



LAO PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

FEBRUARY/MARCH
2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



One in eight households are currently food-insecure



12%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



57%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
**Livelihood-based coping strategies*



37% spent savings



11% reduced expenses on health



18% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of society



14%

of households in rural areas are food-insecure, compared with 8 percent of those in urban areas.



19%

of households headed by people with no education are food-insecure, compared with 7 percent of those headed by people with secondary education

¹ Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI).





In Brief

About one in eight households in Lao PDR are food insecure (12 percent).¹ The food insecurity trajectory remains unstable, with inflation rising from 40 percent in January/February to 41 percent in February,² and surging prices of key commodities. Additional monitoring of the situation in the coming months is essential as we approach the lean season.

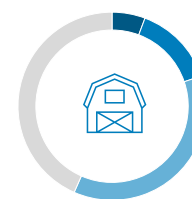
Food insecurity is unequally affecting different areas across the country. In some districts, around 25 percent of households are food-insecure, while in others, four percent are food-insecure. As with the January/February data, rural areas remain more vulnerable to food insecurity (14 percent) compared to those in urban areas (8 percent). However, there has been an overall decrease in the food insecure population, with a slight fall from 17 to 14 percent in rural areas and a decrease in urban areas, particularly in Vientiane Capital (from 8 to 4 percent).

Households without formal education are significantly affected. Those headed by someone with no education are more likely to experience food insecurity (19 percent) compared to those headed by someone with secondary or higher education (7 percent).

Around six in ten is relying on coping strategies to meet their needs for food and other essential needs. Similar to the previous months, a large number of households is turning to livelihood-based coping strategies (57 percent). However, the number of households resorting to these strategies decreased compared to January/February, where those engaging in emergency and crisis coping strategies also decreased (to 6 percent, and 14 percent respectively), except for stress coping strategies (37 percent). These decreases could indicate a positive change in food insecurity, especially for those in rural areas, while these coping strategies used among those in urban areas remain unchanged with a slight increase in percentage (from 53 percent to 55 percent). This could be an indication that the situation is not improving, as some of these coping strategies are economically and nutritionally unsustainable.

In general and compared to January/February people are less worried about food price increases. Some 17 percent of households expressed concerns about food prices, while 36 percent of them indicated no concerns. As in January/February, urban areas remain more concerned about food prices (29 percent) than those in rural areas (20 percent).

More than half of the population is using coping strategies



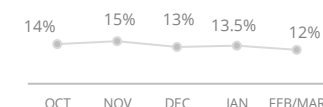
57%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



12%

FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)



1. This February/March 2023 figure is based on a remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (rCARI). More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

2. [Laos Inflation Rate - February 2023 Data - 1989-2022 Historical - March Forecast \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#)

3. https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Digital_ASEAN_FNSR_Volume-1_21-4-2022_FINAL.pdf

Findings

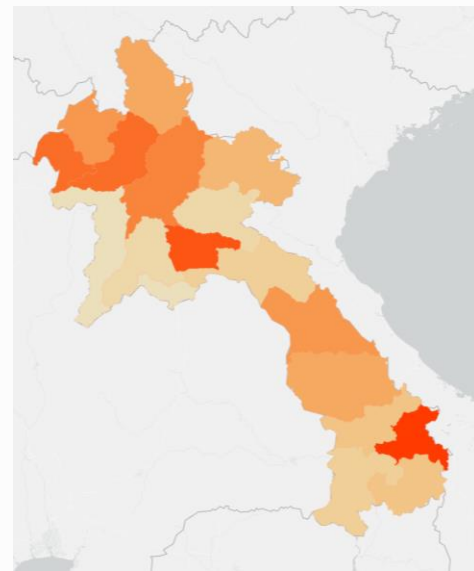
One-eighth of the population (12 percent) is currently dealing with acute food insecurity. Most of them remain at moderate levels, with a marginal increase in the proportion since January/February experiencing severe levels (from 0.6 percent to 0.7 percent).

Food insecurity varies across provinces. The food insecurity situation ranges from 4 to 25 percent. Sekong remains the most food insecure even though there has been a percentage decrease from 33 to 25 percent. Xaisomboun, Oudomxai, and Bokeo are the second highest provinces in terms of food insecurity (between 20 and 24 percent). Seven provinces are well below the national average, with Vientiane Capital and Xaignabouly, only having 4 percent of their populations food-insecure (a welcome decrease from 8 and 13 percent respectively).

