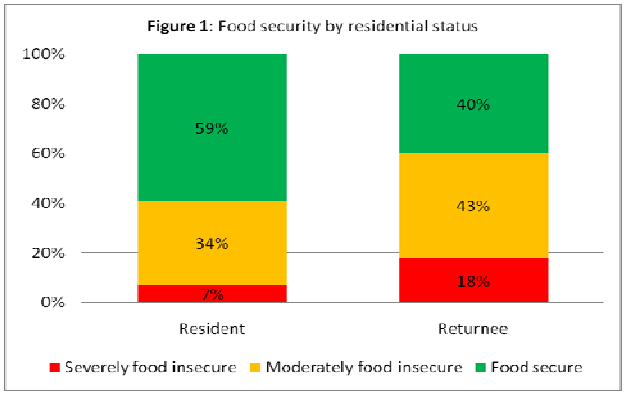
Executive Brief of the Emergency Food Security Assessment for Returnees (South Sudan)

Overview

- The main objective of the Returnee Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) was to assess the food security status of the returnees and local resident community in the main returnee concentration areas. It aims to understand the food and/or non-food needs of returnees after 3 months upon return to South Sudan. The returns have taken place mostly since October 2010.
- The data was collected on 7-15 February 2011 in six out of ten South Sudan States selected based on return concentration. The selected states were Western Bahr el Ghazal, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Jonglei, Warrap and Central Equatoria. Due to insecurity and logistical reasons, the assessment was not conducted in Upper Nile State.
- This EFSA was a joint effort by SSRRC, SSCCSE, MoAF, FAO and WFP.

How many people are food insecure[1]?

- By March 31, 2011, the total number of returnees received in South Sudan was 264,490[2].
- 18 percent of the returnees are severely food insecure and 43 percent moderately food insecure. Smaller degree of food insecurity was reported among residents **(Figure 1**).
- Based on the current returnee caseload, 47,600 returnees are estimated to be severely food insecure and 113,700 are moderately food insecure.



Who is food insecure?

- Returnee households who get their main income from sale of natural resources (27 percent) or other sources, such as begging, borrowing, relying on kinship support and sale of assets (28 percent) were severely food insecure. Among residents the ones getting their main income from sale of natural resources (33 percent), salaried/skilled labour (17 percent) and agriculture (13 percent) were severely food insecure.
- 30 percent of returnee households who do not have relatives or friends at the place of return were severely food insecure. 14 percent of those with relatives or friends were severely food insecure.
- 20 percent of returnees and 10 percent of residents who did not own cattle were severely food insecure.
- 25 percent of returnees living in temporary shelters were severely food insecure.
- 20 percent of returnees who returned during or after December 2010 were severely food insecure compared to 12 percent for those who returned before December 2010. This is attributed to poor food access due to unreliable income sources. 60 percent of returnees who returned during or after December 2010 had poor income reliability compared to 33 percent among those who returned before December 2010.

Why are they food insecure?

Food availability and markets

- 82 percent of residents and 27 percent of returnees have access to land which they can cultivate. The land for those households with access to land is mostly their own while some 26 percent of returnees and 9 percent of residents use land that is not theirs but can be used free of charge.

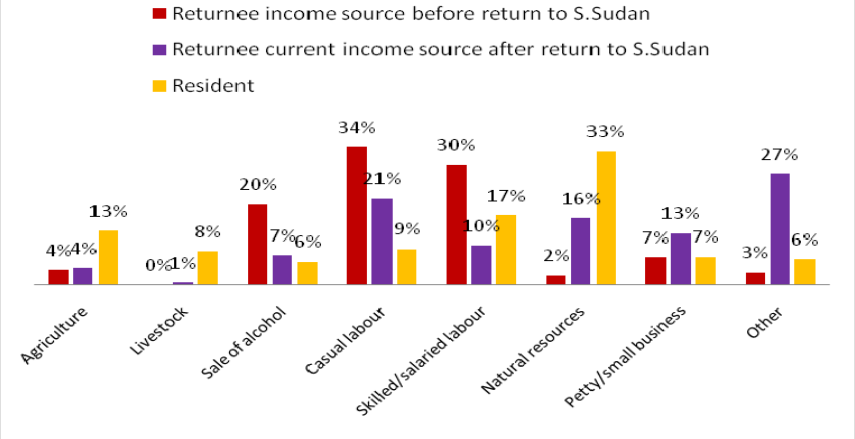
[1] Food security indicator has been formulated based on household food access (income source and expenditure on food), food consumption and coping strategy index
[2] OCHA return update 31 March, 2011

- Main crops cultivated by residents were: maize (87 percent of households who have access to land), groundnuts (85 percent), and sorghum (83 percent). Among returnees, those with access to land showed interest in the cultivation of maize (95 percent), groundnuts and vegetables (88 percent) and sorghum (76 percent).
- Market is the main source of food. About 69 percent of residents and 72 percent of returnees used markets to access food. The most often purchased items from the market for the returnee households were sugar (96 percent), meat (88 percent), oil (80 percent), other cereals/tubers (75 percent), sorghum (59 percent) and maize (51 percent).

