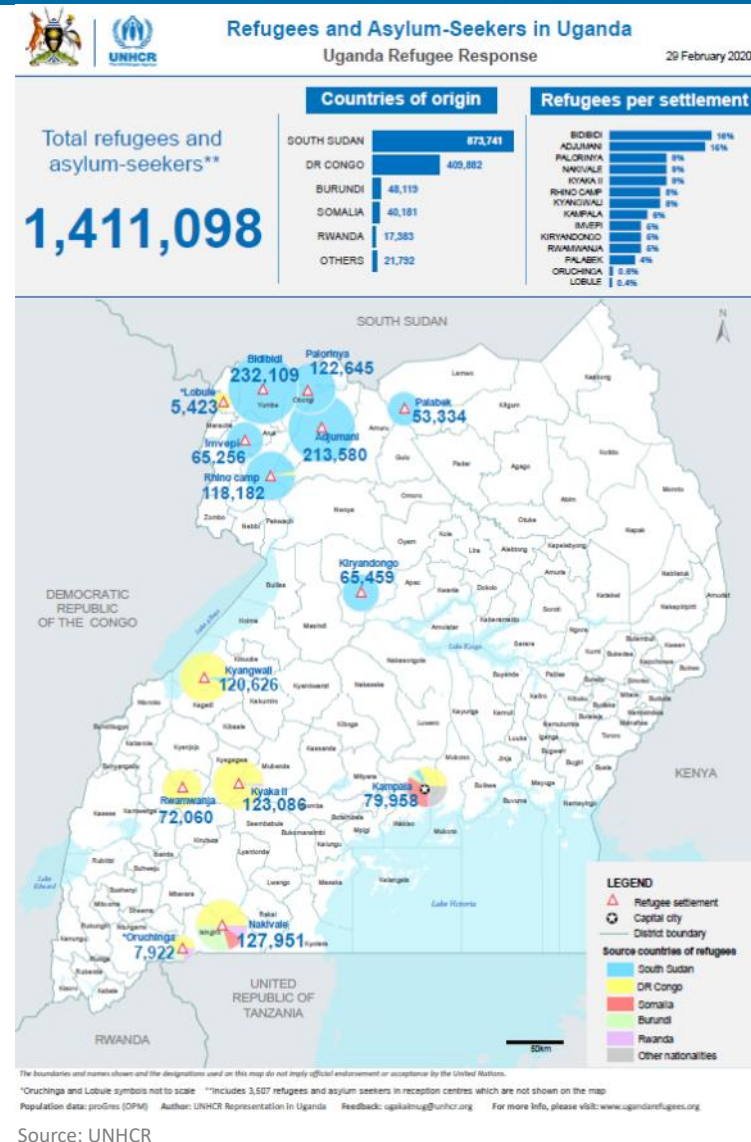
Refugee populations continue to be more vulnerable, having less food stocks, much fewer income earners and higher dependency on WFP assistance, higher debt ratio, poorer food consumption outcomes and higher use of food and livelihood-based coping. Approaching the lean season, the share of refugee households that are relying on WFP food assistance as their main source of food stocks have increased from around half in November 2019 to nearly all.



Refugees in Rwamwanja reported the highest share of poor food consumption (65 percent), debt level (84 percent), share of households restricting adult food consumption for children to eat, and use of emergency asset depleting coping strategies (81 percent).



Beyond the refugee population, the food security situation for households with chronically ill heads is dire as they report fewer households having stocks of staple foods, much higher debt levels, high share of poor food consumption, as well as very high use of both food-based and asset depleting coping strategies to cover their basic needs. Especially food consumption outcomes have deteriorated since November 2019.

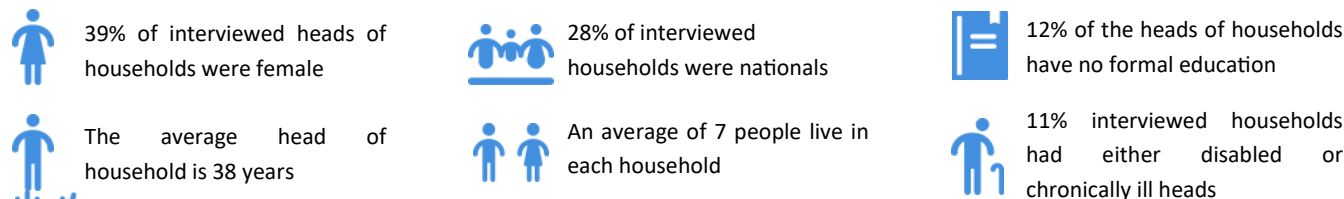




Survey methodology

Mobile voice technology is used for remote collection of household data to monitor seasonal variations in the food security situation in refugee hosting areas in Uganda. WFP introduced mVAM in Ugandan refugee settlements in January 2018. Despite the recent increase of the sample size, the data is not necessarily representative of the larger population, and readers should note these limitations when interpreting figures and trends.