Food security gap remains considerable between rural and urban areas. As with the previous rounds, households in rural areas (14 percent) are more vulnerable to food insecurity than those in urban areas (8 percent). However, rural households are observed to have had a decrease in food insecurity since January/February, while urban areas have had a slight increase.

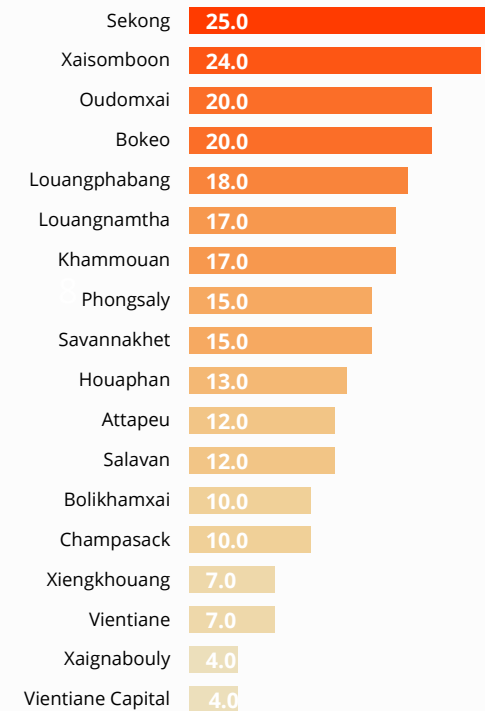
Provincial distribution

of food insecurity across Lao PDR



4% - rCARI - 25%

FOOD INSECURITY BY PROVINCE (%)



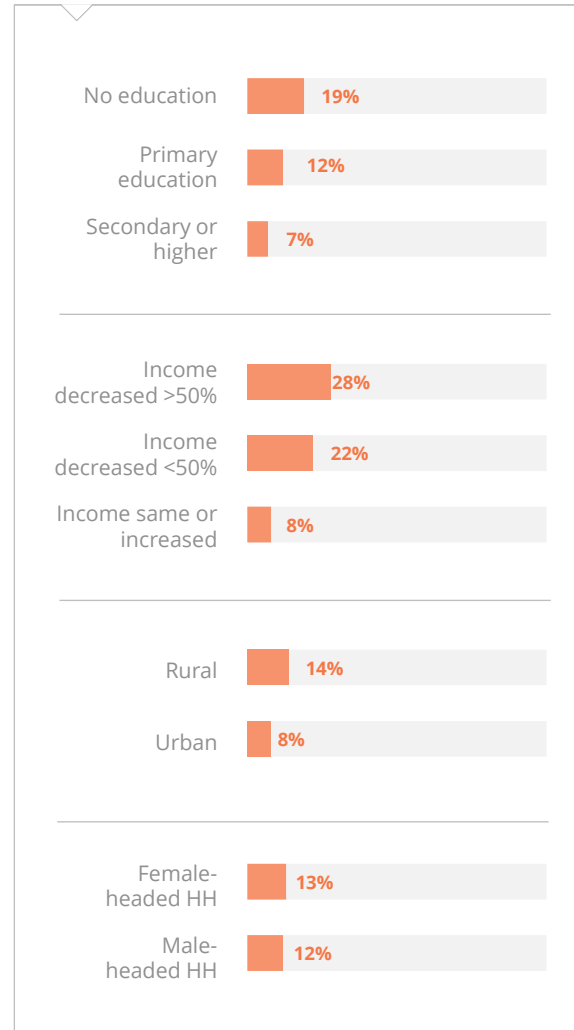
Food insecurity remains diverse in different parts of society.

As in previous rounds, households with financial problems are particularly affected. Households with a reduction in their income (regardless of whether it was <50 percent or >50 percent) are more likely to experience food insecurity than those with stable or increased incomes.

Education is another important component of food security outcomes. Households headed by someone without education (19 percent) are more likely to be food-insecure than those with secondary or higher education (7 percent).