Food access

- 76 percent of residents and 27 percent of returnees own some kind of livestock.
- Before return, 34 percent of returnees relied on casual labour, 30 percent on skilled labor and 20 percent on sale of alcohol. Upon return, only 21 percent relied on casual labour while 27 percent rely on other income sources such as begging and sale of household assets. 16 percent rely on sale of natural resources **(Figure 2).**

Figure 2: Main income sources

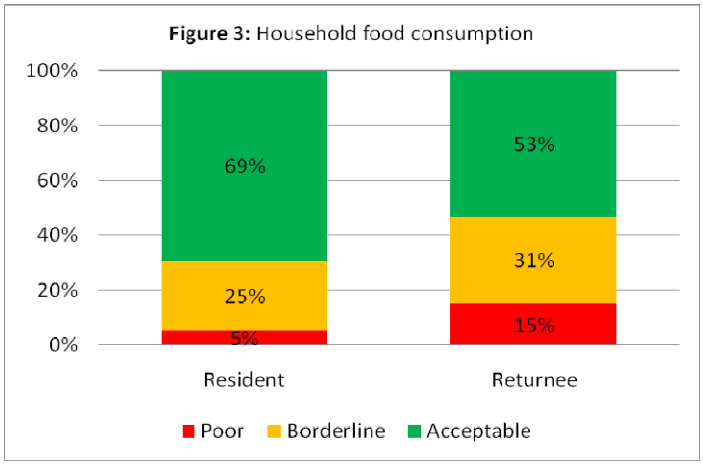


- 93 percent of the communities have accessible fishing ground, mostly river (82 percent) or swamp (52 percent).
- Returnees spent 58 percent of their expenditure on food, cereal accounting for 25 percent. The residents spent 53 percent on food with cereals constituting 21 percent of the total expenditure.
- 46 percent of returnees have poor food access based on their income source and expenditure on food, compared to 36 percent of residents.
- 55 percent of returnee households received food assistance after return, (however, bias and time lag between returnee registration, verification and food distribution could account for this low coverage), 35 percent received non-food items, 3 percent seeds and tools and 4 percent other types of assistance.
- 71 percent of the returnee households arriving after December had received food assistance compared to 46 percent of those who had returned in November or earlier.
- 73 percent of returnee households had adopted coping strategies after return to South Sudan; an increase from 33 percent representing the proportion of these households before return. 64 percent of residents used coping strategies. The most common coping strategies adopted among returnees and residents were limiting portion size at meals (51 vs 58 percent), reducing number of meals eaten (50 vs 55 percent), restricting adults consumption to ensure more food for children (33 vs 41 percent), and borrowing food (32 vs 44 percent).

Food utilization

- 15 percent of returnee households had poor food consumption compared to 5 percent among residents **(Figure 3).**
- Returnees who returned to South Sudan before December 2010 had poorer food consumption compared to those who returned during or after December (22 vs 12 percent).

Figure 3: Household food consumption



Conclusions

- 18 percent (47,600) returnees are severely food insecure and another 43 percent (113,700) are moderately food insecure. Some 6 percent of the residents were severely food insecure and 28 percent moderately food insecure. Returnees had poorer food consumption compared to the residents, leading to food insecurity. Food consumption could improve by encouraging households for own food production, even by simple vegetable gardening.

- Returnees' access to land for cultivation is a problem as only 27 percent of returnees have access to land. They may also require some training on what types of crops to cultivate and the possibilities for feasible approach for cultivation, especially if living in urban areas may need to be assessed.
- There is a drastic shift in the returnees' sources of income mostly from skilled/salaried labour, casual labour and sale of alcohol to more unreliable and unsustainable income sources such as sale of natural resources (firewood, charcoal burning etc) and sale of assets.
- The communities identified that they would be interested in learning new skills or improve on acquired skills more especially on carpentry and sewing, followed by handicrafts, bee keeping, metal work and masonry. There was also interest on various levels of skills around agriculture (vegetable gardening) and fishing (actual fishing, making nets)
- About 55 percent of returnee households received food assistance, 35 percent received non-food items and 3 percent received seeds and tools since their return to South Sudan.
- The main community priorities identified in the focus group discussions were food assistance (62 percent), drinking water and health services (32 percent).

Recommended food and non-food assistance

- Food and non-food assistance to returnees (beyond 3-months assistance package) should be targeted, needs-based and community focused.
- General livelihood support, including support on building permanent houses, distribution of seeds and tools with targeted trainings on how to cultivate in the preferred scale (several feddans vs small back garden for vegetable cultivation), and provision of well equipped social facilities, is required to assist in reintegration.
- More opportunities should be created to harness the livelihood skill sets of returnees and the most vulnerable residents in the communities to engage them more productively in the local economy.
- Accelerate reintegration activities.

How was the assessment done?
The assessment data was collected by household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. 17 sites (villages) were selected purposively to represent returnees and residents in the locations based on the most updated returnee population information prior to the EFSA. In each site, 20 households (10 returnees and 10 residents) were selected randomly totaling 340 households which were visited on 7-15 February 2011. Food security was assessed based on household food access (income sources and expenditure on food), food consumption, and coping strategy index.

For more information on the Returnee EFSA, please contact: Juba.VAM@wfp.org