THE GAMBIA

mVAM Food Security and Market Bulletin #I, August 2020

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND MARKET PRICES

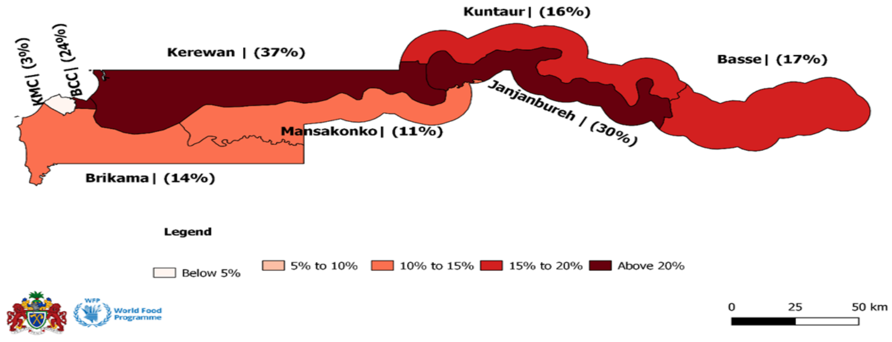
Highlights:

In July 2020, WFP Gambia embarked on supporting the Government to shift from face to face approach to remote data collection to ensure continued monitoring of the food security situation of households and market prices in the Gambia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The continuous mobile data collection covers all the 6 regions in the country.

There has been stability in the food security situation, with growing trends of households showing improved food consumption patterns. Proportions of families with poor food consumption, dropped from 25% reported in March 2020 by Cadre Hamonise, to 20%.

Prices of key staple foods are also reportedly stable. This is likely because of Government national food distributions combined with WFP and other partners responses to the COVID-19.

PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH POOR AND BORDERLINE FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE (July -mVAM)



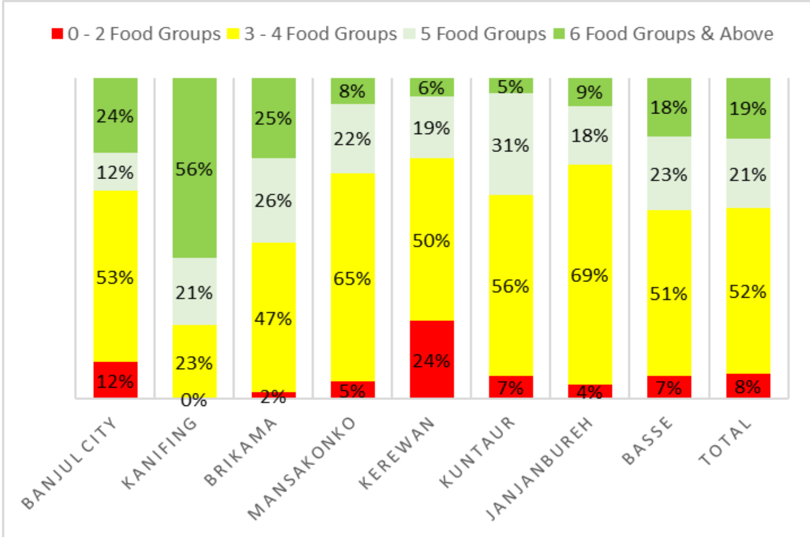
Situation update

The 2020 March Cadre Harmonise (CH) food security assessment was updated in April through a rapid assessment to reflect the impact of COVID-19. The rapid assessment report indicated that 733,000 people would be vulnerable to food insecurity during the lean season due a poor 2019 cropping season as well as the effect of COVID-19. After the first Covid-19 case, the government of The Gambia responded with containment measures that included restrictions on economic activities such as closure of open "lumos" markets, and other businesses. The impact of Covid-19 was not factored in the CH analysis and the restrictions on economic activities deems it necessary for continuous monitoring of food security situation in the country as we try to cope with the pandemic.

It was against this backdrop that for the first time in The Gambia data is collected remotely through mobile calls (mVAM), a shift from face to face data collection due to Covid-19. WFP provided technical support and resources to the Government of The Gambia to commence remote monitoring across the country.

