

IRAQ

Food insecurity increases across the country, especially among IDPs

Highlights

- Household food consumption has deteriorated sharply since February 2016, especially among IDPs and returnees.
- The average cost of a standard food basket remained stable in June, but food markets are highly volatile in conflict-affected governorates. Respondents in Fallujah continue to report severe shortages of food, and the few food items available are more expensive than ever.
- Household access to Public Distribution System (PDS) deliveries showed signs of deterioration as more respondents reported not receiving rations in May than in February.



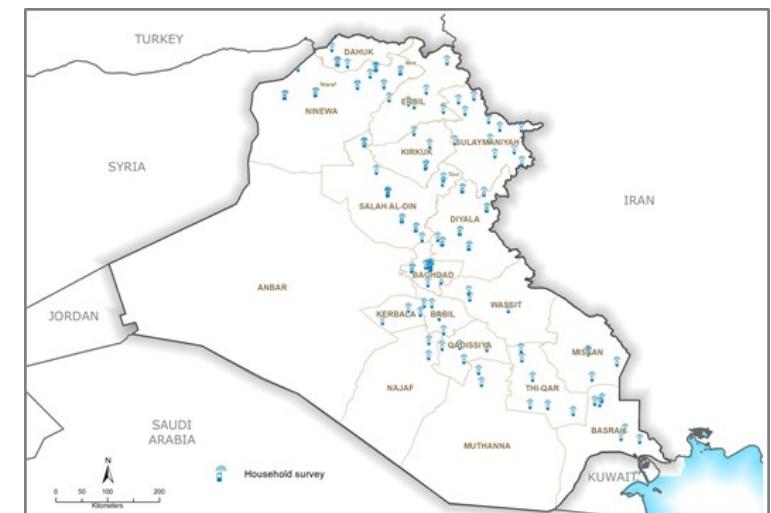
SITUATION UPDATE: May and June saw an increase in the number of attacks across Iraq, primarily in Anbar Governorate and in Baghdad. In May, the western city and district of Rutba was retaken by Iraqi forces, giving access to a population that has been under ISIL occupation since June 2014. Meanwhile, on 22 May the Iraqi Prime Minister announced the start of the military operation to recapture Fallujah from ISIL. According to humanitarian partners, up to 85,000 people have been displaced from Fallujah and have arrived mainly in Amiriya Al Fallujah, with a smaller number in Al Habbaniya sub-district (both in Anbar Governorate), as well as in Baghdad Governorate. On 18 June, the Iraqi Prime Minister ordered measures to help displaced families from Fallujah, with 10 new camps to be established. The Iraqi army declared Fallujah recaptured from ISIL on 26 June.

Humanitarian agencies working on the outskirts of the city are reportedly struggling to cope with the heavy flow of displaced civilians fleeing the violence as the offensive continues, pressing on towards ISIL-held Mosul. While it is not clear how many civilians are still in the city, the UN estimates it could be in the thousands. Meanwhile, the situation of those who have fled the city is dire. Families are gathering in dozens of small camps in harsh conditions, sharing small, overcrowded tents, while others are stranded in the open desert or sheltering in mosques and schools.

METHODOLOGY

In May and June 2016, mVAM conducted household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 3,000 respondents (1,500 in May and 1,500 in June) via Korek, a major mobile network operator. WFP monitored respondents living in Iraq's 18 governorates and in conflict hotspots, drawn from Korek's database. The data was weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household. In addition to monitoring household food security, WFP collected market information in central and northern governorates of Iraq, using live telephone interviews. In collaboration with Islamic Relief, 412 calls were successfully made in May and June, obtaining information using a simplified market questionnaire. Responses covered 31 different locations (sub-districts) in six governorates: Anbar (7), Diyala (5), Kirkuk (3), Ninewa (5), Baghdad (5) and Salah al-Din (6).

