

Household food security in Central Somalia

Key messages:

- In August, data shows an upward trend in the share of respondents with poor or borderline food consumption from 12.9% in May (3.7% poor and 9.2% borderline) to 21.9% in August (9.4% poor and 12.5% moderated).
- The most common strategies used by respondent households to obtain food were: "selling non-productive assets", "purchasing or borrowing food on credit", "engaging in casual labour" and "withdrawing children from school". From May to August, the share of households with "poor" food consumption are resorting to 'stress' strategies increased significantly.

The context

Central Somalia is mainly pastoral, with sheep, goats, and camels being the primary livestock. The bigger city of the area is Galkayo, which host to a large number of IDPs. The majority of IDPs have been displaced by violence, and others were forced to migrate to the town because of prolonged drought and the ensuing loss of assets.

Methodology: monthly collection of food security indicators

Since May, monthly rounds of data collection take place on a panel of about 260 IDPs households in Central Somalia allowing to monitor the evolution of the food security conditions of the population. The data collected is used to establish the prevalence of poor food consumption in the area and the survival strategies used by the population in order to procure food. Two set of questions are asked each month to the survey participants. The first set is directly related to food consumption, and answers are used to calculate the "food consumption score", a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency and relative nutritional importance of different food groups. The second set of questions inquires about strategies used by households to cope with food/money shortcomings.

Before starting voice calls, a face-to-face baseline survey was conducted in September 2013. WFP enumerators randomly selected a pool of 656 households, interviewed them, informed them about the mVAM project, and requested their consent to participate. The assessment found that mobile phones ownership is very high in Central Somalia: 495 (60%-70%) of the interviewed households had access to a phone. Of the interviewed households, 400 agreed to participate to the mVAM project. Statistical tests demonstrated that these households offer a good proxy for the total population. On average 62% of the entire pool of households (400) responded to our phone calls in May and only this 62% was called back during the subsequent rounds. Data collection will continue until April 2015.

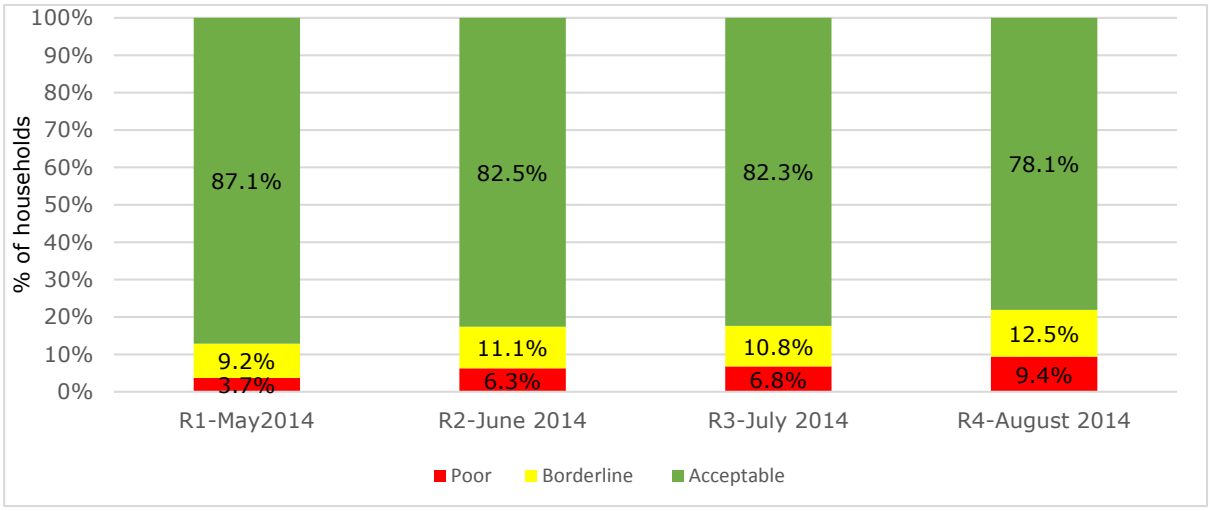
Overall results

FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE

The food consumption score estimates household dietary diversity, taking into account the frequency of and the micronutrient density of food consumed.