Live telephone surveys were conducted from 3rd to 28th February 2020 with 3,006 households randomly chosen from a master list. Households were located in the refugee settlements and in the refugee hosting districts of Adjumani, Arua, Koboko, Lamwo, Moyo and Yumbe in the West Nile region; Hoima and Kiryandongo in the Mid West region; Isingiro, Kamwenge and Kyegegwa in South West region of Uganda. The data for all figures stems from primary data collection, and results are compared to results from relevant previous mVAM rounds.



Household food stocks

In March 2020, 77 percent of the assessed households were in possession of stocks of staple foods including various types of cereals and beans (Figure 1). The share was relatively higher for nationals than for refugees (83 percent vs. 75 percent). In total, 76 percent of households had cereal food stocks (maize, sorghum, millet or rice) in their households, while 65 percent had beans, peas or groundnuts. Relatively more national households had cereal stocks (80 percent vs. 74 percent for refugees), though fewer had bean stocks (60 percent vs. 66 percent for refugees).

More households in West Nile had food stocks (87 percent) compared to Mid West and South West (70 percent and 65 percent respectively). When comparing household food stocks by type of modality received as food assistance, significantly more in-kind beneficiaries had food stocks than those who received cash (87 percent vs. 64 percent). When comparing according to the health status, more households with able-bodied household heads had food stocks (79 percent) compared to those with chronically ill (68 percent) and disabled household heads (59 percent).

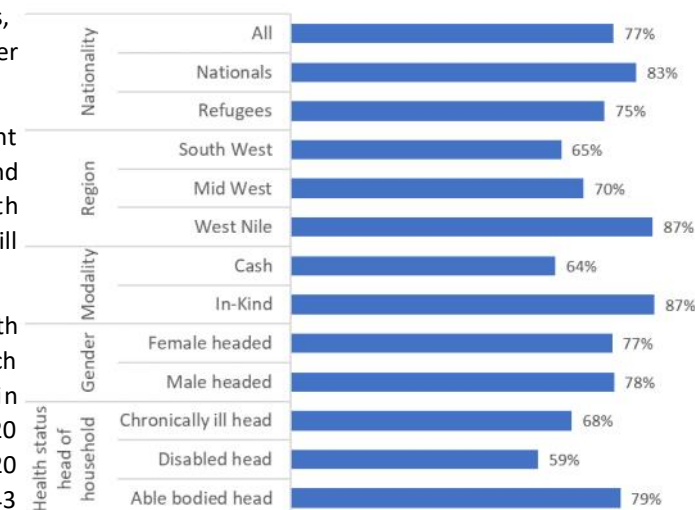
For refugee households, the level of cereal stocks varied widely from only 20 percent in Kyangwali to 100 percent in Bidi-Bidi, with five camps where more than 9 in 10 households were keeping cereal stock (Figure 2). When comparing to the month of March from the two previous years, 11 percent more refugee reported having cereal stocks (63 percent in March 2018 vs. 74 percent in March 2020). The increase was largely pushed by Rwamwanja, where the share had more than tripled from a very low level of 20 percent to 72 percent in March 2020. At 45 percent, 32 percent fewer households in Nakivale kept cereal stocks in March 2020 than in March 2018. When comparing to one year ago, Kyaka II saw the largest increase in refugee keeping cereal stocks (43 percent), while Kyangwali and Nakivale reported the largest decreases at 24 percent and 33 percent respectively (Figure 2).

Table 1: Survey sample size, March 2020

	Refugees	Hosts	Total
Adjumani	174	123	297
Bidi-Bidi	173	40	213
Imvepi	170	40	210
Kiryandongo	176	40	216
Lobule	173	69	242
Kyaka II	189	131	320
Kyangwali	152	90	242
Nakivale	173	60	233
Oruchinga	169	1	170
Palabek	161	81	242
Palorinya	174	83	257
Rhino-Camp	94	47	141
Rwamwanja	184	37	221
Overall	2,164	842	3,006

*** The use of refugee settlement names to represent host community only implies sampled nationals that are residing in the sub counties surrounding the refugee settlements.*