Map 1. Iraq mVAM data collection, May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

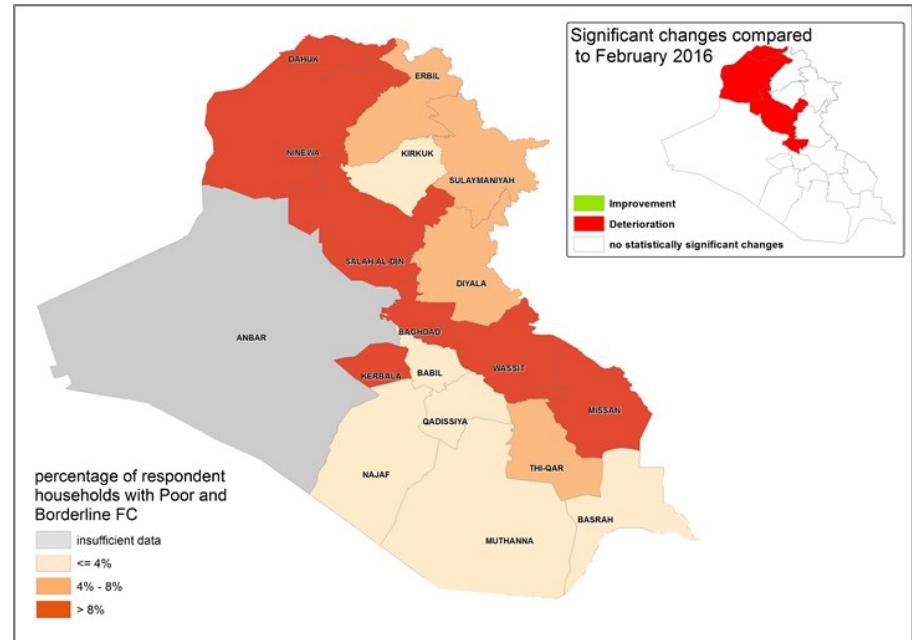
MORE HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT ACCESS TO AN ADEQUATE DIET

National food security was worse in May than in February. The percentage of surveyed households with inadequate ('poor' or 'borderline') food consumption increased from 3 to 10 percent.

At the governorate level, inadequate consumption increased significantly for households surveyed in Baghdad (from 2 to 12 percent), Duhok (from 7 to 22 percent), Ninewa (from 9 to 29 percent) and Salah al-Din (from 2 to 17 percent) (Map 2). Ninewa continues to report the highest levels of inadequate food consumption, with almost a third of surveyed households reporting poor or borderline consumption (Figure 1).

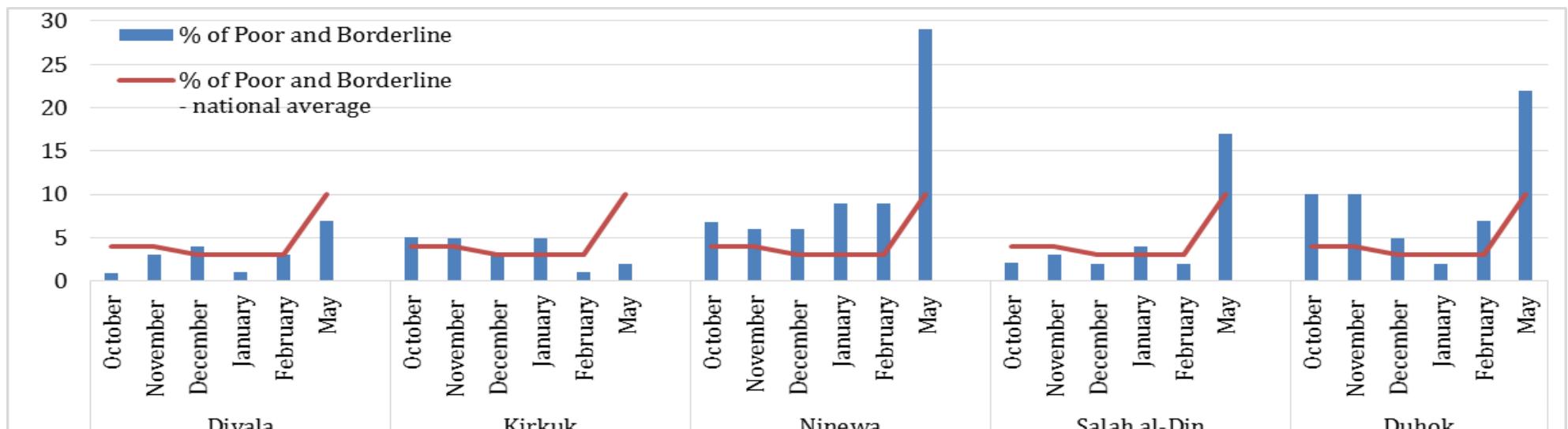
May data revealed that IDP food consumption has deteriorated sharply: 31 percent of IDPs and returnees have poor or borderline food consumption – a new record level of vulnerability. The downward trend also held for residents, although they registered much better levels of food consumption: 7 percent reported poor or borderline consumption (Figure 2).

