



World Food Programme

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Bulletin 1 – August 2015

Yemen



August 2015: Conflict leads to acute food insecurity for displaced households

Key messages

- **Emergency food security conditions currently prevail in conflict affected governorates. According to mVAM data, roughly 20% of the population (5-6 million people) are severely food insecure, while another 20% (5-6 million people) are moderately food insecure. These findings broadly corroborate with the latest 2015 Integrated food security Phase Classification (IPC) figures.**
- **Food insecurity is most severe for the country's 1.3 million internally displaced people.**
- **Scarcity of the imported foods, and livelihood disruption, are restricting the population's ability to access food. Acute water shortages are also having severe impacts on food security.**
- **The accumulation of risks – including continuing conflict, displacement, supply chain disruption and limited humanitarian access – indicates that food insecurity levels will likely increase in coming months.**

Methodology – mVAM remote mobile data collection

High levels of insecurity in Yemen currently prevent the implementation of traditional face-to-face surveys. In order to monitor the impact of the conflict on food security, WFP is using mobile VAM, its remote mobile data collection tool.

In late July, WFP launched a pilot round of live telephone interviews, conducted from a call centre located outside Yemen. The initial round of surveys took place over three weeks in July and August 2015. Calls targeted all mobile operators and used random-digit dialling. The data presented here was collected from a sample of 1147 respondents from 22 governorates. One third of respondents were internally displaced people. While an adequate sample was obtained from Al Hudaydah, Dhamar, Al Dhale, Hajjah, Ibb, Taizz, Sana'a, Sana'a city, Amran, Hadramaut and Al Mahwit, only a limited number of questionnaires were obtained from other governorates.

The questionnaire included household indicators, demographic information (including disaggregated gender, displacement and housing information) and access to food assistance, in addition to an open-ended question.

Owing to the partial nature of mobile phone access in Yemen (68 subscriptions/100 people in 2014 according to the [World Bank](#)), data collection by mobile phone involves biases. Responses are likely biased towards younger, somewhat better-off men who live in urban areas. According to data from the Yemen Comprehensive Food Security Survey 2014, 72% of the population in the poorest quintile do not own a mobile phone, which indicates that mobile phone surveys would be biased to better off households. We account for such biases as we interpret our results.

Conflict and widespread displacement in a context of high insecurity

In March 2015, conflict intensified between the government forces and armed groups. In July 2015, conflict worsened in Aden and adjacent southern governorates. At present, there are an estimated 1.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) – four times the number at the start of the conflict. This figure is expected to increase still further as the conflict persists. The largest concentrations of IDPs are in Hajjah (298,788), Al Dhale (227,414) and Aden (184,100) and the majority of IDPs are living with host families who are already struggling to meet their basic needs (UNHCR, July 2015).

The 2014 [Comprehensive Food Security Survey](#) found that before the events of this year, Yemen already faced high levels of food insecurity, with 41 percent of the population – over 10 million people – food insecure.

Box 1. Although food supply improves in some areas, markets remain disrupted as of July

According to the latest [WFP market update](#), markets in Yemen are stressed. The national average cost of a food basket in July 2015 was 30 percent higher than in the pre-crisis period, and 2 percent higher than the previous month. The cost of living is highest in the conflict affected governorates of Aden, Laheg, Al Dhale, Al Bayda, Sa'ada and Hajjah. However, the reopening of the port in Aden, the delivery of food aid shipments and improved access to surrounding governorates in July and August has improved supply. Nonetheless, importers contacted mid-August mention that fuel and food shipments continue to be seriously delayed, and that aggregate demand for food is flagging because of lack of credit and low consumer purchasing power.

The fuel, transportation and distribution bottlenecks constitute the critical inefficiencies in the supply chain. Chronic fuel shortages are hampering the dispatch of existing commercial food stocks at Hodeida and Salif ports to retailers and to the population. Because of the acute diesel shortage, milling operations have also sharply declined. This is leading to limited availability of wheat flour, sugar, vegetable oil, cooking gas and other items. These shortages are especially acute in the governorates of Abyan, Al Dhale, Adan, Laheg, Mareb, Shabwa and Taizz.

