

Guinea

November 2014: Despite the harvest, food insecurity persists in Forest Guinea

Tracking food security during the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in Guinea

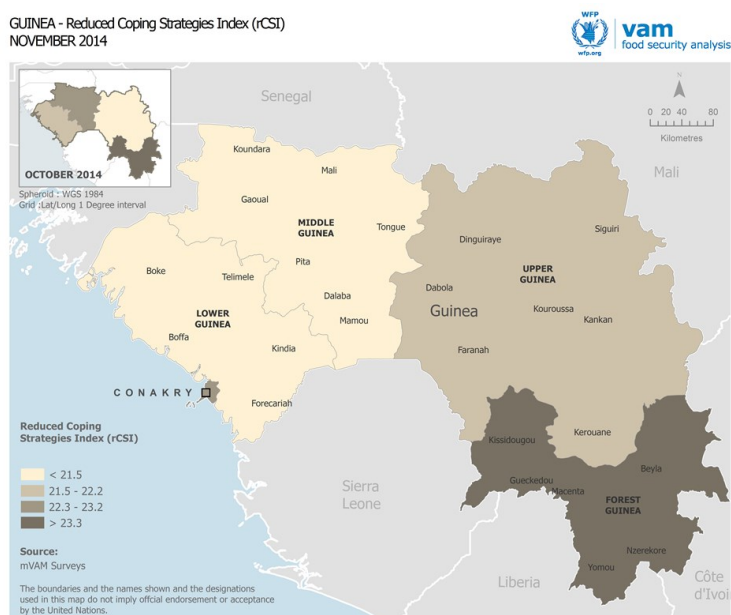
Key Messages

- Households in Forest Guinea and in Conakry are resorting more frequently to negative coping strategies. The coping strategy index remains high in Nzerekore and Conakry, the areas most affected by the Ebola virus disease (EVD).
- Despite the harvest season, the level of coping strategies used by households has not decreased since October. In Upper Guinea, the spread of EVD in the region and its impact on employment in artisanal mining may explain this phenomenon.
- In most areas, local rice prices have fallen as the harvest has increased food availability in markets. Imported rice prices remain stable compared to October. While the terms of trade of daily casual labourers have improved, they still remain low in Forest Guinea.

Methodology

The information for the November cycle was collected by telephone using interactive voice response (IVR). In total, 532 respondents were contacted. As far as possible, respondents from the October 2014 cycle were contacted again in November 2014 to allow for trend analysis. For more details on survey methodology, please visit the mVAM website.

Map 1: Guinea - reduced Coping Strategy Index high in Guinea — November 2014



The survey collected the reduced coping strategy index (rCSI), an indicator that captures the severity and frequency of consumption-related coping strategies used by households. The more strategies households implement, the higher the rCSI.

November data suggests that surveyed households in Forest Guinea and Conakry are resorting more frequently to severe coping strategies than they did in October. In November, in spite of the harvest, a decline in the rCSI was observed in Upper Guinea, where there was an increase in EVD transmission rates. Households in Lower and Middle Guinea employ fewer coping strategies compared to households in other regions of the country. These regions are also less affected by EVD than other regions.

Source: mVAM data, WFP, November 2014

As illustrated in Figure 1, November data suggests that the rCSI is increasing in Nzerekore (Forest Guinea), the region most affected by the epidemic. The rCSI has remained stable at high levels in Conakry.

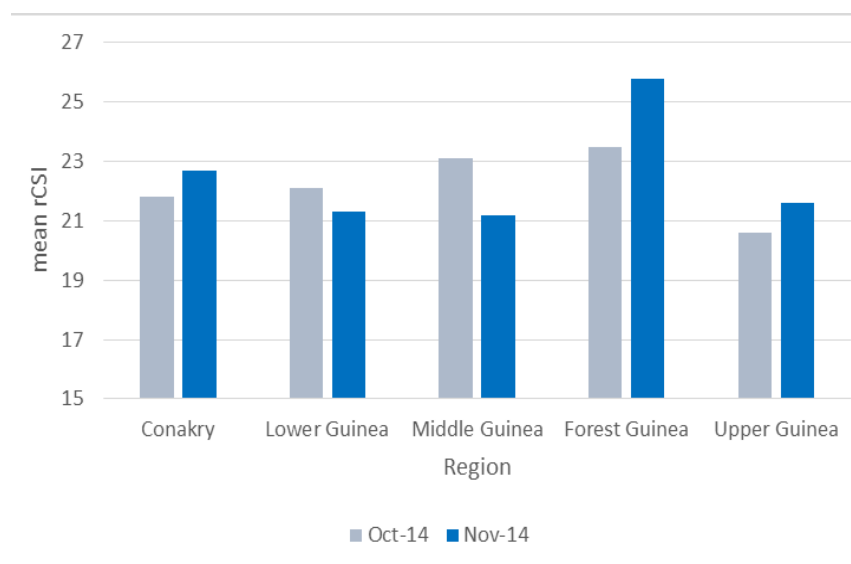
In Forest Guinea, the region most affected by EVD, the rCSI increased from 23.5 in October 2014 to 25.8 in November 2014 ($p = 0.06$). In Upper Guinea, where EVD transmission persisted in November, the rCSI rose from 20.6 to 21.6 from October to November, within a survey margin of error of $p=0.31$. The persistently high rCSI in these two regions is worrisome, as the harvest should allow households to enjoy better food security,

including improved access to food and lower prices. Poor salaries and loss of employment may in part explain the continued use of coping strategies in these regions.

