KIRIBATI

mVAM Bulletin

The data presented here was collected via the World Food Programme's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) survey. Data was collected through telephone interviews conducted across four regions using random-digit dialing, between September and October 2023.

WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES CHANGING LIVES

HOUSEHOLD FOOD CONSUMPTION

Since mid-2022, Kiribati has experienced a prolonged **drought**, affecting the populations livelihoods, crops and agriculture. This slow on-set disaster triggered water scarcity which exacerbated an already distressing situation for food security and nutrition of remote, climate-vulnerable communities. This has further increased challenges and threats in terms of water availability, contamination, brackish water, water accessibility and agriculture.

In **September 2023,** food consumption patterns of **92 percent** of total Kiribati households, were at **acceptable levels,** primarily driven by the frequency of consumption of staples, proteins, and sugars - all consumed more than six days in a week.

The consumption of food groups that are essential for a **balanced** and **healthy diet**, such as vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and pulses is reportedly remained in lowest levels.

Diets have remained similar to March 2023. In 7 days, the average household in Kiribati, in September, consumed:

STAPLES	PROTEINS	SUGARS	FATS
7.0 days no change	6.7 days up from 6.5	6.7 days up from 5.6	4.3 days up from 4.1
FRUITS	VEGETABLES	DIARY	PULSES
1.3 days down from 1.7	1.6 days up from 1.4	0.9 days no change	0.0 days no change

The diet composition and inadequacy in Kiribati reflects households increased **vulnerability** to food insecurity. Triangulation of this quantitative information with other - qualitative data indicates, in the long run, poor diets is a primary contributor to **chronic** food insecurity and the **triple burden of malnutrition**.

The compounding effects of climate change with limited agricultural production, high dependency on imports, and economic constraints of households to acquire nutritious foods all amplifies these challenges, greatly limiting I-Kiribati's access to **healthier choices**.

The **nutrient** uptake of Kiribati households in September 2023 had not improved in comparison to the previous mVAM round in March this year. With only **20 percent** of households having an acceptable level of **Vitamin A** rich-food intake.

Percentage of interviewed households with low or no intake of nutrient rich food

Vitamin A	80%
Hem Iron	12%
Protein	10%
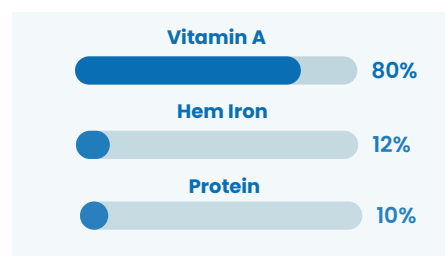
Insufficient consumption (1-6 days in a week) of **Vitamin A** rich foods, such as organ meats, deep yellow/orange vegetables and fruits, etc. was reported by **47 percent** of the respondents. While 33 percent of the interviewed households had not had food containing Vitamin A in their diets for the past 7 days at all. The proportion of households with no Vitamin A intake was higher in **urban** areas (36 percent) compared to **rural** locations (29 percent).

A slight improvement was observed in consumption of **Hem Iron**: proportion of households with low consumption of iron-rich foods decreased from 20 percent in March 2023 to **12 percent** in September 2023.

Nine out of ten Kiribati households consume sufficient **protein** rich-foods. This includes fish and seafood, chicken, other local foods, and ultra-processed imports.

LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES (LCS)

LCS identifies negative coping strategies adopted by households to meet essential needs. It classifies households according to the most severe coping strategies adopted. This highlights how households' mid to long-term capacity to sustain livelihoods and meet their essential needs is negatively impacted.

10.3 %
of respondents employing
Livelihood Coping Strategy
Crisis or Emergency

Fifty three percent of Kiribati households reported employing negative coping strategies to sustain their livelihoods and consumption patterns. Extreme forms of coping strategies (emergency and crisis) were adopted by about **10 percent** of the interviewed households. This indicates a consistent trend for the past 2 rounds of data collection for March 2023 and September 2022.

Percentage of households resorting to coping strategies
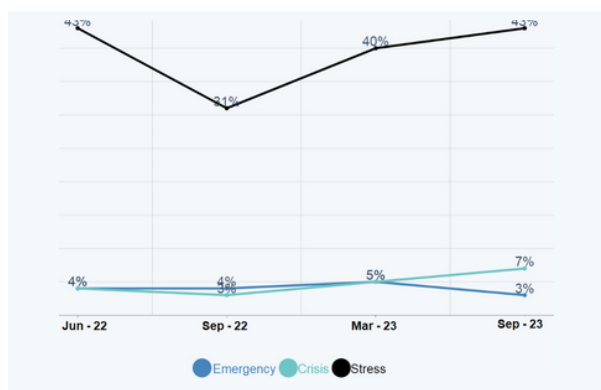
Stress strategies, such as borrowing money or spending savings, were used by **40 percent** of the households, higher by 3 percent in comparison with March 2023. Long term use of these strategies may reduce the ability of households to deal with future shocks given a current reduction in resources or an increase in debts.