Households with higher numbers of children (≥4) are more food-insecure (23 percent) than those without or those with fewer children (8 percent, and 11 percent respectively). Individuals with high (18 percent) and medium (12 percent) dependency ratios⁴ are likely to be at greater risk of food insecurity compared to those with lower dependency ratios (7 percent).

FEB/MAR FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



4. Dependency ratio is calculated as the ratio of non-working-age members (i.e., children, elderly) to working-age members in a household.

Household diets are not sufficient in general.

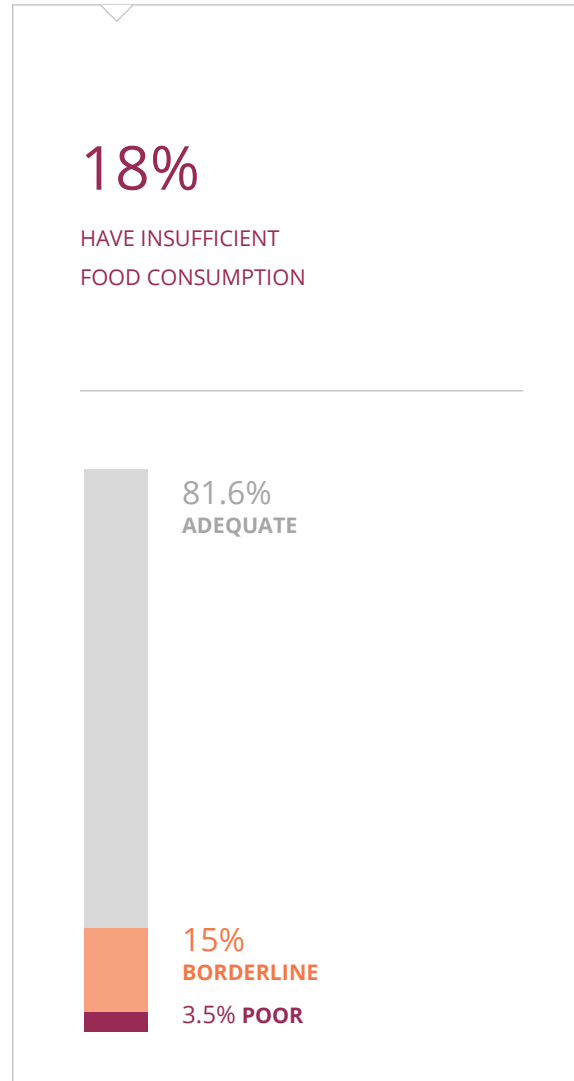
Adequate food consumption slightly improved compared to January/February, although 18 percent of households are at poor or borderline consumption levels.

Similar to previous months, in seven days, households repeatedly eat food staples daily, while vegetables and animal proteins are consumed about six times per week. This high consumption of vegetables and animal proteins could be a result of access to wild vegetables and the prevalence of hunting in some areas of the country.

Rural households are far behind in consuming dietary diversity (22 percent) compared to urban households (12 percent).⁵ Dairy and pulses are less consumed among both rural and urban residents, with the average consumption of each food type less than twice a week.

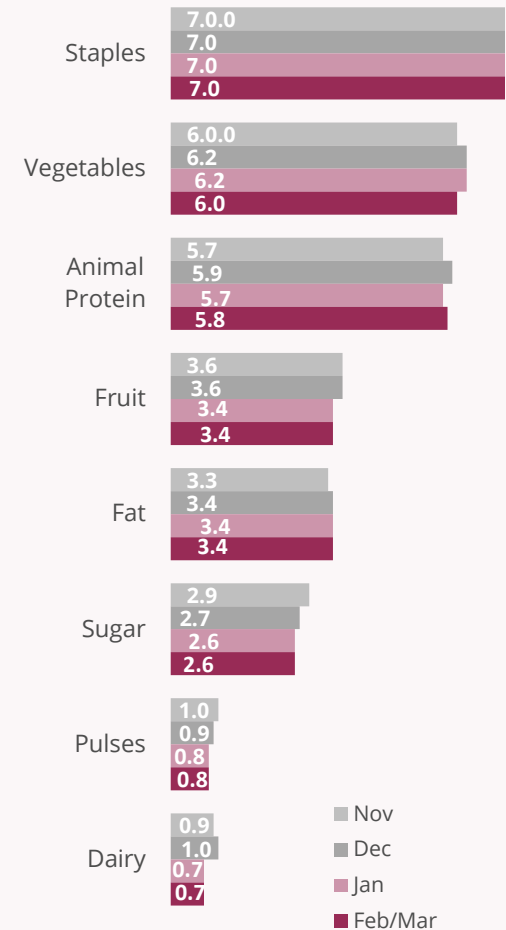


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

Number of days the average household consumes the following food items (every seven days)



5. The household food consumption score is calculated according to the types of foods consumed during the previous seven days, the frequencies with which they are consumed and the relative nutritional weight of the different food groups.