Map 2. Percentage of respondent households with 'poor' and 'borderline' Food Consumption Score (FCS) – May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

Figure 1. Percentage of respondent households with 'poor' or 'borderline' FCS compared to national average. October 2015 – May 2016

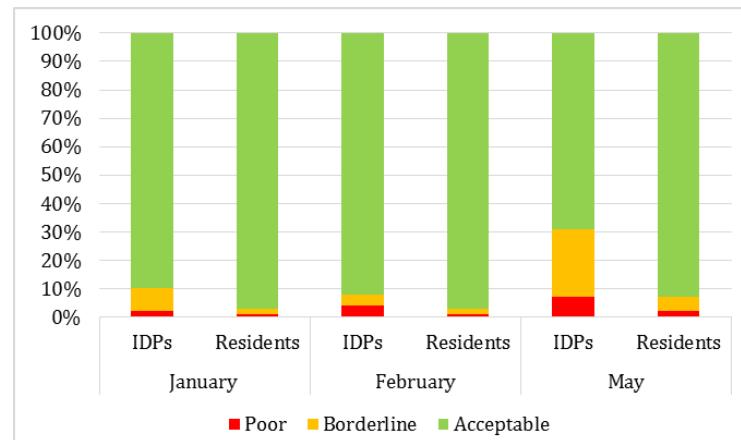


Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

Food consumption improved slightly in conflict hotspots during Ramadan

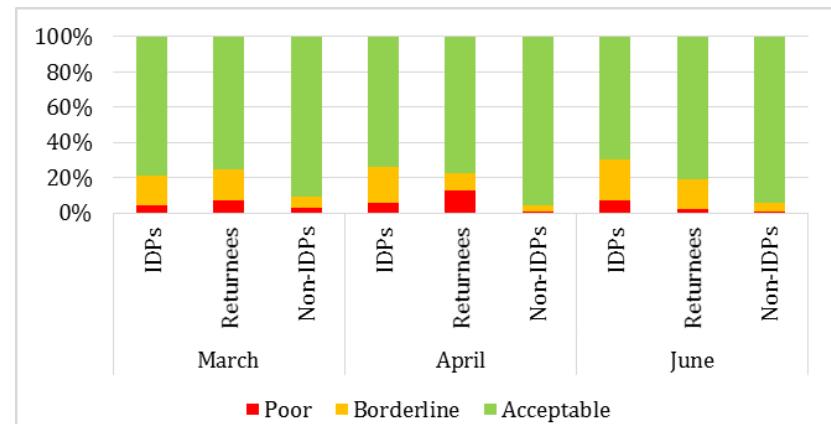
In the monitored conflict hotspots, data collected in June showed that the food consumption of sampled households remained largely unchanged compared to previous rounds. Better food consumption was registered in Al-Shikhan (Ninawa), Baladrooz (Diyala), Balad (Salah al-Din) and Daquq (Kirkuk). This improvement is likely related to the observance of Ramadan. However, more households reported poor food consumption in the districts of Tooz, in Salah al-Din (from 7 percent in April to 16 percent in June). IDPs and returnees in conflict hotspots registered similar food consumption patterns to previous months (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Households with inadequate consumption by respondent status, January 2016 – May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

Figure 3. Households with inadequate consumption by respondent status in conflict hotspots, March 2016 – June 2016