Among the surveyed population, this indicator has deteriorated from May to August. Figure 1 shows an upward trend in the share of respondents with poor or borderline food consumption from 12.9% in May (3.7% poor and 9.2% borderline) to 21.9% in August (9.4% poor and 12.5% moderated). This difference in proportion is statistically significant (p=0.0078), and matches the expected seasonal pattern of declining food consumption, as the lean season advances.

Figure 1: Food Consumption Score



Source: WFP phone surveys

Dietary diversity of respondent households has remained the same since May. The diet of respondent households is varied during the phone rounds: respondents eat cereals, tubers, pulses, milk, meat, vegetables and fruits on average from 3 to 6 days in one week (Table 1). This means that fewer households consumed "poor" or "borderline" diet. However, households with poor food consumption eat cereals, tubers, pulses and vegetables, on average from 1 to 3 days in a week, whereas fruits, proteins and dairy products are almost not consumed (less than one day a week). While, those with borderline food consumption, consume slightly more cereal, pulses, vegetables and tubers, but still barely any animal proteins and milk and fruits.

Table 1: Households' diet: average weekly consumption of different food groups and average weekly consumption of different food groups by FCGs from May to August.

	Average weekly consumption (May-August)	Average weekly consumption by FCGs (May-August)		
		POOR	BORDERLINE	ACCEPTABLE
Cereal+tubers	5.8	3.5	4.8	6.1
Pulses	2.9	1.0	1.8	3.2
Proteins (meat, fish, eggs, liver kidney)	4.1	0.6	1.2	4.7
Milk	3.5	0.6	2.0	3.9
Vegetables (orange veg., green leafy veg.)	4.6	1.6	2.2	5.2
Fruit (orange fruits & other fruits)	2.9	0.3	0.5	3.4

LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGY

Livelihood strategies are ways in which households utilize and combine their assets to obtain food. These livelihood strategies are defined under the following three categories: "Stress", "Crisis" and "Emergency". "Stress" includes purchasing or borrowing food on credit, spending savings, engaging in casual labour and withdrawing children from school. "Crisis" refers to selling non-productive assets such as radios or furniture. Finally, "Emergency" strategies captures begging and the sale of productive assets.

The most common strategies used by respondent households over the period, were: "selling non-productive assets", "purchasing or borrowing food on credit", "engaging in casual labour" and "withdrawing children from school".

Statistical tests show a significant increase between May to August in the share of respondents who engage in specific livelihood strategies when classifying respondent households according their level of food consumption. As shown by Table 1, poor households implemented more "stress" strategies in August than in May. This increase is significant at a 95% level for: purchasing or borrowing food on credit, engaging in casual labour and withdrawing children from school. At the same time, 32% of borderline households started to engage to the "emergency" strategy in August, such as "selling of productive assets". Also, respondents with acceptable food consumption tried to obtain food using more frequently the following strategies: spending savings, selling productive assets and withdrawing children from school.

These results and the fact that the proportion of respondents who engaged in all other strategies remained the same, reveal that people were implementing more strategies to face the hunger period in August, as also the significant increase in the food consumption showed.

Table 3: Z-test to evaluate significant changes in the share of respondent households who engaged in livelihood strategies between May to August.

	R1-May 2014	R4-August 2014	p-value	R1-May 2014	R4-August 2014	p-value	R1-May 2014	R4-August 2014	p-value
	Poor	Poor		Borderline	Borderline		Acceptable	Acceptable	
Selling non-productive assets	60.00%	36.36%	0.2113	72.00%	67.86%	0.7414	75.32%	71.59%	0.3953
Purchasing or borrowing food	70.00%	100.00%	0.0069*	92.00%	96.43%	0.9124	60.00%	62.50%	0.6101
Spending savings	0.00%	9.09%	0.3271	8.00%	3.57%	0.4839	12.34%	19.89%	0.0366*
Engaging in casual labour	30.00%	68.18%	0.043*	92.00%	89.29%	0.7279	59.57%	60.23%	0.9761
Selling productive assets	0.00%	23.81%	0.0929	0.00%	32.14%	0.0002*	16.60%	30.86%	0.0007*
Withdrewing children from School	40.00%	77.27%	0.0394*	76.00%	82.14%	0.5823	47.23%	61.14%	0.0059*
Begging	10.00%	0.00%	0.131	8.00%	0.00%	0.126	15.32%	12.50%	0.4179

**The result is significant at p<0.05.*

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