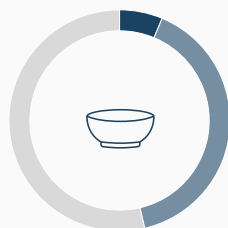
Coping strategies are still being employed.

Households using livelihood-based coping strategies slightly decreased to 57 percent from 59 percent in January/February. Emergency coping strategies also dropped one percentage point (from 6.5 percent to 5.7 percent).

More than half of those using livelihood-based coping strategies are dealing with the uncertainty of food security by spending their savings (37 percent), reducing health expenditure (11 percent), or borrowing to buy food (18 percent). The most use of these strategies was pronounced in Attapeu and Sekong provinces.

Compared to January/February, the number of households resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies did reduce in rural areas (from 62 percent to 57 percent), while urban areas experienced a slight increase in households adopting these strategies (from 53 percent to 55 percent). Households with a high reduction of income (>50 percent) are more likely to be in food insecurity than those with a low reduction of income (<50 percent).




About four in nine households have turned to food-based coping strategies with no change in percentage for this group since January/February (46 percent). Occasionally households had to eat less preferred foods, limiting portion sizes, or adults forfeiting their meals for their children to preserve present and future food supplies.

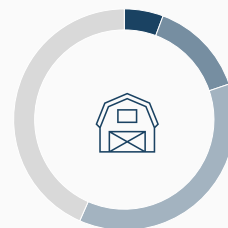


46%
relying on **food-based** coping strategies

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low/No

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF MONEY OR FOOD IN FEBRUARY/MARCH




-  **51%** are relying on less preferred food
-  **20%** are limiting portion sizes
-  **15%** have adults sacrificing meals so children can eat



57%
relying on **livelihood-based** coping strategies

■ Emergency ■ Crisis ■ Stress ■ None

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS TO COPE WITH A LACK OF FOOD OR MONEY IN FEBRUARY/MARCH

-  **37%** spent savings
-  **11%** reduced expenses on health
-  **18%** borrowed money



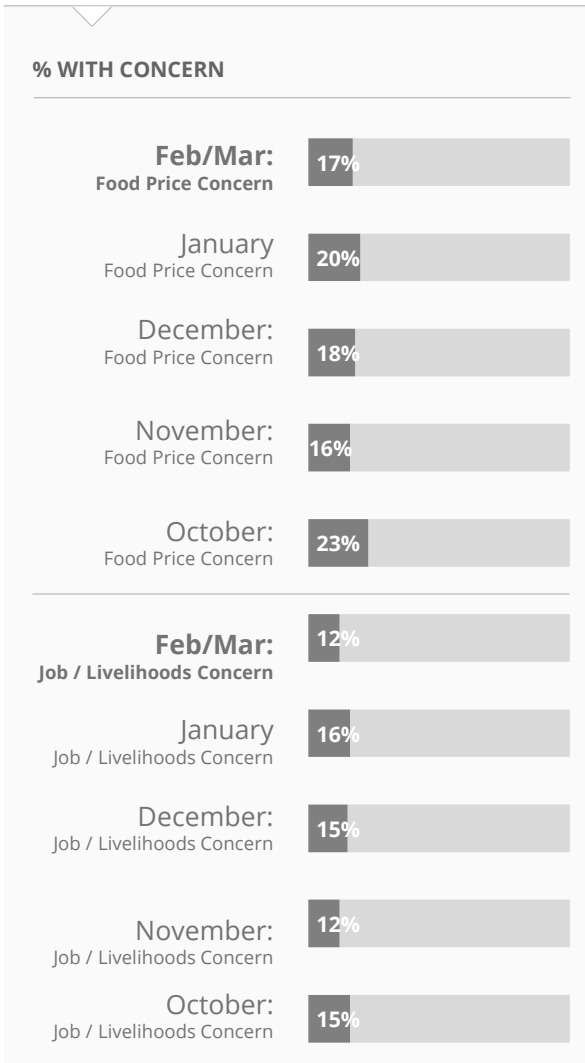
Food prices remain the top concern, while market access has become more difficult compared to January/February.