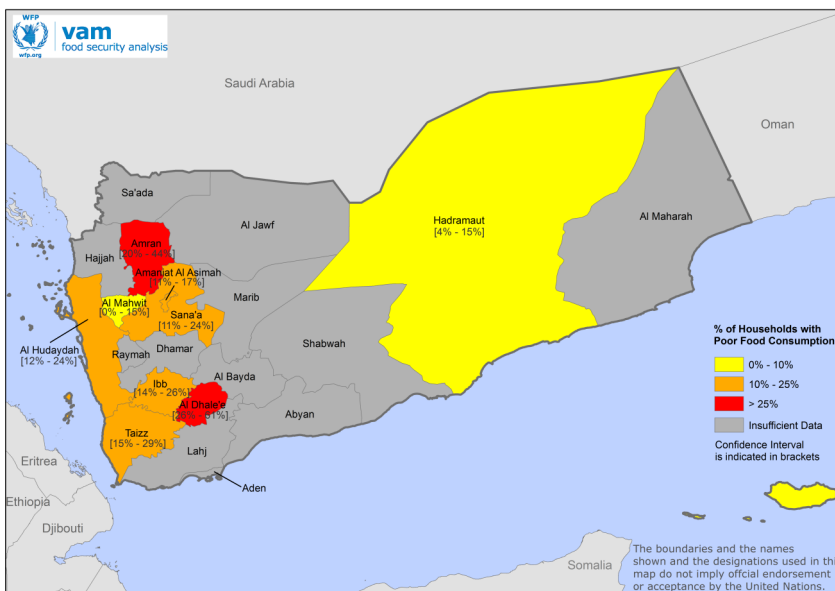
Household food security indicators have been impacted

The [Food Consumption Score \(FCS\)](#)¹ measures the diversity of household diets and how frequently food is consumed. The FCS classifies households as having 'poor', 'borderline' or 'acceptable' food consumption. Those with 'poor' and 'borderline' consumption are considered food insecure. Two out of every five interviewed households reported 'poor' or 'borderline' food consumption. This might be an underestimate of conditions on the ground, because the worse-off households in Yemen probably do not own mobile phones and were therefore not interviewed for this assessment.

FCS results indicate that 18.1 of the population – have 'poor' food consumption and are considered severely food insecure. This is roughly equivalent to 5-6 million people. Another 19.5 percent or 5-6 million people have 'borderline' food consumption and are considered moderately food insecure. These findings are broadly in line with May 2015 IPC results.

Yemeni households with 'poor' food consumption are consuming diets of bread or rice, with oil and sweet tea. mVAM data suggests that over 25 percent of households in the governorates of Al Dhale and Amran have 'poor' food consumption. In the governorates of Ibb, Taizz, Sana'a, Amanat al Asimah (Sana'a city) and Al Hudaydah