Figure 1: Households with staple food stocks, disaggregated

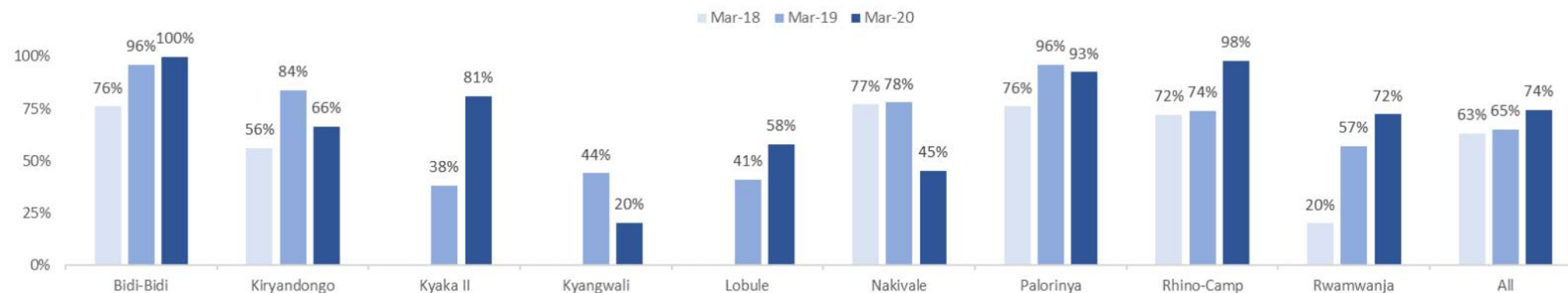


Source: mVAM



Household food stocks, continued

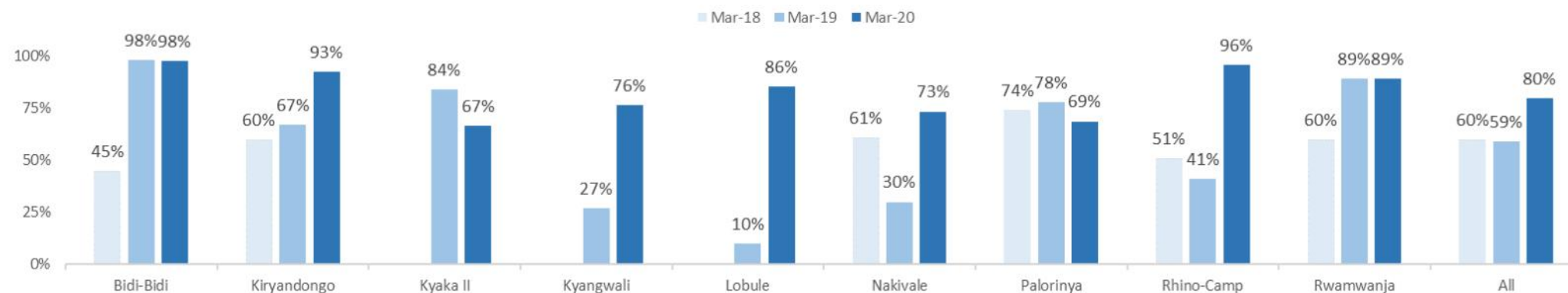
Figure 2: Refugee households, cereal food stock trend, by settlement



Source: mVAM

For host population households, the level of cereal food stocks was generally higher, varying from 67 percent in the areas surrounding Kyaka II to 98 percent close to Bidi-Bidi camp (Figure 3). The average level was 80 percent, which is 20 percent higher than in March 2018. The most volatile situation was reported from Lobule where only 10 percent of households had cereal stocks in March 2019, which increased to 18 percent in May 2019, increased again to 96 percent in September 2019, fell to 56 percent in November 2019 and increased again to 86 percent in March 2020. This indicates that the host populations around the Lobule camp is vulnerable to seasonality. Also Kyangwali, Nakivale and Rhino-Camp reported large increases in the share of host community households with cereal stocks of 183 percent, 144 percent and 134 percent respectively compared to one year ago. In comparison, Kyaka II and Palorinya saw a negative development of 21 percent and 11 percent respectively compared to March 2019, while the development in Bidi-Bidi and Rwamwanja remained stable.