Crisis strategies were deployed by 7 percent of the respondents, 2 percent more than in March 2023. Use of crisis strategies, such as selling productive assets or means of transport, reducing expenses on health (including medications), etc. may result in potential reduction of households future productivity, including human capital.

Emergency strategies were used by fewer households in September - by 3 percent, indicating a decrease of 2 percent, compared to March 2023. Emergency strategies are difficult to reverse, and they increase households susceptibility to future shocks and food insecurity.

The **top three** negative coping strategies adopted by Kiribati households in September were: borrowing money or food, spending personal savings and reduced health expenses.

27%	14%	5%
Borrow money/food	**Spent savings**	**Reduced Health Expenses**

These negative coping strategies have largely remained unchanged from the previous quarter, with no signs of improvement.

The coping behaviors applied by households to meet their essential needs can vary in form. Generally, use of negative coping strategies unfold the fragile mid- to long-term capacity of a household to sustain livelihoods and meet essential needs - particularly during a shock, or a disaster.

The interviewed households employing negative coping strategies seem to be driven by several factors. Households expressed the escalating **cost of food**, which remains at the forefront for **24 percent** of interviewed households as the most notable.

The food price increase was the primary concern of 33 percent and 31 percent of households in Kiribati in March 2023 and September 2022 respectively. This economic burden likely compels them to resort to various strategies to make ends meet.

Following closely was the worry as **falling sick**, expressed by **18 percent** of the interviewed households, maintaining the same trend for the past 3 rounds of data collection. In March 2023 and September 2022, **one fifth** of the households reported falling sick as a top concerns.

Additionally, **3 percent** of households are troubled by the prospect of **food shortages** - a major drop from the previous round, when 17 percent of respondents mentioned food scarcity as a top concern. This round, another 3 percent of households considered disruption of livelihoods as one of the top concerns as well.

Interviewed Households Top Three Concerns

1	INCREASE OF FOOD PRICES
2	FALLING SICK
3	FOOD SHORTAGE
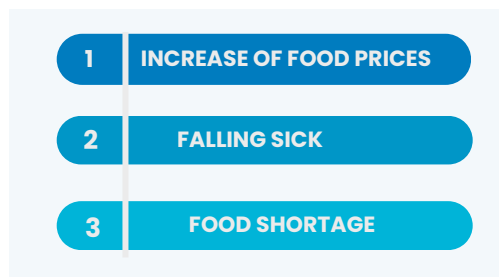
Overall, in September 2023, **food consumption** patterns of over 90 percent of households in Kiribati were at acceptable levels. The **Northern Gilbert Islands** had the higher proportion of households with borderline food consumption of 8 percent. Another 1 percent of the respondents reported having poor food intake.


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUPS (%)
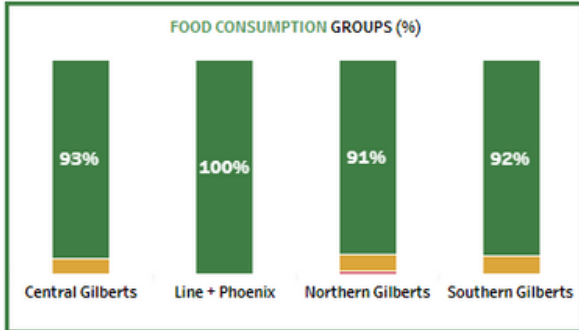
Despite the Kiribati regions consistently exhibiting household acceptable levels of food consumption (primarily from the account of higher frequency and quantity of staples, proteins, and sugars), the **diversity** and **nutrient** component of foods among most households remains a major issue.

In September, respondents seven days recall indicates very limited consumption of food groups rich with essential vitamins such as fruits, vegetables, dairy and pulses - often consumed less than 2 days a week.

The inadequate consumption of Vitamin-A rich foods is a great concern. Over 20 percent of interviewed households did not consume any such foods in the past seven days. The Central

DIETARY DIVERSITY
Round 9: Sep 23

	Central Gilberts	Line + Phoenix	Northern Gilberts	Southern Gilberts
STAPLES	7.0	7.0	6.9	7.0
PROTEINS	6.7	7.0	6.7	6.7
SUGARS	6.9	6.9	6.6	6.5
FATS	2.7	4.1	4.7	3.3
VEGETABLES	1.1	2.2	1.5	1.7
FRUITS	1.0	0.7	1.4	1.5
DAIRY	0.1	2.1	0.9	0.7
PULSES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Gilberts region recorded the highest percentage - nearly **half** of the households in the region reported **not** consuming any Vitamin A rich foods for the past 7 days.


