

Executive Brief: **Burundi** Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) - 2008

Overview

Burundi has come a long way in terms of rebuilding the nation since the end of the 13 years civil war in 2003. Yet it is one of the poorest countries in the world (167th out of 177 countries).¹ Indeed the war has had a lasting negative impact on the economic and food security situation of the country.

Today's challenge is to rebuild the human, social and economic fabric of the country. The government has engaged in reforms and programs to spur economic growth and social changes, but economic growth has been slow (averaging only 2.7% between 2001 and 2006). The food security situation remains precarious, as poverty is widespread and the country is prone to recurrent climatic shocks.

To prepare a new Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation in the country, WFP Burundi conducted a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis in June-July 2008. Since the timing of the survey coincided with the harvest season, it is likely that the reported prevalence of food insecurity may be lower than what would be experienced during the non-harvest seasons.

How was the survey carried out? Primary data was collected from 5,011 sampled households, key informants and through focus groups discussions. Information on health and nutrition was collected from 4,006 children below the age of five. A market survey and a secondary data analysis were also conducted.

How many people are food insecure and where are they?

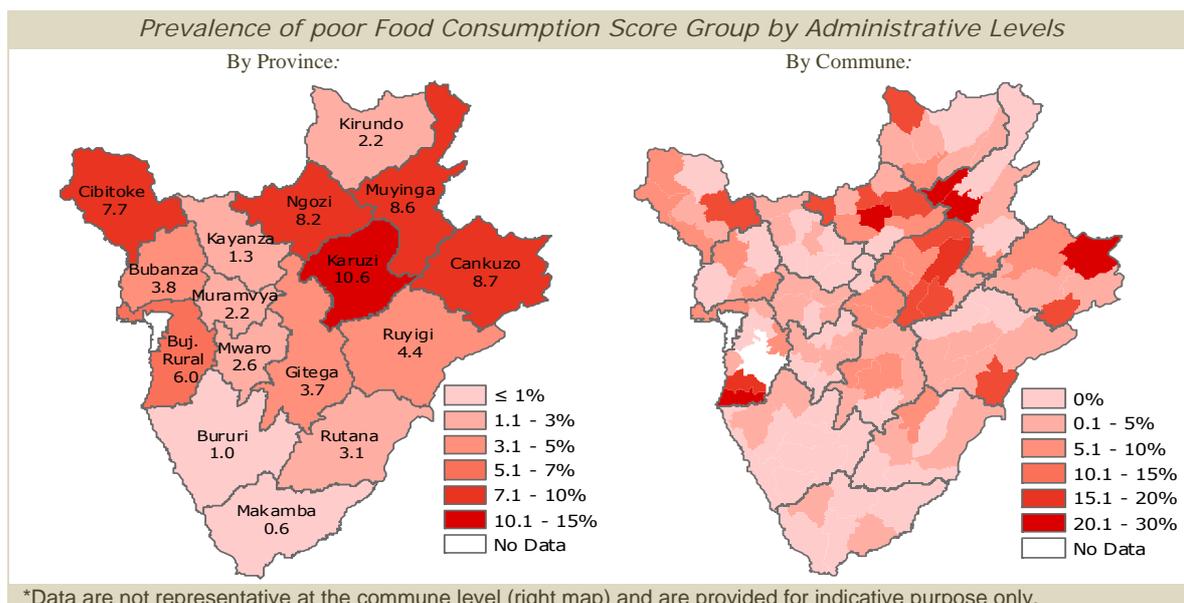
About 63,900 households representing 4.8 percent of the households were deemed food insecure.² The diet of these food insecure households mainly consists of tubers or cereals supplemented with some vegetables and oil.

About 302,700 households representing 23 percent of the households are moderately food insecure. Their food consumption is classified as borderline with a diet similar to the food insecure group but made richer through the intake of pulses.

Malnutrition: The level of chronic malnutrition is high with 52.7 percent of children under the age of five being stunted and 8.4 percent wasted (acute malnutrition).

Definition: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, FAO, 2006.