Figure 3: Host population households, cereal food stock trend, by settlement

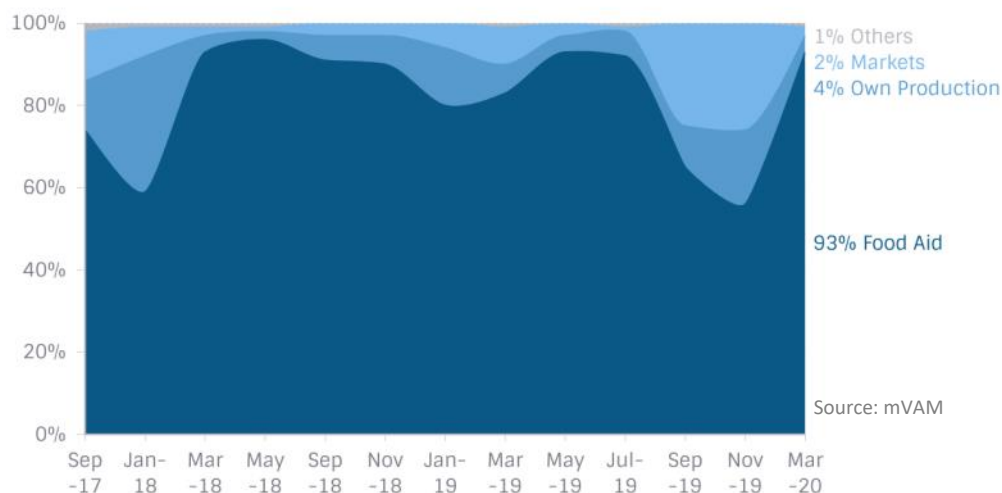


Source: mVAM



Source of food stocks

Figure 4: Main source of cereal food stocks among refugee households



At 93 percent, food aid remained the main source of cereal food stocks in March 2020, followed by own production (four percent), market purchases (two percent) and other sources (one percent).

While having increased by 67 percent since November 2019 where food aid comprised 56 percent of total cereal stocks for refugees, it follows the seasonal trends by being the same level as was reported in March 2018 (no change) and slightly higher than March last year (12 percent increase).

At four percent, own production of cereal reflected regular seasonal trends and was at the same level as in March 2018, while being slightly lower than March 2019 where seven percent of total cereal stocks was produced by the households themselves. Generally, own production is a larger source around November-January, while during the rest of the year it only contributes marginally to cereal food stocks.

At two percent, the importance of market purchases is in the lower-end of the normal level for the refugee populations, and since the monitoring started in September 2017 it has mainly been the last two rounds of September and November 2019 where market purchases have comprised an important source of cereal stocks at 25-26 percent (Figure 4).



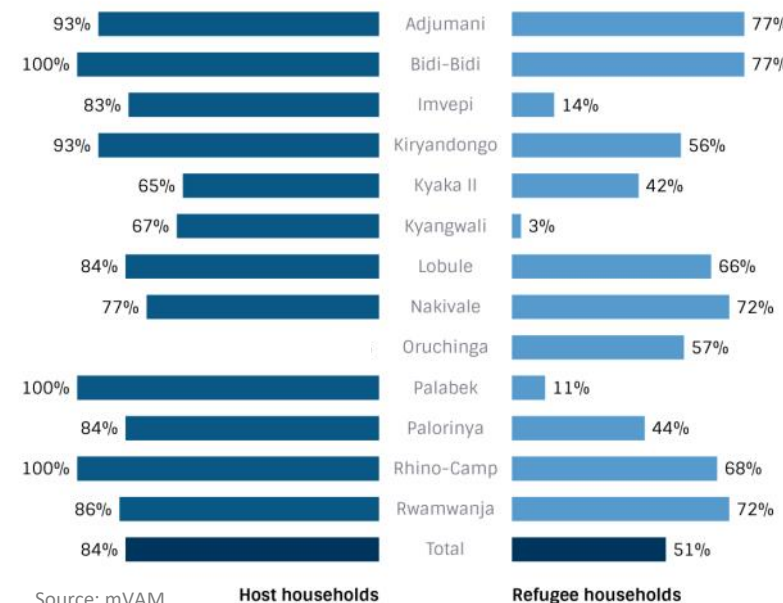
Livelihood profile

Overall, 60 percent of households have at least one income earner in the household. This figure is significantly higher for the host population (84 percent) than for refugee households (51 percent). When comparing to March 2018, this number has increased from 64 percent for Ugandan households while it decreased from 59 percent for refugee households. The trend is similar when comparing to last year, where 77 percent of the host population had an income source significantly higher than the level for refugees (52 percent). Thus, the trend reflects an improvement in the share of households with a livelihood source for the host population during the past two years while this has decreased for refugees.

When comparing the host population by area, households around Bidi-Bidi, Palabek and Rhino Camp were best off as they all have at least person earning an income (Figure 5, left side). The situation in Bidi-Bidi has significantly improved from 29 percent in March 2019 to 98-100 percent in all four assessment rounds from July 2019. Similarly, the situation at Rhino camp has improved from 67 percent in March 2019 to 83-100 percent since May 2019. Worst off are host populations in Kyangwali, Lobule and Nakivale where 65 percent, 67 percent and 77 percent of households respectively had a source of income. Especially in Kyangwali and Lobule, this reflects a deterioration since last year where 97-98 percent had an income.