From October to November, the rCSI level increased from 21.8 to 22.17 in Conakry ($p=0.31$). The stability of the indicator at this high level reflects a continued risk of food insecurity in the capital.

The coping strategies most often used by households in Conakry are consuming less expensive food (85.7 percent of households) and reducing portion size at mealtimes. In Forest Guinea, 91.2 percent of households reported reducing the number of meals they eat in a day, and 87.3 percent said they are consuming less expensive and less preferred food. In addition, 87.3 percent of households said they are borrowing food or relying on help from a friend/relative to meet their consumption needs – a sign of increased food insecurity.

Figure 1: rCSI, October and November 2014



Source: WFP mVAM data, October and November 2014

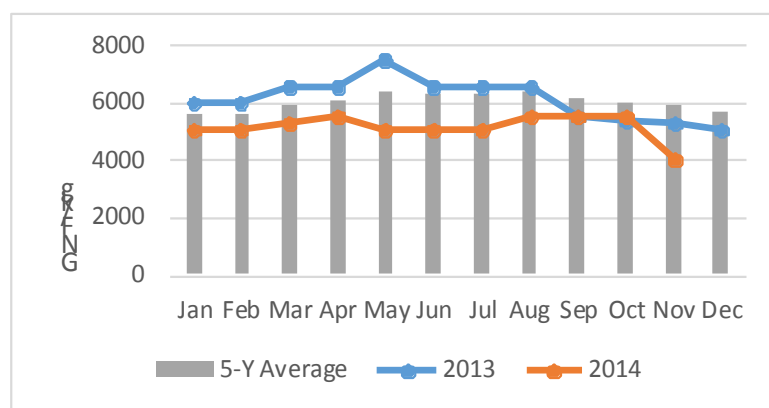
Evolution of the epidemic in Guinea

According to WHO, transmission rates remain high in Macenta, Nzerekore and Beyla Prefectures, which are located in Forest Guinea. Since the start of the epidemic until 27 November, a total of 222 cases have been registered in Conakry, 368 in Gueckedou and 518 in Macenta. There has been continued transmission of EVD in Upper Guinea in November, with 78 new registered cases reported in Kerouane, 50 in Faranah and 25 in Siguiri.

Food prices and markets

WFP's market monitoring indicates a decrease in local rice prices in November, in line with seasonal norms. According to the survey, a relative stability in imported rice prices was observed, with an average price of 220,000GNF per bag reported in Conakry. Palm oil prices also fell.

Figure 2: Price per kilogram for a bag of local rice in Nzerekore, 2013 and 2014



Source: WFP mVAM data, October and November 2014

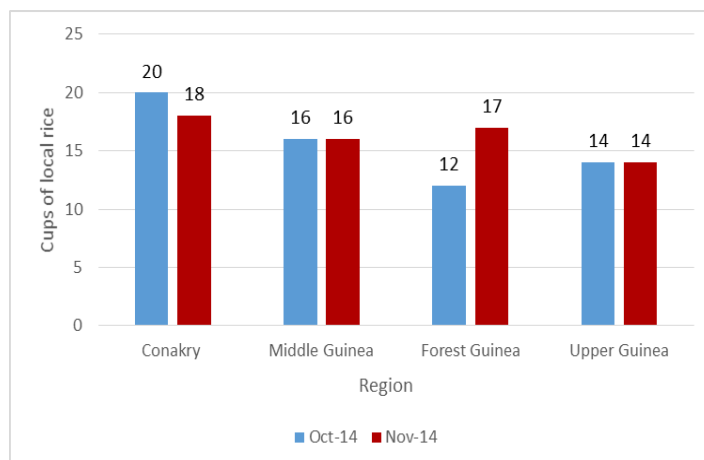
Wage levels and terms of trade

Wage rate trends for manual labour are mixed. Wages have improved in Forest Guinea, but they have fallen slightly in other parts of the country. In Forest Guinea, the wage rate increase – from 18,000GNF to 24,000GNF a day – could indicate a recovery in economic activity, which has been hit by movement restrictions and fear.

By contrast, wages for manual labour fell in Upper Guinea, where mining activities have slowed down because of fears related to the spread of EVD, especially for gold mining in Siguiri and diamond mining in Kerouane. Artisanal mining activities provide employment, particularly for women, and continued disruption could potentially limit food access for these groups.

Thanks to the harvest, wage-to-local-rice terms have increased, except in Conakry. Nevertheless, there are significant geographic discrepancies. While a day labourer's wage equals 17 to 20 cups of local rice in Conakry, it only equals an average 15 cups in the rest of the country.

Figure 3: Terms of Trade—wage to local rice



Source : WFP VAM market data

Conclusion and Outlook

Compared to October, the November food security situation has not improved in the regions most affected by EVD. This is in spite of the harvest, which should normally improve people's access to food through lower prices and own production. As the rCSI has improved in regions less affected by EVD, the poorer food security situation in Forest Guinea and Conakry may be the result of the epidemic. An adverse economic situation and weaker household purchasing power appear to be the most important contributing factors to ongoing food insecurity.

These results may suggest once the epidemic is stabilized, food security will improve. However, the continued official and unofficial obstacles to commerce and markets – such as those found in the Beyla Prefecture of Forest Guinea – may continue to limit the development of livelihoods and revenues in EVD-affected areas, even when transmission rates decline.



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To download mVAM data on the ebola-affected countries, please visit: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/index.html