The food security situation was generally stable across the country, except for some pockets with poor consumption, particularly Kerewan (37%), Janjanburreh (30%) and Banjul (24%) higher than the national average of 20%. Food consumption in these regions has deteriorated compared to March 2020 CH, which is 5% in Banjul and 16%Kerewan. Overall, 52% of the households had moderate dietary diversity eating 3-4 food groups, while 8% had severe dietary diversity taking only 0-2 food groups. The poor dietary dietary diversity is worst in Kerewan and Banjul City.

Fig. 1: **Households Dietary Diversity Scores**



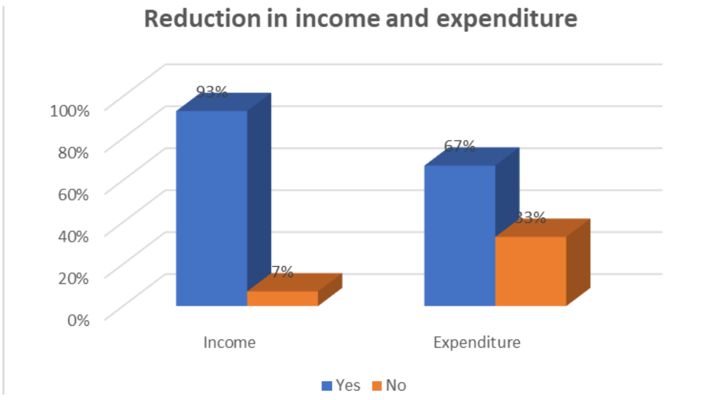
Income and Expenditure

About 93% of respondents had their household income reduced as a result of the Covid-19 and majority of them cited low production due to social isolation, loss of jobs, closure of markets including lumo, drop in sales, seizure of remittance both home and abroad, loss of perishable crops and reduction of passengers on public transport as the main cause. Covid-19 containment measures have had detrimental impact on economic activities. In the Gambia majority live from hand to mouth either in petty trading at lumo and regular markets, taxi driving, selling at the TDA all of which were affected by the Covid-19 restrictions measures. According to the preharvest about 20% in rural Gambia rely on remittance for food. Covid-19 has had a big impact on the purchasing power of people.

An estimated 67% of the households had their expenditure increased as a result of the Covid-19, citing panic buying, hoarding of commodities by shopkeepers, closure of schools resulting in the increase of food expenditure costs, high costs of transportation resulting from the restriction of passengers on public transport. The closure of schools due to the pandemic was an extra burden on some parents as they have extra mouths to feed. Fares were increased by taxi drivers due to reduction in number of passengers to carry.

Given a reduction in income and increase in expenditure, households' disposable income fall which lowered the purchasing power of most households.