There has been a slight drop in the proportion of households concerned about food prices (from 20 percent to 17 percent). Likewise, concerns about livelihoods and job security also decreased (from 16 percent to 12 percent). The increased price of fuel is another concern (from 2 percent to 4 percent) compared to last month.

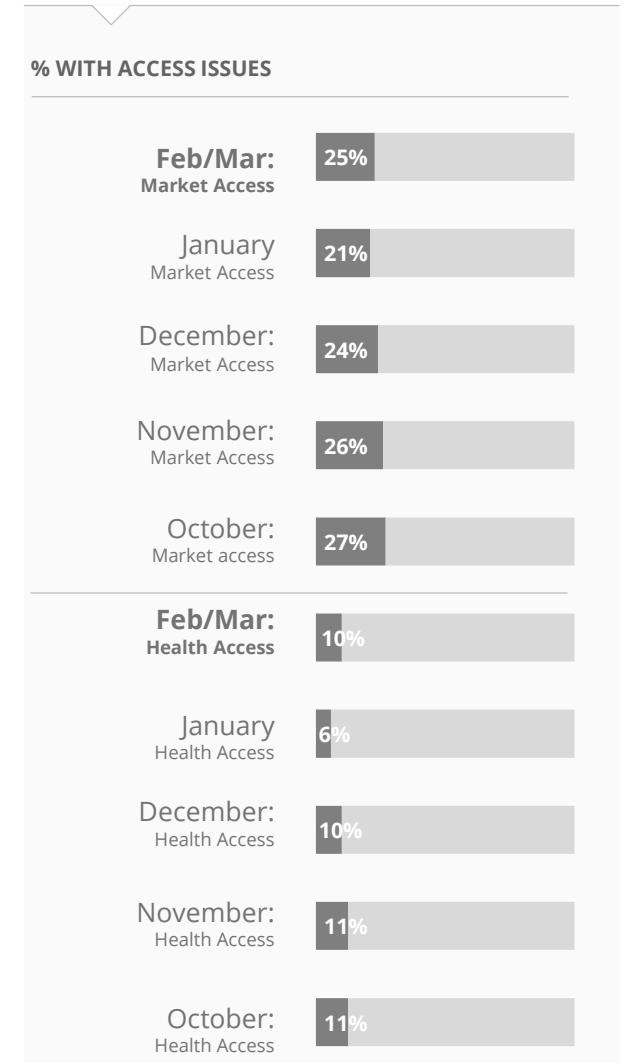
Urban households (29 percent) are more worried about food prices than those in rural areas (20 percent) compared to January/February. This is evident in Vientiane Capital where food security is at the lowest level of concern but food prices rank at the highest level of concern (35 percent). Households headed by someone with secondary or higher education are more concerned about food prices than others (by more than 16 percentage point).

Residents have more trouble in accessing market and health services compared to last month (25 percent, and 10 percent respectively). Rural residents and those who have experienced a reduction in their income (>50 percent) are more likely to face difficulty with access, compared to those in urban areas or those who have had no change or an increase in their income.