Map 1: Share of households with 'poor' food consumption



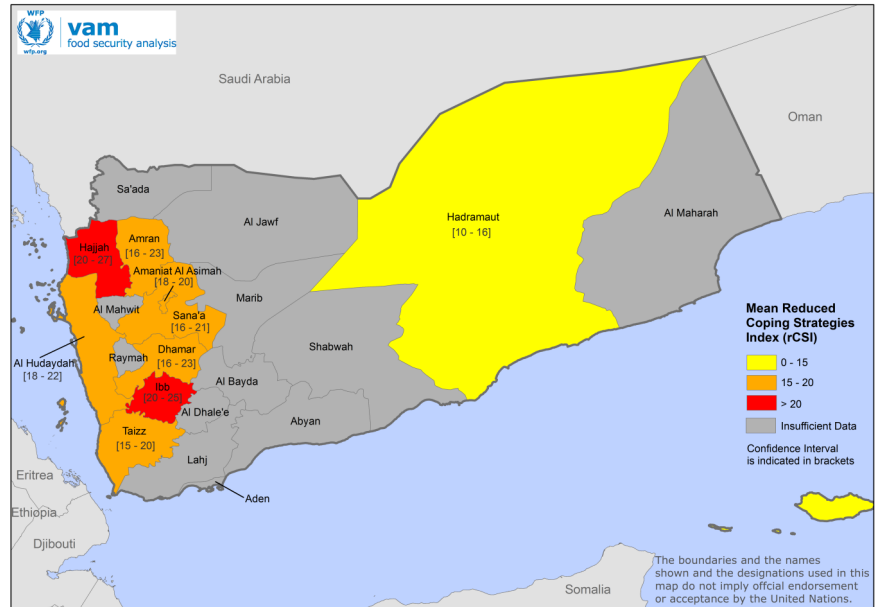
Source: WFP mVAM, August 2015

¹ The FCS results in Yemen are calculated using a universal adjusted set of thresholds taking into consideration the high consumption of oil and sugar in the region (poor ≤ 28, 28 < borderline ≤ 42, acceptable > 42). For more details on the food group composition, weighted values and FCS thresholds, please see the [Food consumption Analysis Technical Guidance Sheet](#).

between 10 and 25 percent have 'poor' food consumption, all governorates with large IDP numbers, including Al Dhale. In comparison, fewer than 10 percent of households in Al Mahwit and Hadramaut have 'poor' food consumption. Because of the limited sample size, we are unable to report on other governorates

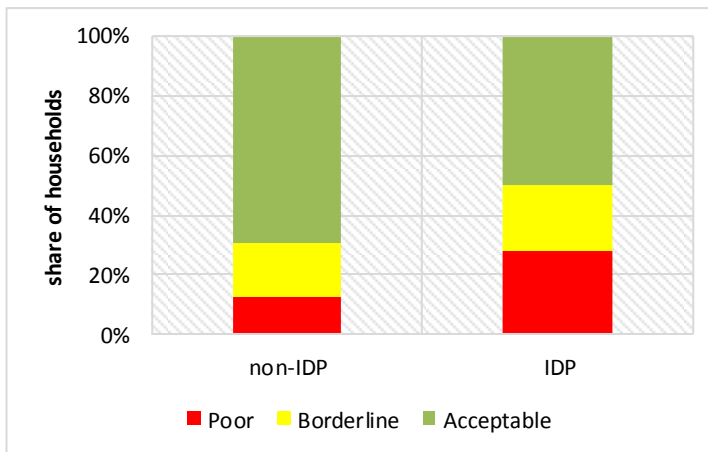
The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) measures the frequency and severity of the behaviours households engage in when faced with food shortages, such as skipping meals or reducing the size of portions. A higher score indicates that households are resorting to more frequent or severe negative coping strategies. Detailed information on the rCSI can be found [here](#).