VITAMIN-A CONSUMPTION (%)
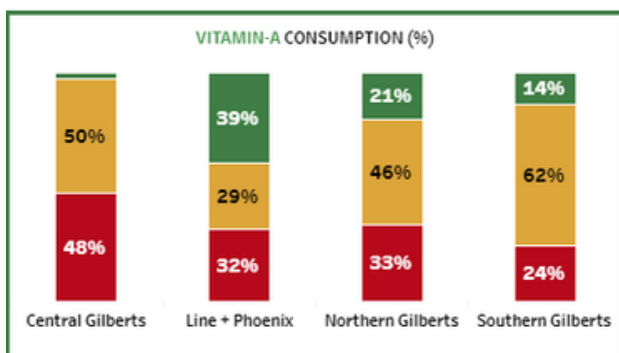
Kiribati, in comparison to other Pacific countries where mVAM is being conducted, exhibits a lower consumption of **Vitamin-A** rich foods. Animal meats, organs, dairy products, fruits, and vegetables (the main sources of Vitamin A) were not consumed regularly and in sufficient quantities by households in Kiribati.

PROTEIN CONSUMPTION (%)
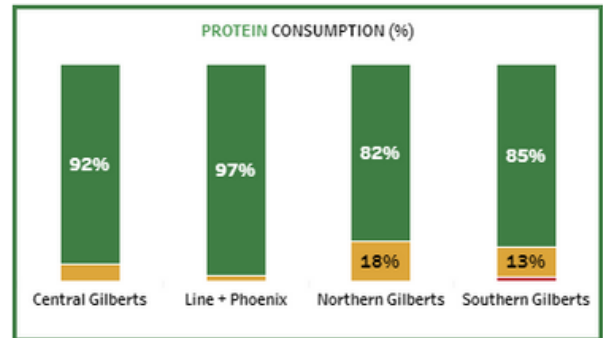
Protein consumption is generally at an **acceptable level** in Kiribati except for the **Northern** and **Southern Gilberts** regions with **18 percent** and **13 percent** of households respectively consuming low protein rich foods (1-6 days in a week). In Southern Gilberts an additional 2 percent of respondents reported not consuming protein-rich foods for the past 7 days.

Negative **coping strategies** have largely remained unchanged from the previous round, with no signs of improvement.

The **Northern Gilberts Islands** recorded the largest percentage of households employing negative coping strategies, with **13 percent** employing

HHs RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES (%)
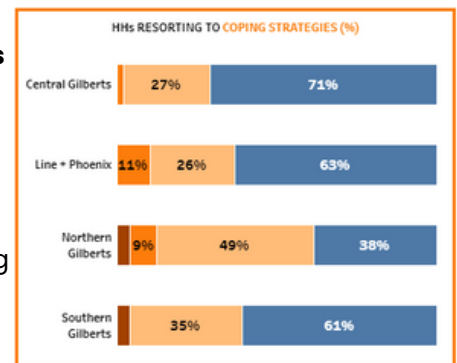
extreme forms - **crisis** and **emergency.** Nearly half of the respondents reported using **stress** strategies, such as borrowing money and spending savings to purchase foods.

According to respondents in the Northern Gilberts, the **high cost of food** (31 percent) emerged as the most significant concern, followed by **illness** (23 percent). This trend has remained **consistent** across previous and current mVAM rounds. In comparison to other regions, it appeared the **Northern Gilbertese** might not have adequate income to procure food containing essential vitamins and nutrients.

Economically disadvantaged households may have also been overly-exposed to unhealthy diets because of greater economic constraints, limiting their affordability to healthy and nutritious foods.

Methodology:

This mVAM Bulletin reflects data collected from September 2023 to October 2023 via remote data collection facilitated through telephone calls in participants preferred language, either Ikiribati or English. The telephone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing, yielding 418 households.

The questionnaire contained questions on households livelihoods, food consumption, nutritional quality, livelihood based coping strategies, multi-dimensional deprivation index, remittances, and debt. A final open ended question gives respondents the chance to share any additional concerns regarding the disruptions in food security in their community.

The Information collected through mobile interviews may be biased towards gender and households subscribed to the phone provider.

Other Resources: Kiribati mVAM Dashboard

Sample Population at a glance :

Male-headed households: 77 percent
Female-headed households: 23 percent

Survey Respondents: 418 households

Urban Households: 59 percent
Rural Households: 41 percent

Households reporting having a member/s with disability: 15 percent

Level of education of the head of the household:
- Primary education: 24 percent
- Secondary education: 43 percent
- Tertiary education: 32 percent
- Vocational Training: 1 percent
- None: 0 percent

Bulletins & Dashboard

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