For refugees (Figure 5, right side), households in Adjumani, Bidi-Bidi, Nakivale and Rwamwanja were relatively better off in March 2020 as 72-77 percent of households had at least one source of income. As with the host population, the livelihood situation in Bidi-Bidi has improved massively from just 1-3 percent of refugee households having an income

Figure 5: Households with at least one income earner, by HH status





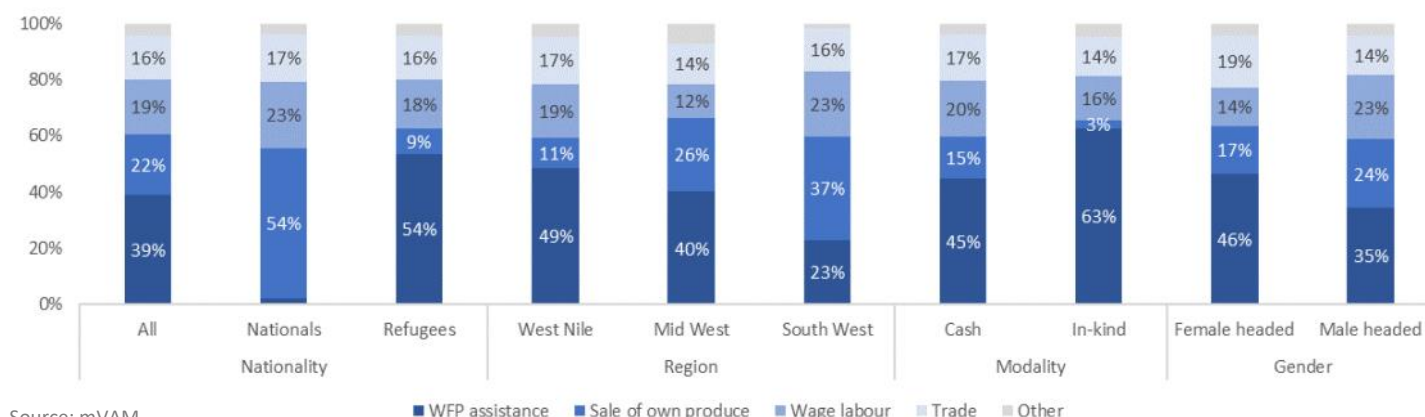
Livelihood profile, continued

source in November 2018 - January 2019, to 60 percent in September 2019 and 75 percent in November 2019. Though at a lower level (44 percent), the livelihood situation has also greatly improved in Ralorinya when compared to January - March 2019 (two and five percent), as well as in Rhino Camp where nearly five times as many households had an income earner than one year ago (14 percent vs. 68 percent). Opposite this trend, livelihood opportunities for refugees in Kyangwali have nearly vanished from a level of 62-81 percent in March-May 2019 to only three percent in March 2020. Also in Imvepi, the level of income earners is low at 14 percent.

At 39 percent, WFP assistance is the main source of livelihood followed by sale of own produce such as food crops, cash crops and animal products (22 percent), wage labour at 19 percent and trade of firewood, charcoal, petty trade and handicrafts at 16 percent (Figure 6). At four percent, other income sources including begging, fishing, hunting, gifts, brewing and remittances comprise only a small part of the total source of livelihood. For refugees, more than half of households rely on WFP food assistance as their main source of income in comparison to only two percent for nationals. Instead, more than half of nationals depends on sale of own produce, mainly food crops, followed by wage labour (23 percent).

According to region, West Nile was the most dependent on food assistance while households in South West are more dependent on sale of own produce (37 percent). Beneficiaries receiving in-

Figure 6: Main income source, disaggregated



Source: mVAM

kind distributions are significantly more dependent on WFP assistance in relation to other sources of income, and only three percent of household are relying on sale of own produce as their main livelihood source. For cash-receiving beneficiaries, 20 percent are relying on wage labour or sale of their produce to sustain their livelihoods.

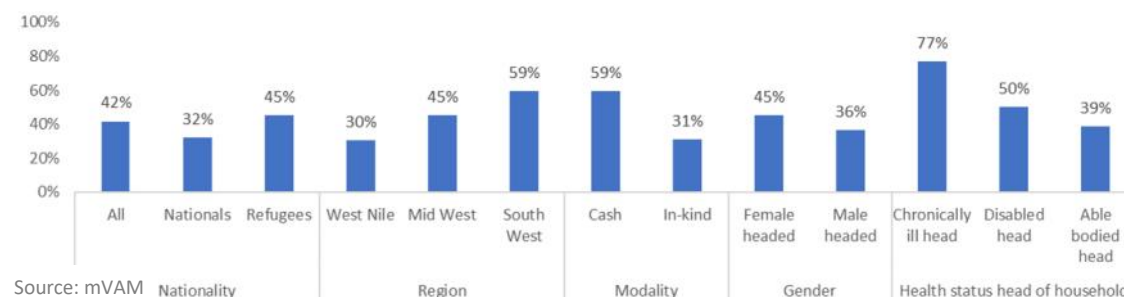
Female headed households have a higher reliance on WFP assistance in comparison to households headed by males (46 percent vs. 35 percent). Instead, male headed households are comparably more reliant on sale of produce and wage labour, though female headed households rely more on trade.



