



Northern Part of Rakhine State

Remote Emergency Assessment mVAM Myanmar | Release #1



vam
food security analysis



Food Security: Recent security incidents have seriously compromised food security in already highly vulnerable areas. Particularly, in Buthidaung North and Maungdaw, depleted food stocks and partially functioning markets seem to have caused severe food access problems leading to hunger related suffering and displacement. Populations are facing serious food shortages and are employing disruptive coping strategies to manage these food gaps.



Livelihoods: People are not able to go to work, access agricultural land and fishing areas and face serious difficulties in reaching markets. Crop losses may have a mid to long-term impact on food security. Households' terms of trade have decreased and pose a serious concern on the ability of households to purchase sufficient food.

- mVAM is a WFP tool meant to remotely monitor food security through live phone calls
- 32 respondents interviewed in 12 villages
- 48 household interviews from WFP Staff in 8 food distribution points (FDPs) on 1-10 November
- Calls done by two WFP operators on 10-18 November

ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

WFP conducted a rapid survey in Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships to assess the impact of the recent security incidents since 9 October on food security. The assessment took place through: i) face to face interviews of 48 WFP beneficiaries at 8 FDPs in Buthidaung South, and ii) phone based interviews of 32 key informants in Maungdaw and Buthidaung North.

FOOD PRICES AND SUPPLY

Markets are functioning and accessible in Buthidaung and partially functioning in Maungdaw South. In Maungdaw North, survey respondents reported non-functioning markets. However, 30 out of 32 respondents reported difficulties when accessing the market. Monthly rice prices have increased in Maungdaw (25 percent on average) while they remained stable in Buthidaung. In Buthidaung North and Maungdaw all survey respondents reported a lower or much lower food supply in markets compared to the month of October due to the impossibility to access the food supplies. Purchasing power of households has decreased in all areas seriously undermining their capacity to access sufficient food.

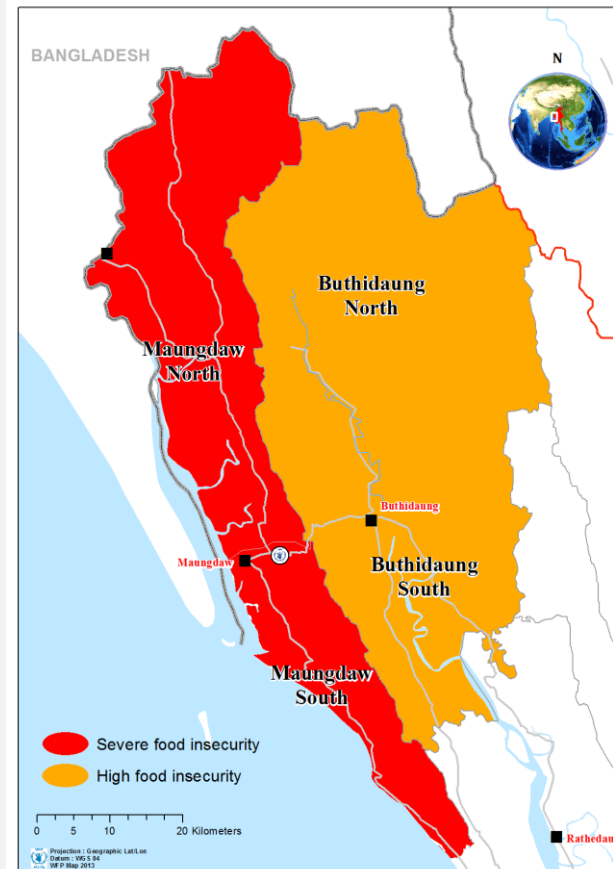
OVERALL FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

Maungdaw

In Maungdaw, severe food insecurity was registered in all surveyed villages. Although based on limited observations, the situation appears the worst in the northern part of the township. The two respondents reached by WFP communicated of non-functioning markets, extreme food shortages, and a sharp increase in the number of households suffering from hunger with respect to the previous month. Some households are leaving their villages for other areas of Rakhine and/or neighbouring Bangladesh due to the lack of food and livelihood opportunities.

The population in the south is also facing food shortages, reduced livelihood opportunities and hunger related suffering. All 23 survey respondents reported the reduction in the number of daily meals and portion sizes and many households are borrowing food or eating seeds, roots and wild foods due to the reduced availability and major difficulties to access food.

The deteriorated security situation has also prevented the population to access markets, agricultural land and fishing areas. Loss of employment, impending crop losses, reduced income and movement restrictions could seriously impact the food security situation in the mid to long-term.

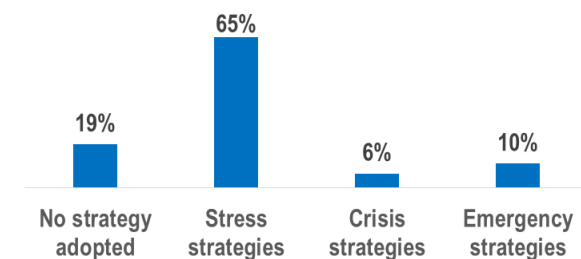


Buthidaung

The food security situation has rapidly deteriorated also in Buthidaung. In the north, food insecurity has severely impacted five out of the seven surveyed villages. In these villages, survey respondents are facing difficulties in accessing markets and some or extreme food gaps depending on the extent of their stocks.