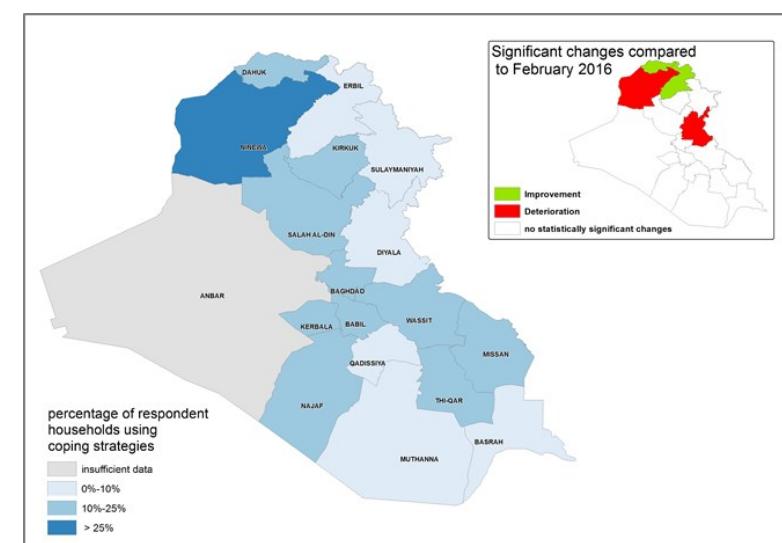
Source: WFP mVAM, June 2016

MORE HOUSEHOLDS RESORTING TO NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES IN NINEWA

In May, 14 percent of households reported food access problems compared with 12 percent in February. At the governorate level, Diyala and Ninewa showed an increased use of negative coping strategies, while in Duhok and Erbil fewer households resorted to negative strategies (Map 3). The coping strategies most used by surveyed families were buying less expensive food, borrowing food or receiving help from family and friends, eating smaller portions and reducing the number of meals. In February, 6 percent of households limited their portion sizes; this proportion doubled in May to 13 percent.

Several governorates saw a rise in the proportion of households limiting their portion size (Baghdad +15%, Salah al-Din +21%, Ninewa +13% and Missan-Wassit +14%). In Ninewa, 12 percent more households ate fewer meals and had to rely on less expensive food; 22 percent more borrowed or received help from families and friends (Figure 4). Households in Ninewa are resorting to more negative coping strategies than in any other governorate and the increase from February is very high: over a third of the surveyed households used at least one food-related coping strategy during the seven days before the survey.

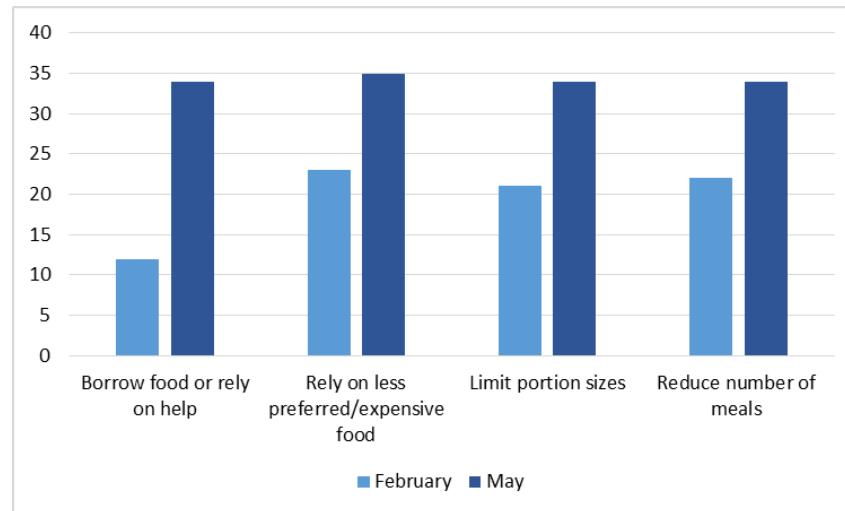
Map 3. Percentage of households using negative coping strategies, May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