Debt prevalence

In March 2020, 42 percent of the interviewed had debt which is similar to November 2019. Of this, 39 percent was used for food, 24 percent for education and 16 percent for health. Comparably more refugees have debt (45 percent) than nationals (32 percent), and twice as many households in South West had debt as in West Nile. Similar to the findings from November 2019, nearly double as many beneficiary households receiving cash had debt compared to those receiving in-kind distributions (59 percent vs. 31 percent). Also, female headed households had higher debt ratio, as well as household where the head was chronically ill (77 percent).

Figure 7: Share of households with debt, disaggregated



Source: mVAM



Household food consumption

On average, interviewed households had two meals per day consisting mainly of cereal (eaten nearly every day), pulses and fat (eaten four times per week). Vegetables were eaten every second day, sugar and meat products including were eaten once per week on average, while fruit and dairy products were rarely eaten (Figure 8).

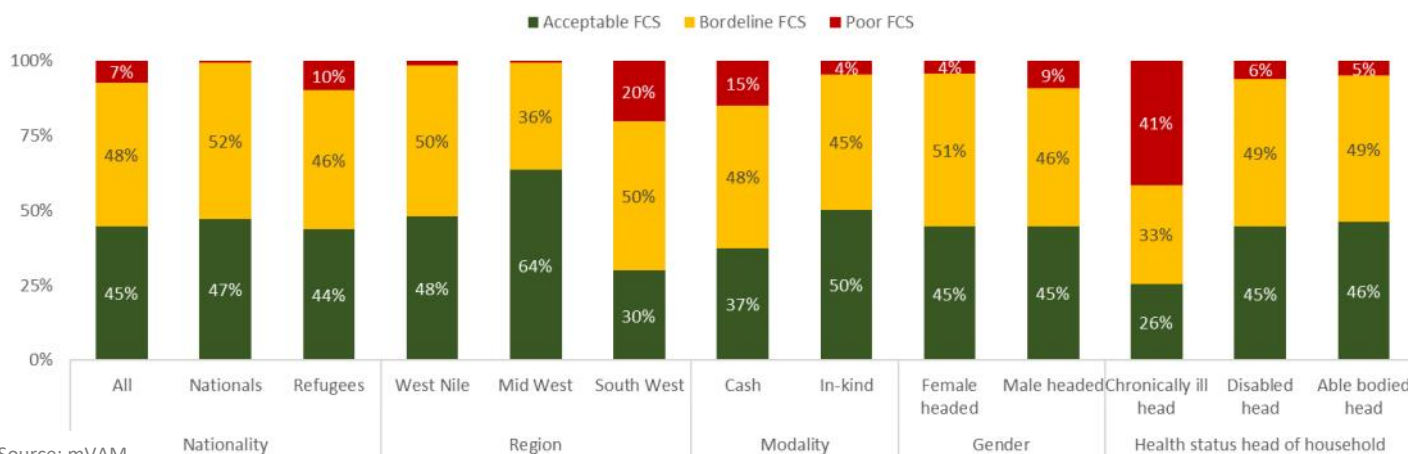
The quality of the diets consumed was generally low with 47 percent of households having a low dietary diversity score (eating up to four food groups in a week) and 52 percent having a medium score (five-six food groups), leaving only two percent with an acceptable dietary diversity score (eating all seven food groups).

Half of all households did not consume any haem iron rich food groups in the week prior to being assessed, while 49 percent consumed haem iron between one and six days, and only two percent consumed it every day. For vitamin A rich foods, 17 percent did not consume any, 77 percent consumed it between one and six days, while five percent consumed it every day in the past week. Protein rich foods were generally consumed more frequently and only one percent of households were not consuming protein-rich foods at all in the past week.

Overall, nearly half of the households had an acceptable food consumption score (45 percent), 48 percent had borderline and seven percent poor food consumption (Figure 9). Refugee households were worse off in especially the proportion of households having poor food consumption (10 percent vs. one percent for nationals), and especially refugees in Rwamwanja, Oruchinga and Palabek drove poor food consumption, accounting for 65 percent, 37 percent and 14 percent poor food consumption respectively. In Comparison, the rest of the camps had nearly no households with poor food consumption.