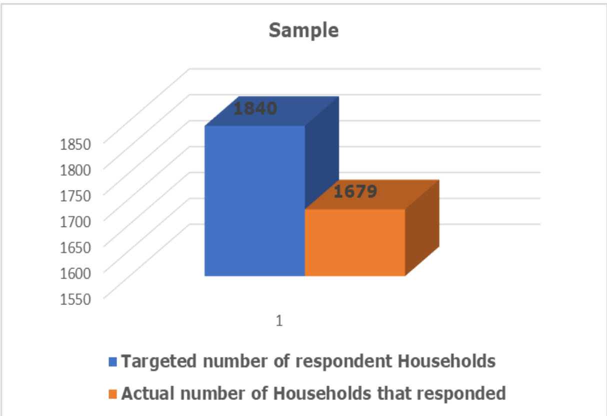
Fig. 2: Income and Expenditure



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

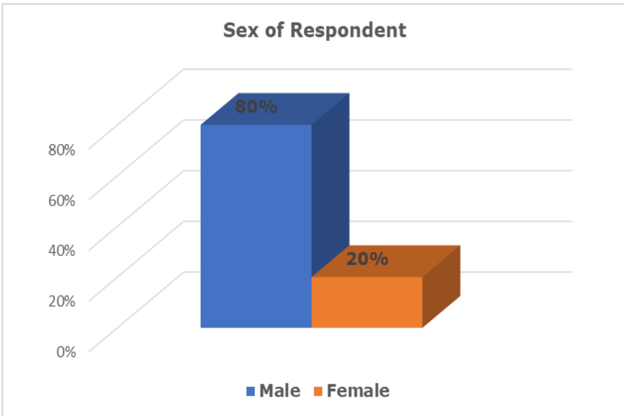
Sample profile

Fig. 3: Sample



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Fig. 4: Sex of Respondents



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Sample profile

In July 2020, a mobile VAM survey (mVAM) was carried out on a sample of 1,840 households selected anonymously among the 10,000 contacts in the GBoS database. Out of a total of 3,251 EAs in the 6 LGAs and 2 councils, five percent (163 EAs) was sampled with 5 households to be interviewed per sampled EA. This translates to 1,840 households from the sampled enumeration areas.

The survey has a national coverage with 80% of the respondents males and 20% females; while 86% are male headed while 14% are female heads of their households. The male domination could be attributed to cultural and religious norms. Over a third of household heads have no formal education (31%), about 41% conventional school, 26% madarassa education and 2% others.

Food Consumption by Gender and Household size

The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency, and relative nutritional importance of different food groups. Respondents were asked about the food consumption of their household in the past seven days.

Interestingly, large households (with>10 members) had better food consumption (81%) than small households(1-10) (79%) as shown in **Fig.5.** This may be as a result of household members contributing that gave them an edge over small households in times of purchasing power.

Male headed household had a higher acceptable food consumption (80%) than female headed households (79%). Poor food consumption for female headed households was 21%, higher than the national average(20.1%). This implies that female headed households are more vulnerable to food security especially in the context of the Covid-19 as seen in **Fig.6.**

Overall**,** the poor and borderline consumption translates to 46,416 people with high vulnerability to food insecurity and 311,466 with moderate vulnerability, respectively.

Fig. 5: FCS Small households vs Large house-

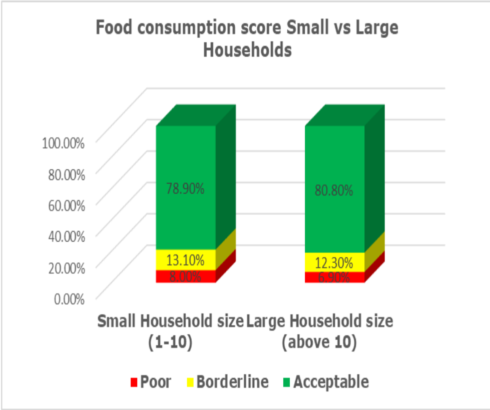
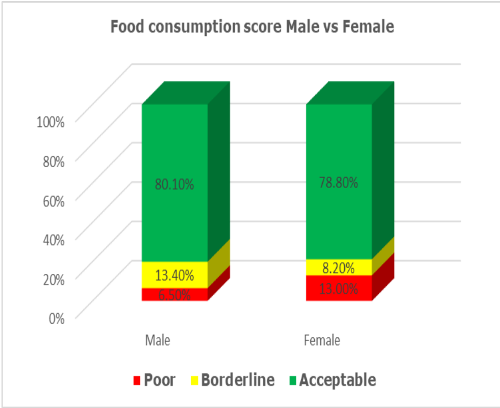