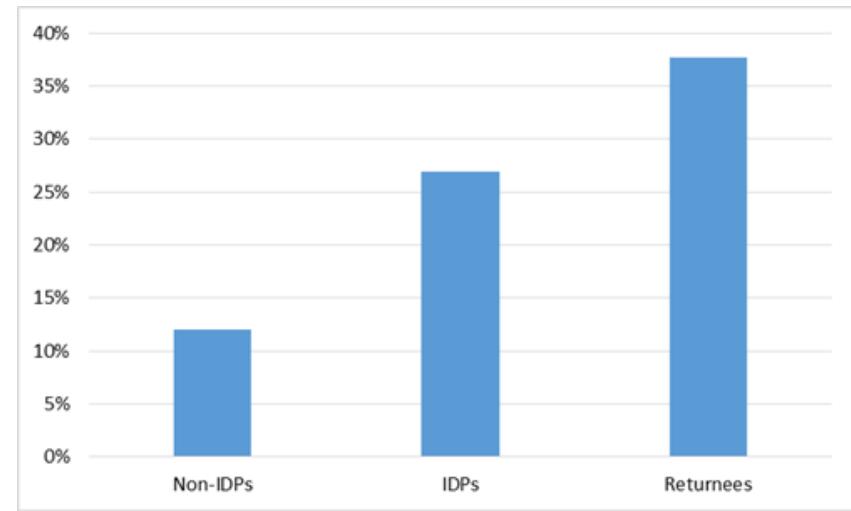
Returnees are resorting to coping strategies more than IDPs and residents. This highlights the difficulties faced by returnees who are struggling to rebuild their homes and lives in destroyed towns (Figure 5). Most returnees are desperate to live in their towns again, but given the presence of IEDs they have no choice but to wait, sheltering in tents or abandoned buildings on the outskirts where conditions are basic at best. IDPs are still worse off compared with residents, but their coping situation has been stable across recent rounds of data collection. The most common coping strategies used by IDPs and returnees are borrowing food and relying on help from families and friends, followed by relying on less expensive food, eating fewer meals and limiting portion sizes.

Figure 4. Households using negative coping in Ninewa, February and May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

Figure 5. Households using negative coping by respondent status, May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

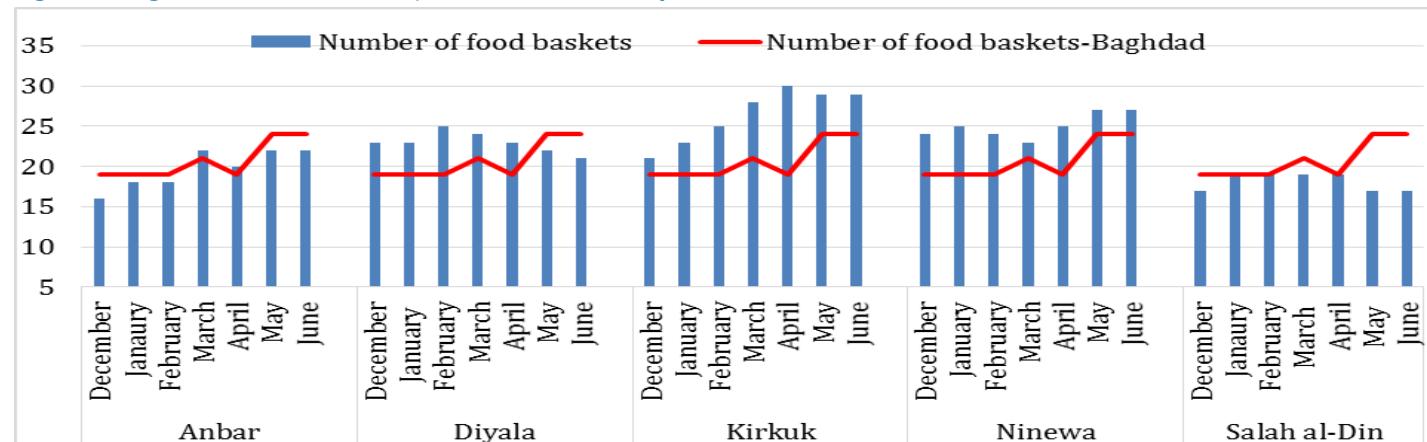
WAGES ARE STABLE FOR UNSKILLED LABOUR

After reaching a record high in May, the overall average unskilled labour wage has fallen from IQD 21,500 to IQD 20,700.

Kirkuk has the highest wages (IQD 23,333) and Salah al-Din the lowest (IQD 15,976). Wages have risen in Baghdad and Kirkuk but fallen in Ninewa (Figure 6).

The terms of trade – the number of food baskets that can be bought with one day of manual work – have stayed the same since May.

Figure 6. Wage-to-food terms of trade, December 2015 – May 2016



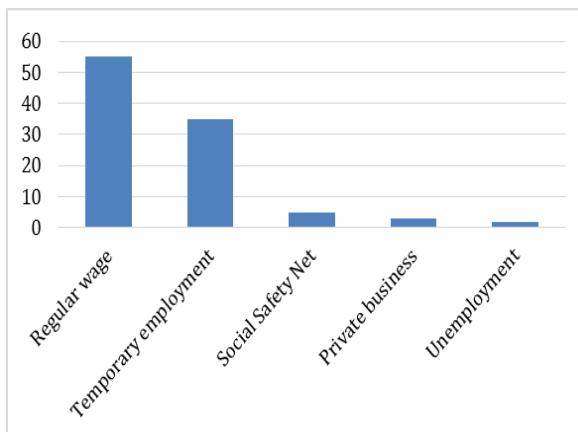
Source: WFP mVAM, June 2016

WAGE LABOUR IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INCOME

Regular wage is the main source of income for 55 percent of households, followed by temporary employment (Figure 7). Unemployment is more widespread among returnees and IDPs (Figure 8).