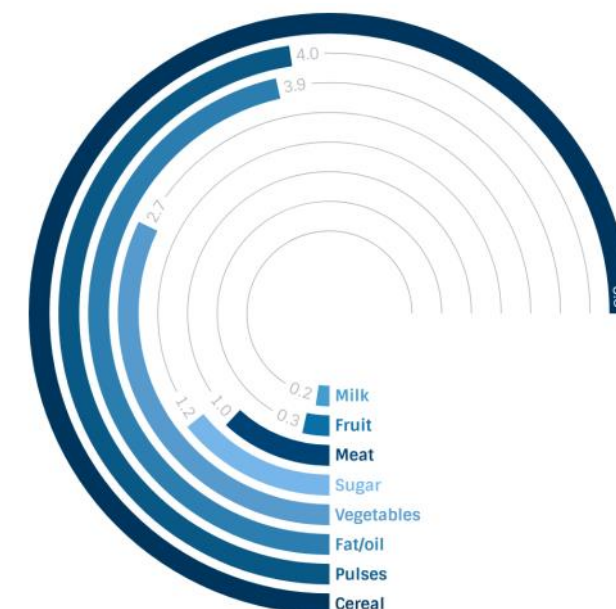
For the host population, only Kyaka II, Kyagwali and Adjumani had households with poor food consumption, though only between one and two percent. However, Adjumani had a very high proportion of households having borderline food consumption at 88 percent.

Figure 9: Food consumption score, disaggregated



Source: mVAM

Figure 8: Average #of days food groups were consumed



Source: mVAM

When comparing regions, South West Uganda was significantly worse off with 20 percent of households having poor food consumption compared to two percent in West Nile and one percent in West Nile. At the same time, half of all household in South West have borderline food consumption, leaving only 30 percent with acceptable food consumption.

In-kind beneficiaries and female headed households are relatively better off in terms of food consumption. However, households with a chronically ill head showed concerningly poor food consumption outcomes with 41 percent poor, 33 percent borderline and only 26 percent acceptable food consumption. In comparison, both households with able bodied and disable heads have significantly better food consumption.



Food and livelihood-based coping

Overall, 29 percent of the households had to apply **food-based coping** strategies to cover their food needs within the week prior to being surveyed. One fourth ate less preferred food, while every fifth household reduced the number or the size of meals (both 21 percent). The more severe strategies of borrowing food and restricting adult food consumption for children to eat were applied by 17 percent and ten percent of households respectively. This was mainly due to high food prices, loss of employment or reduced wages, adverse weather conditions and health issues (Figure 10).

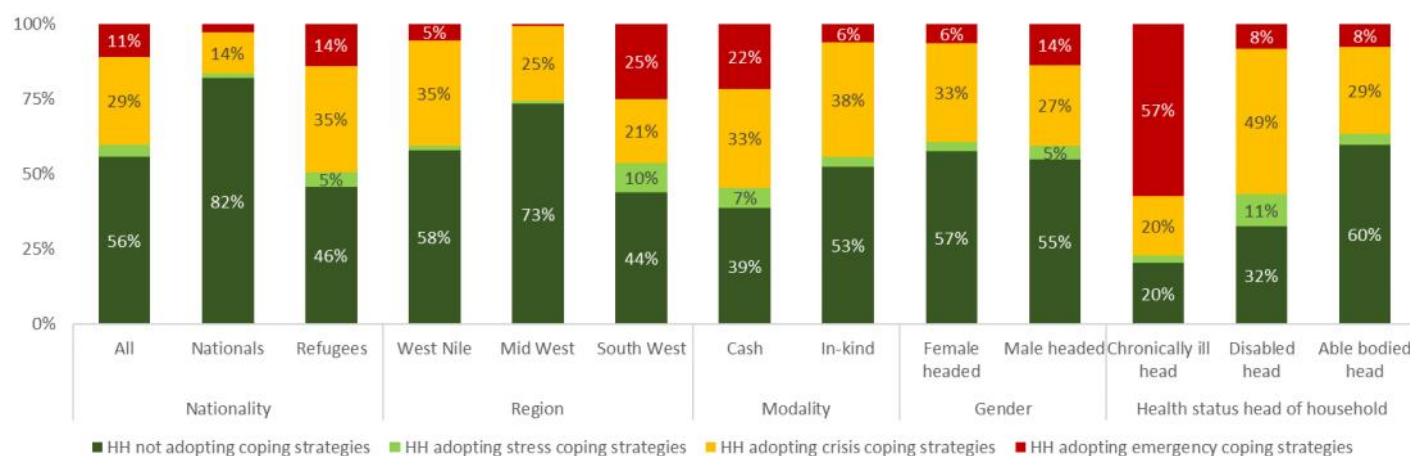
The average reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) reflected a slight decrease in the use of food-based coping compared to November 2019. Though it decreased for refugees, it stayed at a much higher level than for nationals (rCSI of ten vs. five). When comparing to November 2019, refugees in nine of the monitored camps used less food-based coping. However, refugees in Adjumani had a high increase in the level of food based coping (rCSI of 18 vs. 23), leaving it as the camp with the highest rCSI. Also the camps in Palorinya (rCSI of seven vs. 14) and Imvepi (rCSI of four vs. ten) reported a deterioration within the past four months.