CONCERNS



ACCESS





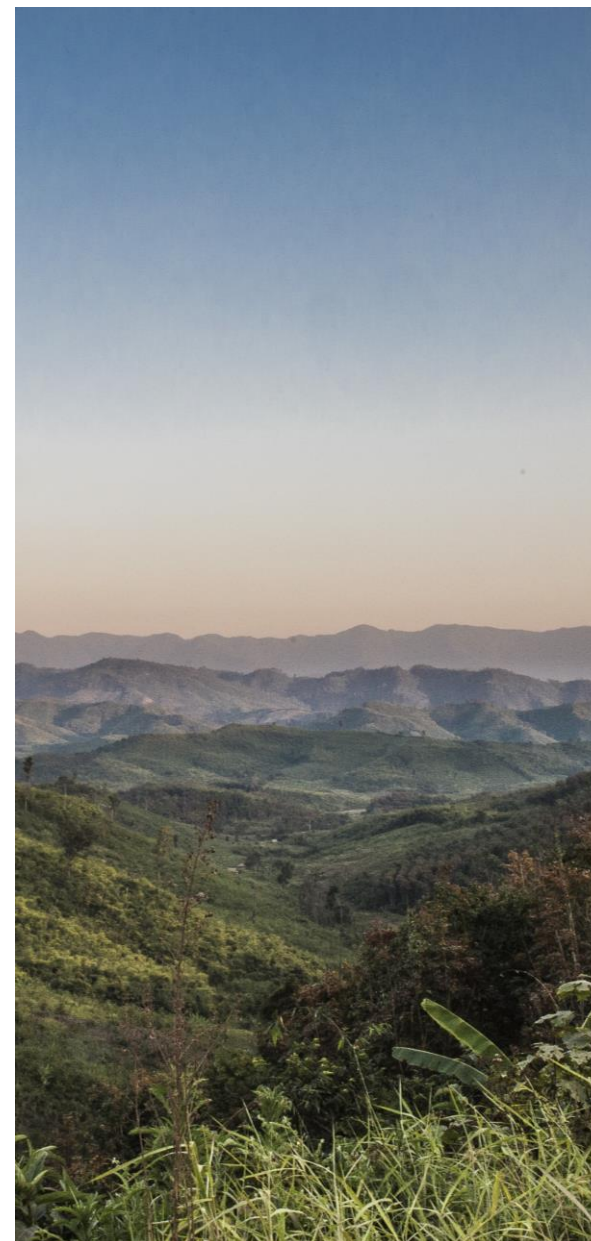
Background and Methodology

Lao PDR's inflation rate is now the highest in Southeast Asia.^{7, 8} The cumulative effects from COVID-19's socio-economic impacts and the global food crisis have exposed Lao PDR to macroeconomic instability, heightened financial risks, and negative trends in state expenditure.

The price hikes are likely to have an outsized impact on households that mostly depend on markets as a source of food. These rising fuel and food prices are undermining household purchasing power – impacting the quality and quantity of households' diets, and threatening the country's food and nutrition security.

In this context, WFP is rolling out household food security surveys through mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM). These remote surveys use a phone-based (CATI) methodology to understand the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country. The February/March 2023 round consisted of 1,838 surveys across all 18 provinces. The final results are weighted to ensure that results for provinces are statistically representative.

This comes as part of WFP's efforts to expand its evidence generation initiatives and inform the response among government and humanitarian/ development partners in Lao PDR.



Other Resources



ECONOMIC EXPLORER

An overview of prices across different markets (Select Lao PDR)



COUNTRY BRIEFS

A monthly overview of WFP's activities in Lao PDR, including situational and operational updates

7. Trading economics

8. Consumer Price Index, Lao PDR General Directorate of Statistics

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	OVERALL
Food Secure	49
Marginally Food Secure	39
Moderately Food Insecure	11
Severely Food Insecure	1

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	43
Stress	37
Crisis	14
Emergency	6

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	54
Medium	40
High	6

Food Consumption Group

Acceptable Food Consumption	82
Borderline Food Consumption	15
Poor Food Consumption	4

Annex: Tables

	Education			Residence	
	NONE	PRIMARY	HIGHER	RURAL	URBAN
Food Insecurity (rCARI)					
Food Secure	42	43.5	60	46	56
Marginally Food Secure	39	44	33	40	36.5
Moderately Food Insecure	18	11	7	13	7
Severely Food Insecure	1	1	0.2	1	1
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies					
None	43	40	46	43	45
Stress	32	39	37	37	36
Crisis	16	15	12	15	13
Emergency	9	5	5	5.5	6
Food-based Coping Strategies					
No/Low	47	52	59.5	49.5	62
Medium	43	41	36	44	32
High	9.5	6.5	4.5	6	6
Food Consumption Group					
Acceptable Food Consumption	73	79.5	89.5	78	88
Borderline Food Consumption	19	17	9	17	10
Poor Food Consumption	8	3.5	1	4	2

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