Map 2: reduced Coping Strategies Index



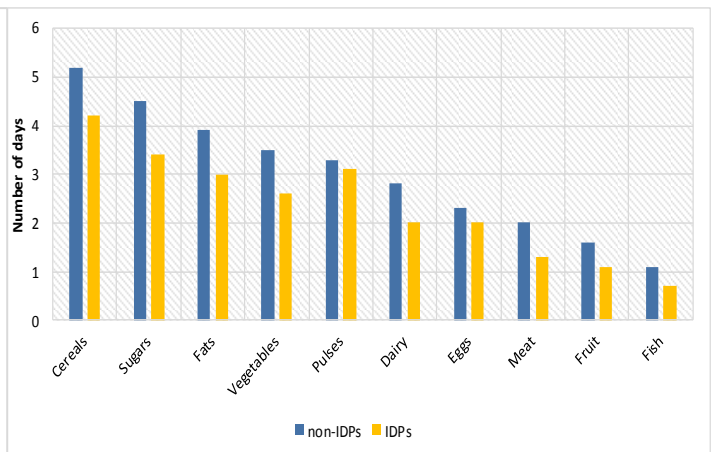
Source: WFP mVAM, August 2015

Figure 1: Food consumption groups of displaced and non-displaced households



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2015

Figure 2: Dietary diversity of displaced and non-displaced households



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2015

As Map 2 shows, the highest levels of negative coping are seen in Hajjah, Ibb and Al Hudaydah where the mean rCSI is above 20, indicating that households use coping strategies that include the consumption of less preferred foods, borrowing money to buy food, reducing portion sizes and skipping meals. An rCSI of between 15 and 20 is reported in the conflict-affected governorates of Amran, Amanat Al Asimah, Dhamar, Sana'a and Taizz. rCSI levels below 15 are reported in Hadramaut. Because of the limited sample size, we are unable to report on other governorates. The estimates presented here may understate the extent of food insecurity or negative coping in the general population, because the survey sample was biased towards better-off mobile phone owning households.

IDPs are the worst affected, as humanitarian access remains restricted

Household food security seems to be closely related to displacement status. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of households with poor food consumption is higher for IDPs than non-IDPs, suggesting they are consuming a poorer diet. An estimated 28 percent of IDPs have 'poor' food consumption compared with 12 percent of non-displaced households. Half of IDPs are either 'poor' or 'borderline' compared with less than a third of non-displaced households.

Dietary diversity is generally lower for IDPs than for non-displaced households (see Graph 2). IDPs are also consuming certain food groups less often, including staple foods and higher quality foods such as fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat and fish. Only the consumption of pulses and eggs is statistically similar between both groups. The data also suggests that displaced households are using many more severe coping strategies (rCSI=24.9) than non-displaced ones (rCSI=16.0, p<0.01). Pervasive insecurity had meant that humanitarian access remains very restricted, with only a little over 1 million people receiving emergency food assistance in July 2015, out of at least 6 million in need.

Worries over shortages of food and water

The most common themes mentioned by the people interviewed in August include the “deteriorating” situation, “lack of water”, “high food prices” and “shortages”. Some respondents said that wheat flour, bread, rice, vegetables and fruit were very scarce or only available in very small quantities. References to food shortages and high prices echo the findings of WFP’s [Market Watch July bulletins](#).

Respondents emphasized that the lack of drinking water is currently a critical issue. [Press reports](#) state that by late June, the price of water in Sana’a had tripled since the start of the conflict because of a lack of fuel for diesel-operated pumps. This is an important concern for food security, because a lack of water can prevent people from preparing food. Water shortages may also impact people keeping livestock, an important livelihood in the country.

Finally, lack of job opportunities and deteriorating social service provision (education and health) were also reported by respondents.

These issues underscore the fact that the country is currently facing an acute crisis that has profoundly changed people’s food security. As additional data is compiled, a more detailed analysis will be offered.

Figure 3: Word cloud



In the words of the respondents:

- “The situation is very bad, large shortages in food and water.” (Male respondent from Sana’a)
- “The situation is very bad and food is unavailable. Many people need help.” (Male respondent from Ibb)
- “The situation is bad. The prices of food are high and some food items are not available. The availability of water is very limited.” (Female respondent from Sana’a city)
- “The situation is extremely bad and deteriorating daily.” (Male respondent from Al Hudaydah)
- “There is no food, the situation is very difficult.” (Female respondent from Ibb)
- “Worsening food situation and food shortage in the markets, which led to high prices.” (Male respondent from Taizz)

Conclusion: a degradation of food security conditions is likely

The accumulation of risk factors indicates that food insecurity levels will likely increase. Supply chain bottlenecks are restricting the supply of critical imported food supplies to conflict-affected governorates, leading to sharply higher retail food prices. Food access continues to be severely constrained because of lower incomes, disrupted labor markets and widespread population displacement. Households are now using severe coping strategies in order to access food, as pervasive insecurity limits humanitarian access. These factors are expected to lead to an aggravation of the already poor food security conditions that prevailed in Yemen prior to the crisis.

Before the crisis, 11 of 22 governorates were in a critical nutrition situation, with global malnutrition rates exceeding 15 percent. Due to deteriorating health, food security, water and hygiene, it is likely that the situation will continue to worsen further unless immediate humanitarian assistance is urgently provided.



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