It is worrisome that more than half of households in Rwamwanja and a third of households in Bidi-Bidi camps have restricted adult food consumption for children to eat at least once in the week prior to being surveyed. For the host population, the situation specially deteriorated in the areas surrounding the camps of Palorinya and Nakivale, where the rCSI increased from around seven to 17 since September.

At regional level, households in South West had a much higher use of food-based coping compared to especially Mid West, where coping was relatively low. With an rCSI of 14, households headed by chronically ill continued to be using high levels of food-based coping to cover their food needs compared to able bodied (rCSI of eight).

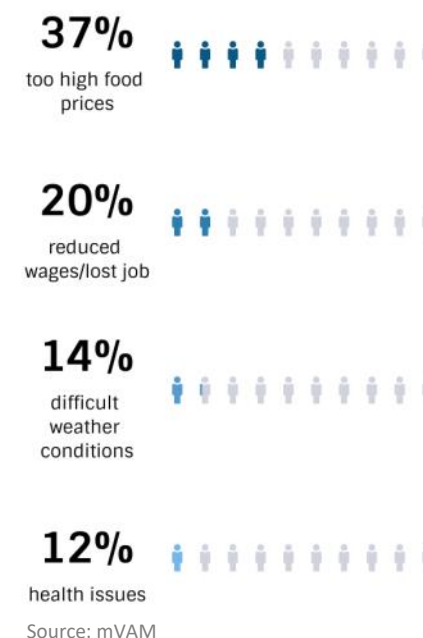
For **livelihood-based coping strategies**, 56 percent of household did not apply any asset depleting coping mechanisms to cover their basic needs in the 30 days prior to being surveyed, four percent adopted stress coping, 29 percent crisis coping and 11 percent emergency coping strategies. Refugee households applied comparably more emergency coping strategies which include begging, engaging in illegal or high risk activities or migration of the entire household to cover basic needs. The situation was especially dire for refugees living in Rwamwanja and Oruchinga, where 81 percent and

Figure 9: Livelihood-based coping strategies, disaggregated



Source: mVAM

Figure 10: Main reasons for food-coping



43 percent respectively were applying emergency coping strategies to meet their needs.

Households in South West Uganda generally applied much more emergency coping (25 percent) than Mid West and West Nile (one and five percent). Also, 22 percent of cash beneficiaries applied emergency coping compared to six percent for in-kind recipients. Half of the beneficiaries receiving in-kind did not apply any livelihood-based coping during the past 30 days.

More than double as many male-headed households had to apply emergency coping strategies compared to those headed by females (14 percent vs. six percent), while the level of emergency coping used by households headed by a chronically ill head is worryingly high at 57 percent (compared to 31 percent in November 2019).



Main challenges faced by respondents

At the end of the interview, the respondents are asked to give their subjective opinions about which challenges they are currently facing and how these are impacting the food security situation in their communities (Figure 12).

Overall, two percent said they have a good food security situation without additional challenges, while 19 percent assessed their food security situation as being fair. Some of the respondents find that food distributions have become more timely.

The challenge that was most frequently reported by nearly half of the households was food prices increasing, negatively impacting the purchasing power of especially poor and market-dependent households. This was followed by around one fifth of households reporting that a lack of land for cultivation and lack of money was the main challenge to food security in their community.

Following climate-related challenges of lack of rains, drought was reported by 18 percent of households as an issue to ensure sufficient harvest to cover food needs, while 16 percent reported that they did not receive enough food.

In addition, 15 percent reported that they were not able to balance their diets by eating a variety of different food groups, which is supported by the low dietary diversity score reported across the assessed areas.

Delayed food distribution caused concerns for 10 percent of households, while a long distance to FDP and insufficient food assistance were both reported by seven percent of the respondents.

Additionally, previous poor harvests, floods, lower demand for agricultural casual labourers during dry season, conflicting basic needs, for instance high expenses to cover medication or school fees, internal power dynamics in the household, and having only one breadwinner in the households are mentioned as challenges faced by some of the surveyed households.

Figure 12: Main challenges to communities' food security situation



Source: mVAM



For further information

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mVAM Resources:

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

Blog mvam.org

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