The CFSVA identified the following priority provinces: the North East (Cankuzo, Karusi, Muyinga, Ngozi and Kirundo) are the least food secure and the North West (Citiboke, Bubanza, and Bujumbura Rural) has the highest prevalence of poverty.



The food insecure households are characterised by one or more of the following: they are asset poor, they own less than 0.25ha of land, they have 2 or less members or are headed by a woman.

¹ Human Development Report, 2007/2008, UNDP.

² WFP uses the food consumption score as a proxy for food security. The score is based on the diversity of the diet and the frequency of food intake.

65% of the food insecure households live in 5 provinces: 16.8% in Ngozi, 14.3% in Muyinga, 13% in Karusi, 10.5% in Cibitoke and 10.5% in Bujumbura Rural.

Malnutrition prevails in every province of Burundi. Acute malnutrition is most frequently observed in Cankuzo and Rutana, while prevalence of chronic malnutrition is high throughout the country. The highest prevalence of stunting can be found in Ngozi, Cibitoke, Mwaro, Kayanga, Muyinga. Out of 16 provinces, only five have stunting levels of less than 50 percent (Bubanza, Bujumbura, Cankuzo, Karusi, Makamba). However the stunting rate is above 45 percent in these provinces.

Who are the food insecure households?

The majority of the population in Burundi is rural and almost all households are engaged in agricultural activities (99.4%). Household's food security is directly linked to wealth and asset ownership. Food insecure households have less access to land, use more often smaller plots and very seldom own the land. They rarely cultivate cash crops and they produce fewer overall varieties of crops.

The following four livelihood groups are considered priority and they account for 58.3 percent of the total population and 68.8% of the food insecure in all livelihood groups.³

➤ **Marginal Households - 1.2% of the population (16,000 households) and 2.5% of all the food insecure**

They are the smallest livelihood group yet the most prone to food insecurity. This group is characterized as isolated, uneducated, elderly head of households with a lowest average income relying on gifts and transfers to sustain their livelihoods. Their average income is the lowest of all livelihood groups, with 60% coming from pensions and transfers, and the remaining from production of both food-and cash-crops.

➤ **Labourers - 14.7% of the population (195,000 households) and 29.6% of all the food insecure**

They are also highly vulnerable to food insecurity as they largely depend on labour (manual and seasonal) opportunities which account for 84% of their income. They have few assets and limited access to land. They depend on markets to access food and spend a large share of their incomes on food. This limits their ability to save and invest in economic assets, trapping them in a poverty cycle.

➤ **Agro-Brewers - 2.5% of the population (33,000 households) and 5% of all the food insecure**

This is a small group which specializes in brewing and wine-making. About 65% of their annual income comes from brewing activities which the remaining is derived from the agricultural production. They have the third highest proportion of food insecure (9.6%).

➤ **Agriculturalists - 34% of the population (442,500 households) and 31.7% of all the food insecure**

These households have the highest dependency on agricultural production for their livelihood (90%). Their annual income is almost half of the national average income.

Malnutrition: Labourers have the highest prevalence of wasting (11.3%) compared to Agro-Labourers (9.7%), Agriculturalists (8.0%) and Agro-Sellers (7.6%). The prevalence of stunting is the highest among Agro-Labourers (55.2%), followed by Agriculturalists (53.6%), Labourers (53.0%) and Agro-Sellers (49.2%).

Why are they food insecure?

The high population density, the high dependency ratio and high population growth rate combined with the current structure of the economy (heavy reliance on limited natural resources) contribute to the population's vulnerability to food insecurity.

Food insecurity is due to:

➤ Declining agricultural productivity due to environmental factors (climate, erosion and loss of soil fertility). In addition, wood is the main source of energy for 96.7% of the households, leading to deforestation and land degradation.

➤ Small land holdings. While access to land is widespread, often the plot sizes are very small (between 0.25 and 0.5 ha) for 42.1% of households. In addition, the high population growth (2.8%) causes diminution of the sizes of food-producing plots.

➤ Poor storage conditions and ability to preserve food. Households sell what they cannot consume just after the harvest when prices are low and buy in the lean season when prices are high. The ability to preserve and store food is a significant component of the household vulnerability.

