



Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM)

What is mVAM?

The World Food Programme's *mobile* Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) project collects food security data through short mobile phone surveys, using SMS, live telephone interviews and an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. The project also includes an automated two-way communication system to give people access to real-time information for free.

What are the objectives of the project?

The mVAM project aims to:

- Provide high frequency data to track food security trends in real-time to support decision making processes.
- Develop and share a sound methodology to run mobile surveys.

The mVAM story

The mVAM project started in 2013 at WFP offices in Goma, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Galkayo, Somalia, with a grant from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund. WFP's first country-wide SMS and IVR-based food security monitoring system was launched in September 2014, when mVAM was deployed in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to support the Ebola emergency response. The system has provided

WFP with operational information in emergencies, overcoming obstacles related to restricted access and staff safety. In 2015, WFP also deployed the mVAM approach to monitor the food security situation in Iraq and in Yemen. Other countries employing the mVAM approach are Chad, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, and Sudan.

Why remote data collection?

Collecting primary data on households' food security can be challenging, time consuming and costly – particularly in areas with limited humanitarian access. Remote data collection is a more flexible and efficient way to collect food security information. Also, it allows for frequent food security monitoring in unstable areas without putting the enumerators at risk.

mVAM pilots confirmed the advantages of remote surveys:



NO RISKS

No 'boots on ground'
[Data collection in hard-to-access areas]



FAST

1 – 2 week turnaround
[6 weeks for face-to-face surveys]

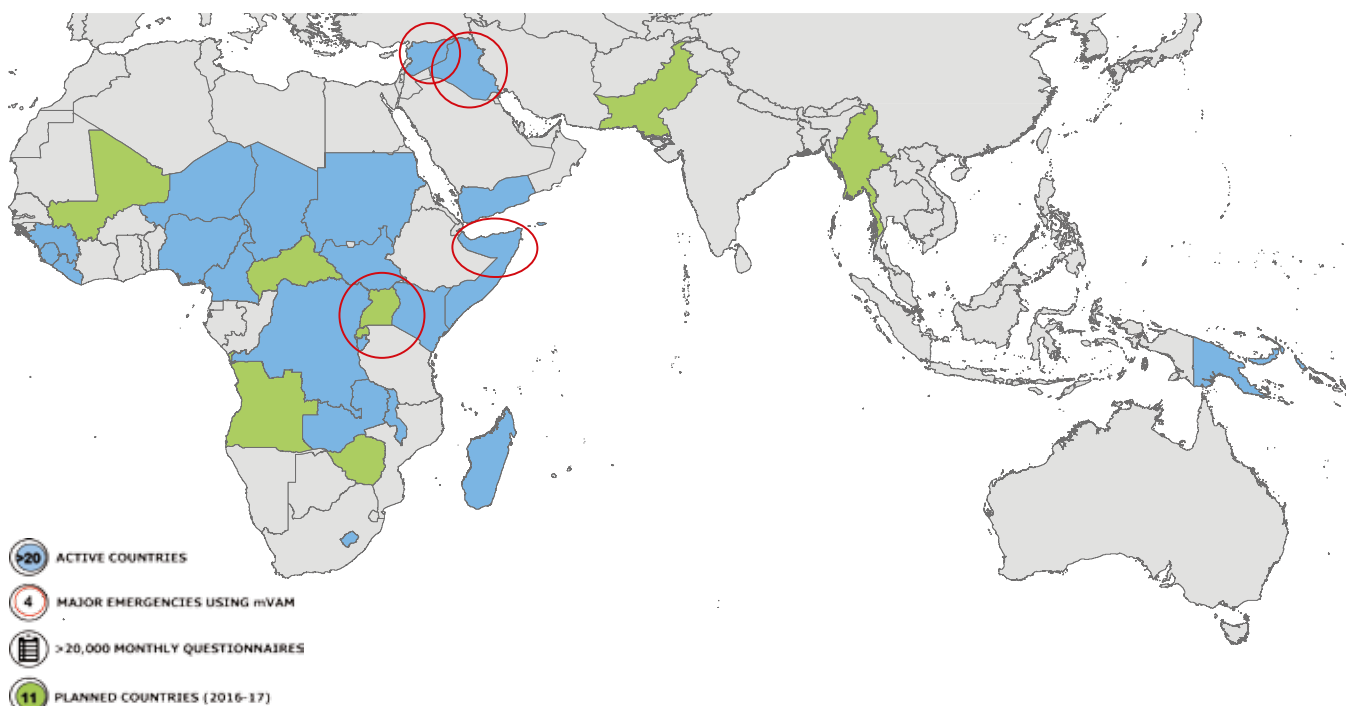


LOW COST

US\$3 - US\$9 / Questionnaire
[US\$20 - US\$40 for face-to-face surveys]

mVAM in numbers

mVAM has proven to be a scalable tool. More than 100,000 questionnaires were collected using mVAM in 2015, a seven-fold increase on the previous year. The technology is active in more than 20 countries – including the emergencies in Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen.



Two-way communication

The technologies that WFP has used for mVAM surveys – including live interviews, text messaging and interactive voice response – make it possible for WFP to listen in and deliver critical information about food security to people everywhere.

WFP has experimented with these tools to deliver and receive information from the communities we work with in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. Each week, we put information on food prices on a voice server that people can call for free using their mobile phones. When people call in, they navigate updated local-language audio recordings about food prices and information on WFP's assistance. People can also leave messages for WFP, so that staff at the office can listen in and respond appropriately to people's concerns. We believe that by doing this, people receive valuable information about food that can make life easier, but can also give their feedback.

How is this different from our usual way of doing business?

Our data is truly 'open' and accessible to people everywhere. WFP has had food security statistics on its website for years on an open access basis. However, people without internet access could never access that information.

What this new approach means is that people in remote and vulnerable communities obtain information that matters to them for free and on demand.

Each month, WFP's office in Somalia takes 400 incoming calls, and sends out over 4,000 text messages to people. Many country offices – including Iraq, Kenya and many others – have set up helplines.

Future of mVAM

Lessons learned from the mVAM project to date are informing the consolidation and expansion of the project to new countries.

- mVAM is experimenting with messaging tools and internet surveys
- New indicators are being collected through mVAM, including nutrition indicators.
- mVAM is experimenting with Free Basics, a free service offered by Facebook. People will be able to visit a website and obtain updated data, straight to their smartphone at no cost.