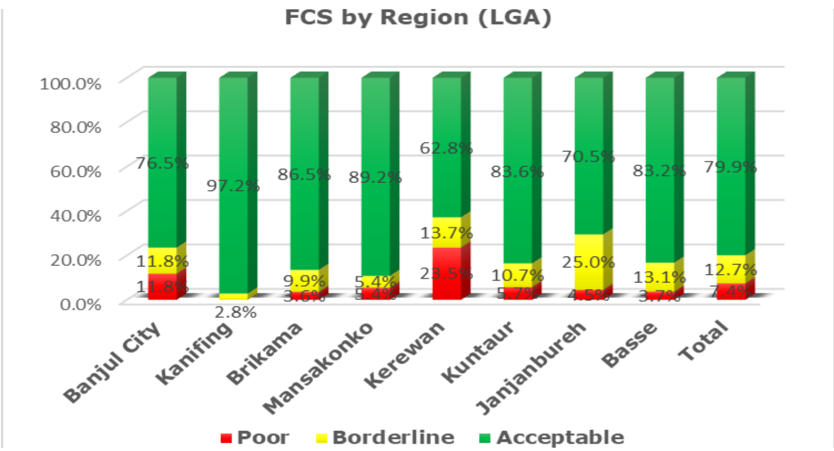
Fig. 6: FCS Male vs Female



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Food Consumption Score by Region

Fig. 7: Food Consumption Score by Region



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

At the national level, food consumption is stable, however there are a pockets across the regions with poor food consumption. Proportions of families with poor food consumption, dropped from 25% reported in March 2020 by Cadre Hamonise, to 20%.

Kerewan — North Bank Region (NBR) has the high percentage of poor food consumption 37%. Janjanbureh—Central River Region South (CRRS) has the second highest with 30% followed by Banjul City Council (BCC) with 24%. All the 3 regions had poor food amount higher than the national average.

Kanifing Municipal Council has the highest acceptable food consumption score 97%, this could be due to the number of Covid-19 responses received. Brikama—West Coast Region (WCR) also had a good food consumption of 87% acceptable. Being the most populated region WCR also received a lot of Covid-19 responses.

In general, household consumption is slightly better (80%) compared to the March 2020 CH (75%) this may be largely due to the food assistance to communities by government, NGOs, institutions and philanthropist. In addition some households also received cash assistance from individuals and institutions.

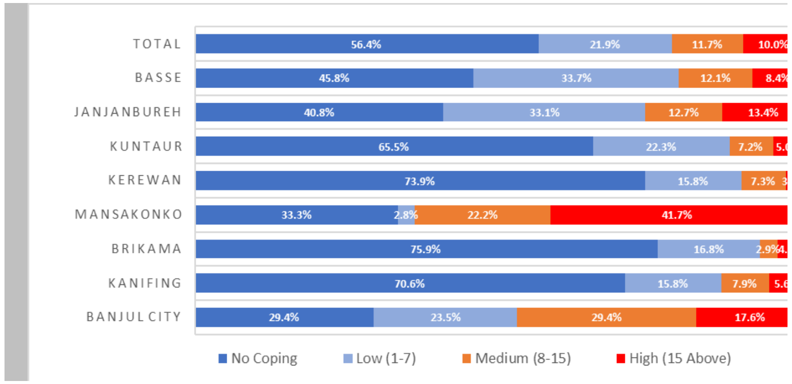
Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)

Reduced Coping Strategies refers to strategies that households adopt when they cannot access food in sufficient quantity and quality. Among these strategies, the most common are buying cheaper food, reducing portions, reducing the consumption of certain members of the household for the benefit of children, reducing the number of meals per day and borrowing food or food aid.

Overall, about 44% of households reported resorting to at least one survival strategy in the past 7 days and 56% adopted no coping strategy Brikama LGA where more than three quarter of the households faced no shocks that will warrant them to reduce their family's consumption of food. Similar situations apply to 73%, 71% and 65% respectively of households in Kerewan, Kanifing and Kuntaur. Mansakonko LGA has nearly half (41%) of the household populations adopting the five negative behaviors (Consumption of less preferred and less expensive food; borrowing of food; reduction of portion size; restriction of adults' consumption in favor of children; and reduction in the number of meals per day) to offset shocks.