➤ Nearly half (45%) of the population is aged 15 or less which is a factor for lower economic growth. Furthermore, each additional child in a household means an average contraction in per capita consumption by 25 percent.

3 The livelihood group is not a sufficient criterion to target food insecure. Additional vulnerability factors including poverty and access to land must be taken into account. Other livelihood groups are: the agro-sellers, the agro-labourers, the agro-traders, agro-exploiters, and the employees. The first four groups are generally better off as they complement their agricultural activity by other activities such as daily labour, wood sale, fishing, mining, trade, etc. See the report for a description of all the livelihood groups.

- 26.9% of households were considered as asset poor. Asset poor households usually have less access to natural resources, no cash crop, none or few animals, less facilities of water and sanitation. Asset poor households are then maintained in an endless cycle of poverty.
- Poor transportation networks. It impacts the accessibility to goods and raises prices. It limits households' access to markets and to the supply of food items beyond the local level.
- Natural disasters. 65.5% of households experienced a drought in the last 12 months, and 21.7% experienced hail.
- High food prices. It is reported as a main shock by 34 percent of households. The price of beans increased by 55 percent between June 2007 and June 2008. The price of cassava and rice increased by 20 percent and 29 percent respectively over the same period.

Malnutrition: acute malnutrition may be due to poor hygiene practices and the use of unsafe source of water. Chronic malnutrition is linked to poverty.

What are the response options?

The following recommendations are made for the national policy level.

- **Include food security-centered programs in national poverty reduction strategies:** Addressing poverty and food insecurity in Burundi will require a broad multi-sector approach. Investments are needed in infrastructure, agricultural productivity, education and health sectors.
- **Integrate food security and health programs in a national nutrition strategy:** An improvement in health and sanitation services is needed to tackle malnutrition.
- **Support the development of a food security monitoring system (FSMS).** In the South region, food security monitoring should focus on and/or take into consideration the impact of droughts; in the North-West, on poverty and prices and; in the North East, on food availability, prices and trade. The system should focus on the lean seasons (February - March and September - October).

Chief amongst the CFSVA recommendations targeted at the identified food insecure groups:

- **Stabilize supply and market prices, monetize rural areas. Target: households who depend on markets to access food (for example labourers)**
 - *Invest in storage and transformation:* better storage conditions would help households to sell what they cannot consume when prices are high. Similarly transformation into products with longer shelf-life and/or better conservation characteristics will similarly contribute to stabilizing supplies over time, and prices.
 - *Invest in transportation infrastructure:* The free-flow of goods and controlled costs of transportation will help to stabilize market supplies and, therefore, food prices.
- **Increase agricultural output. Target: food insecure agriculturalists.** The availability of adapted and improved seeds and other inputs, including fertilizers, should be prioritized. Seed fairs and private (for-profit) seed distribution networks, practices to control erosion and loss of fertility must be promoted. Model gardens and demonstration plots may be useful. Such programs must address specific local conditions.
- **Develop vocational skills and capacities. Target: labours and agriculturalists.** These groups need to develop alternative livelihood strategies to supplement their own production. Interventions to consider include: vocational training, Food-for-Training, investment in adult training programs and school feeding.
- **Invest in export-oriented markets. Target: agriculturalists and agro-brewers.** The North-East region is strategically near the Kigali market in Rwanda and to Tanzania, which could provide market opportunities for goods exported from Burundi. Measures to be considered include trade agreements, investment in infrastructure and support to private initiatives.
- **Food aid distributions:** Aside from specific target groups including refugees and marginal households, the need for assistance depends on agricultural conditions and harvested quantities. Contingency plan for emergency distribution should be informed by the FSMS.
- **Establishment of a formal social support system. Target: Household with a Marginal livelihood strategy.** This group needs food assistance on a permanent basis. Only local networks and organizations have the ability to provide long term support to those households.

For more information, contact:

Jean Charles Dei, WFP Country Director, jean-charles.dei@wfp.org
 Arif Husain, Senior Adviser, CFSVAs, Rome, arif.husain@wfp.org

The full report is available at www.wfp.org/food-security

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