In the south, WFP has observed an increase in November of beneficiary households with an inadequate diet. Nearly half of the households were employing daily coping strategies including begging for food. Despite functioning markets, more than half of the beneficiaries were not sure whether they will be able to access the market in the near future.

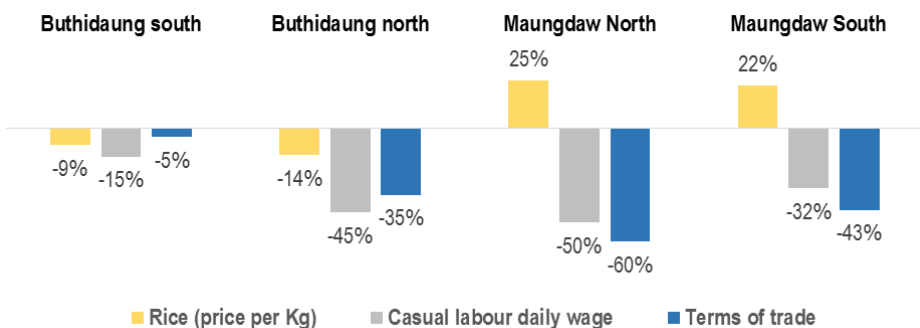
Beneficiary households by type of coping strategy (Buthidaung South)



LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

Access to agricultural land or fishing grounds appears restricted in all areas which is particularly concerning due to the ongoing harvest period. Among WFP beneficiaries in Buthidaung South, the share of households with no income activity the month prior to the survey rose from 6 percent in June to nearly 30 percent in November. All households engaged in casual labour reported a lower number of days worked the week prior to the survey with respect to the previous week. Casual labour wages dropped in all areas from 15 percent in Buthidaung South to 50 percent in Maungdaw North. In line with the terms of trade measuring the quantity of rice that can be purchased with the wage earned from one day of unskilled labour, the purchasing power of affected populations was thus seriously undermined. All survey respondents reported deterioration of livelihood opportunities with mostly negative future prospects. It is unlikely they will be able to maintain the same level of livelihood in the next month.

% variation of average price of rice, daily labour wage, and purchasing power measured by the terms of trade (Oct/Nov)



INDICATORS USED TO MEASURE FOOD INSECURITY

Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a composite indicator based on dietary diversity, food frequency and nutritional importance of different food groups consumed the seven days before the interview. Households with a FCS less than 38.5 are considered to have a poor diet.

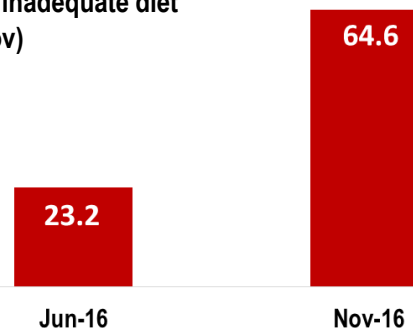
Coping Strategies are used to measure the frequency and severity of negative behaviours when a household is short of food.

Terms of trade (ToT) between poor quality rice and casual labour is a proxy indicator used to measure household purchasing power by showing the quantity of rice that can be purchased with the wage earned from one day of casual unskilled labour.

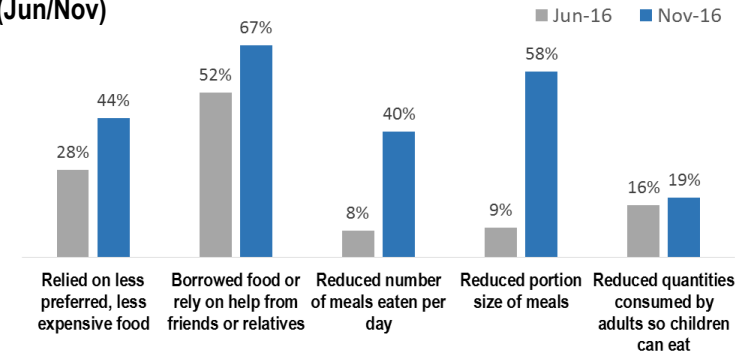
MORE ON FOOD SECURITY IN BUTHIDAUNG SOUTH

WFP also conducted a rapid food security assessment among WFP beneficiaries in eight FDPs in Buthidaung South. Data are fairly comparable to those collected in June during the Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM). The share of households with inadequate diet the week prior to the survey increased from 23 percent in June to 65 percent in November. Dependency on food purchase from markets decreased from 80 percent to 45 percent indicating limited access to markets. The share of households employing daily coping strategies rose from 28 percent to 56 percent.

% beneficiary households with an inadequate diet (Jun/Nov)



% beneficiary households employing coping strategies (Jun/Nov)



NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Exacerbated food insecurity and disruption of livelihoods have led to increased population in need of food assistance. The international community should mobilise resources urgently for the scaled up emergency response, including immediate provision of life-saving food support.
- Cash assistance may not be the most effective transfer modality in the current emergency context and delivery of in-kind assistance to the affected beneficiaries should be considered.
- WFP will continue to monitor closely the evolving situation and inform key stakeholders through regular reports.

LIMITATIONS

This remote survey is mostly based on phone interviews with key respondents. Thus, only a limited amount of information could be collected. Given the limited access of the affected population to mobile phones and the inherent bias in mobile surveys, an important note is that the results of these surveys could not be seen as precise estimates of food insecurity, but rather as a way of capturing patterns and relative levels of food insecurity across areas.

For further information: Email: WFP.Yangon@wfp.org mVAM website: <http://vam.wfp.org/mvam>