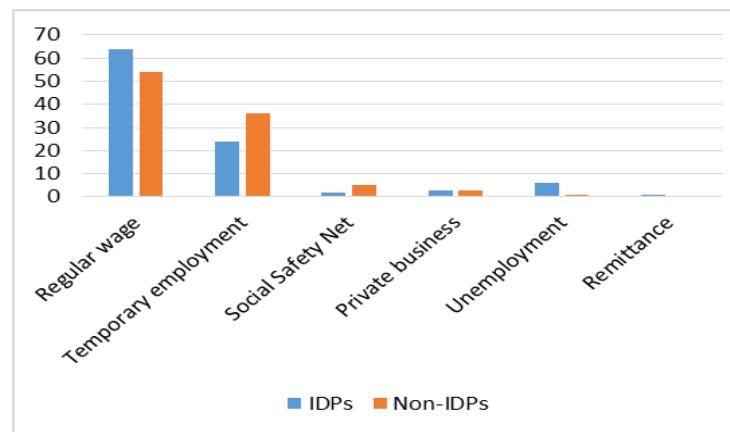
As in previous rounds, all resident households said they had not received any food or non-food assistance from NGOs or the government. Among IDPs, 68 percent said they had not received assistance. Only a small proportion of interviewed IDPs reported assistance as their primary source of food (Figure 9). The market has become an even more important source of food for households, increasing their dependency on price stability and market functioning to ensure adequate food consumption.

Figure 7. First source of income, May 2016



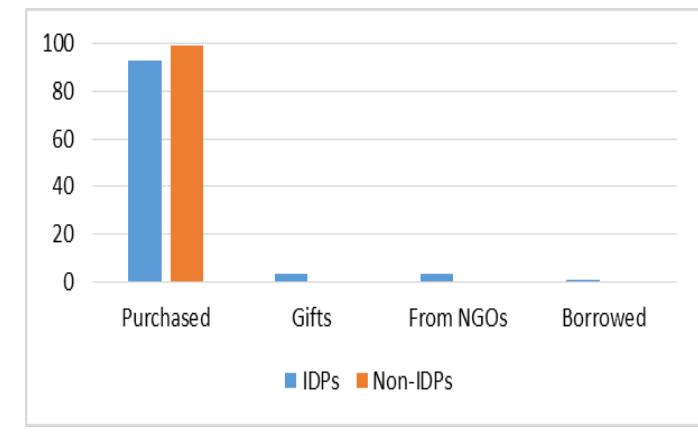
Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

Figure 8. First source of income by respondent status, May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

Figure 9. First source of food by respondent status, May 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2016

FOOD PRICES STABLE DURING RAMADAN

The cost of the standard food basket has remained stable from May. Anbar still has the most expensive food basket (IQD987 excluding Fallujah). Kirkuk, Anbar and Salah al-Din have seen minimum or zero change compared to May 2016 (Table 1). However in Diyala, the trend of increasing food prices continued in June, with prices up 5 percent from May. Prices in Nineva are still the lowest of the monitored governorates but in besieged al-Sharqat, wheat flour, rice, sugar and lentils are almost double the governorate average price. This highlights the very low market integration within the governorate.

Table 1. Cost of the food basket

Governorate	June 2016	Price changes 1 month	Price changes 3 months	Price changes 6 months
Baghdad	IQD 952	-3%	12%	1%
Anbar	IQD 987	-1%	-2%	-14%
Diyala	IQD 923	5%	9%	5%
Kirkuk	IQD 814	0%	-10%	-23%
Ninewa	IQD 784	1%	-5%	-17%
Salah al-Din	IQD 923	2%	5%	-11%

Source: WFP mVAM, June 2016

FOOD AVAILABILITY IN FALLUJAH

As Fallujah has been under armed opposition group control for two years, little information is available. However, through mVAM, WFP and its partner Islamic Relief Worldwide are in contact with reliable sources in the city. The most reported fact is the unavailability of all food items in the market: people are eating vegetables that they are growing on plots of land near their houses and they are helping each other with food. There is no fuel or oil in the city and people are using wood to cook. Farming started in the surroundings of Fallujah; this has brought vegetables to the shops but at inaccessible prices (Table 2). With no possibility of working, most households are selling their belongings to buy food and they are receiving help from the most accessible areas of the district.