The findings revealed that about 22% are adopting low (1-7) coping strategies, 12% medium (8-15) and 10% are using high (15 above)

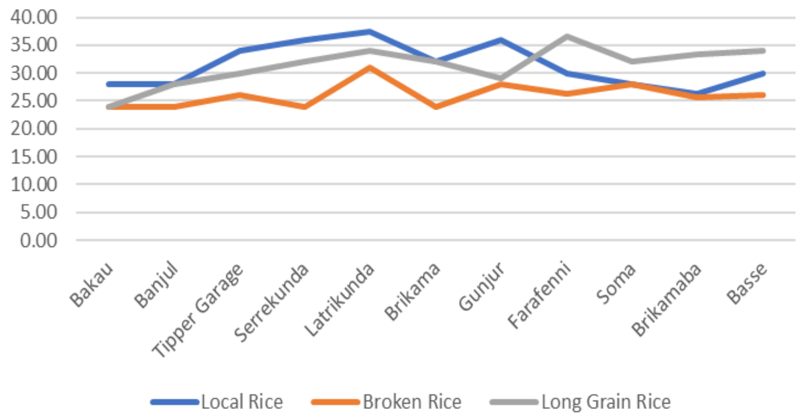
Fig. 8: Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Market Prices

Graph 1: Price of rice per kilo across markets in week 1 of July 2020



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

The average prices per kilo for each of the 3 categories of rice (local, broken and long grain) the staple food of the Gambia remains relatively stable at pre COVID-19 prices. Broken rice which was D25 per kilo is still within that price range in all the markets except Latrikunda where D30 was the prevailing price in the first week of July 2020.

The generally relative stability in the price of broken rice could be attributed to the distribution of food aid by GOTG and other bodies of which broken rice is the main constitute. In addition to that, government through the Ministry of Trade intervened using price control.

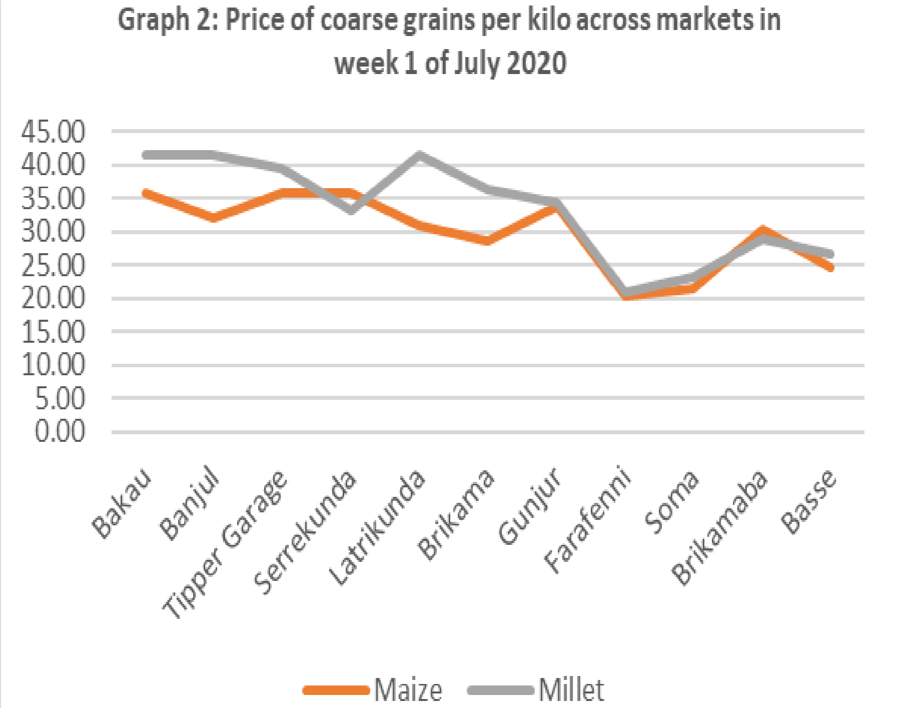
Similar explanations could be applied for the stability of the long grain and local rice which are close substitutes to the broken rice. Prices of these two rice categories in March was D29 and D32 respectively and are still within these price ranges as depicted by Graph 1.The price of rice is 8% higher compared to last and 18% compared to five year average .

Market prices

Lumos open markets remain closed. While weekly open markets are closed, regular markets are adequately supplied during this post-harvest period, but the low purchasing power of the households coupled with the impact of Covid-19 is made it difficult for families to cope with the rising cost of living access to markets.