Table 2. Average prices of basic food basket items in Fallujah, June 2016

Food	December 2015: Fallujah (IQD)	February 2016: Fallujah (IQD)	March 2016: Fallujah* (IQD)	April 2016: Fallujah* (IQD)	May 2016: Fallujah* (IQD)	June 2016: Fallujah* (IQD)	Baghdad (IQD)
<i>Wheat flour (kg)</i>	2,600	22,000	16,300	36,000	37,000	40,000	1,200
<i>Imported rice (kg)</i>	2,650	15,000	NA	39,285	41,000	45,000	2,000
<i>Sugar (kg)</i>	2,200	15,000	16,750	32,000	40,000	40,000	1,300
<i>Vegetable oil (litre)</i>	3,200	21,000	26,250	35,000	43,000	45,000	1,800
<i>Lentils (kg)</i>	3,800	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2,100

* These figures are based on five key informant interviews in the neighbourhoods of al-Wahda and al-Maqalim in Fallujah.

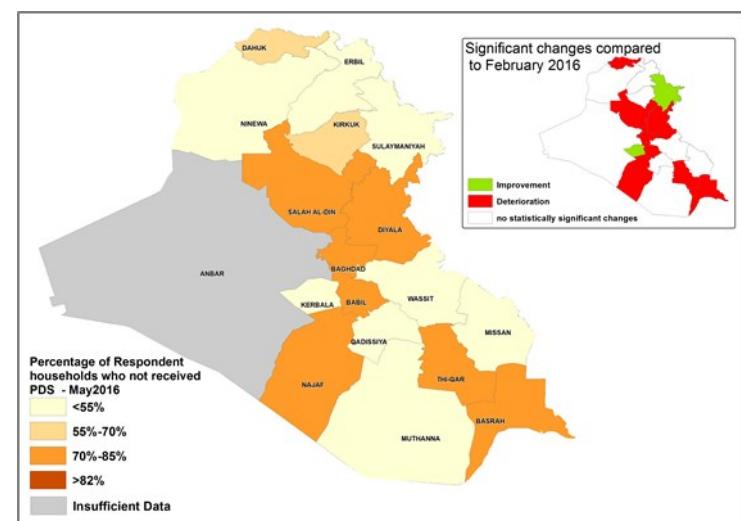
HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (PDS)

May and June data indicate a deterioration in household access to PDS rations: 63 percent of all respondents said they did not receive PDS rations in May compared with 49 percent in February. In particular, respondents in Babil, Najaf, Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala, Dohuk, Salah al-Din and Thi-Qar reported a significant deterioration in PDS distributions. However, PDS access improved significantly in Kerbala and Sulaymaniyah (Map 4). Nationally, just 1 percent of households are receiving a full PDS ration and in most governorates, no respondents received a full ration in May. Data collected in conflict hotspots in June confirmed this trend, as even more households reported not receiving PDS in June.

Over the past two months, wheat flour is the only item that has been distributed regularly. PDS wheat flour distribution in 2016 is reportedly providing 70 percent of requirements. However, quality issues have dogged the distributions, as domestic, low-protein wheat from southern and central Iraq has not proved satisfactory to PDS recipients. Even if the 2016 domestic wheat crop exceeds 4 million mt and domestic procurement exceeds 3 million mt, domestic wheat needs to be blended with imported wheat to yield acceptable flour for bread-making.

In addition, PDS effectively ran out of rice at the end of 2015. Rice distribution was meeting 70 percent of requirements in December 2015 but distribution fell to 1 percent in February 2016. Unless additional purchases are made, PDS will provide under one third of rice requirements in 2016. Other PDS items such as sugar and vegetable oil have also been in short supply. PDS officials reported in June that deliveries were two or three months behind schedule.

Map 4. Respondent households who did not received PDS in April 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, April 2016

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