The prices for millet is higher than that of maize in all the urban markets except Serreh Kunda. In the regional markets of Farafenne, Soma, Brikamaba and Basse price of both maize and millet is almost 50% lower than the urban markets. This is indicating the abundancy of grain supplies in the rural markets and the availability of own produce. Implying that in an event of food shortage, those in the urban settings who practice minimal or nor farming at all will be hardest hit. Maize and millet are 15% and 54% higher than the five year average and no significant compared to last year the period. The price of onion is stable but the price for meat and bone rise from D200 in March to D225 at the time of this survey in urban markets but no changes in the provincial markets. The prices of onion, irish potato and white beans are stable.

Graph2: Price of coarse grains



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Table 1: Price of Onion and Livestock products Per kilo in Dalasi

District	Imported Onion (1kg) in D	Local Onion (1kg) in D	Groud-nut (1kg) in D	White Beans (1kg)in D	Irish potato (1kg) in D	Beef meat and bone (1kg)	Chicken leg (1kg) in D
Banjul	40	40	54.67	48	40	220	75
Kanifing	39.38	39.13	50.86	4052	40	220	75.25
Brikama	39.69	39.56	52.67	44.26	40	220	75.13
Soma	40	46.67	39.41	50	46.67	200	80
Farafenni	35	40	45	45	50	200	80
Brikamaba	40	32.50	34.67	48.33	50	200	100
Basse	50	45	47.03	40	50	200	90

Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Conclusion and Recommendations

Covid-19 is having a negative impact of Covid-19 on food security, the stable food consumption is due to the food distributions by governments, NGOs, institutions, individuals as well as Covid-19 responses by UN Agencies and other development partners. The urban areas showing higher food security vulnerability than rural areas. **Fig.9** presents major concerns reported by the respondents.

Recommendations

- There is need for continued humanitarian assistance throughout the lean season.
- Food security and market price monitoring to be continued.
- There is need to understand the impact of Covid-19 on nutrition.

Fig.9: Major concerns

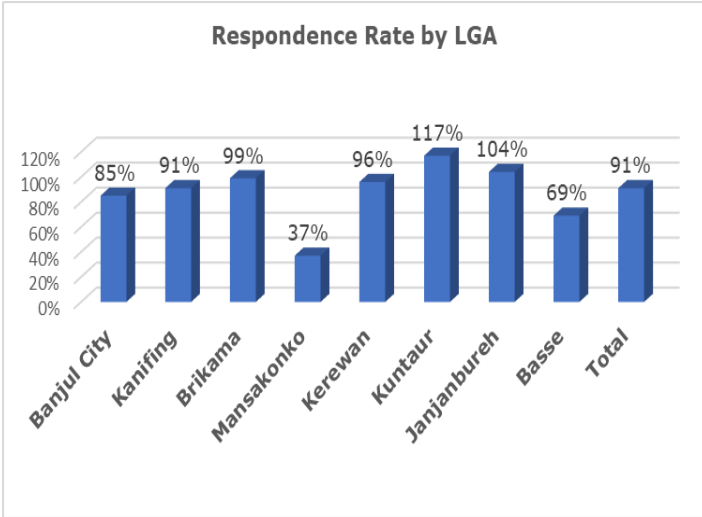
Methodology

The data was collected through mobile calls to sampled households and selected traders located in selected markets. In order to ensure better representativeness of the sample of the July 2020, mVAM survey covered countrywide. Data was collected from 1679 households out of targeted 1840 and 11 regular markets across the country since the weekly markets are closed.

Eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) and municipalities; namely Brikama, Kerewan, Mansa Konko, Kuntaur, Jangjangbureh and Basseand KMC and BCC were targeted. The sample respondents for the food and nutrition intake enumeration was obtained from the sample frame of GBOS Economic Survey telephone list of household respondents.

Data is collected bi-weekly for a duration of 4 days from 1840 households and 2 days for market prices from 11 regular markets Data was collected using tablets through telephone interview and uploaded onto ONA platform for further analysis.

WFP Gambia is providing support to the Ministry of Agriculture through the Planning Services Unit to roll out the remote data collection to ensure continued monitoring of the food security situation of households and market prices in the Gambia during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020)

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