The National Emergency Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment, conducted jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and WFP in June-July 2012, is the first national assessment in Guinea to provide prefecture-level information on food security conditions. The analysis fills gaps in food security information since 2009 and provides support for multi-sectoral programmes already underway in the country (UNDAF, PNIA-SA, PQDS-E, SRP). The key results are presented below.

FOOD INSECURITY: TWO MAIN POINTS

1. Pockets of severe food insecurity remain in the country, most notably in the Forest Guinea Region and in the prefecture of Faranah, where Guinean households are forced to make difficult choices in order to adequately feed themselves.

2. These pockets continue to evolve in the context of high vulnerability and food-related stress for a large portion of the population. Moderate food insecurity thus remains important, especially during the lean season.

DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION: 2009 TO 2012

Although severe food insecurity (a condition in which households rarely have enough food to satisfy their needs) reduced by half between 2009 and 2012, moderate food insecurity (food stress requiring coping strategies like the sale of assets) increased. The number of moderately and severely food insecure households thus increased from one quarter to one third.

ACCESS DIFFICULTIES

The assessment confirms that food insecurity is not necessarily caused by food availability concerns in Guinea. The deterioration of the food security situation is the result of limited financial and physical access, inadequate food habits, and poor management of revenues and food stocks. These difficulties often force households to sell their agricultural products at the wrong time over the course of the year, only to purchase the same products later at elevated prices.

Households that sell agricultural products are also victims of poorly organized supply routes between production zones and aggregation points and have physical difficulties in accessing markets. Remoteness or isolation of communities is one of the most significant determining factors of food security in the country.

POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

In general, agriculture and animal breeding, the primary livelihood for 97% of the rural population, remains precarious for over half of households due to limited revenue and production flow difficulties.

At the national level, poor and very poor households represent 57% of the population, or 6.7 million people. Poverty particularly affects small rural households run by uneducated or illiterate older women (60 and over), with neither a spouse nor sufficient resources to ensure balanced food consumption in their household.

The lack of revenue leads a significant portion of households to take on debt, thus feeding the cycle of poverty. The study estimates that more than half of households take on debt to procure food and products of basic necessity. The endemic poverty affecting the country is rooted in low education levels of the population, among other factors. At the national level, an estimated 38% of heads of households have had no formal education. In addition, 49% of children ages 6-14 have never been sent to school.

Households in rural zones (41%) are thus more affected by food insecurity than households in urban zones (31%). In western (Boke, Kindia, Conakry) and southern (N’Zerekore) regions, the prevalence of food insecurity is higher. In Conakry, the commune of Rotama (37%) is most affected by food insecurity. In the East, the most affected prefectures include Kerouane, Lola and Beyla, while in the West, Kindia stands out.

POOR HOUSEHOLD RESILIENCE TO SHOCKS

For 91% of households that have been affected by a shock, their capacity to produce or purchase goods was diminished. These shocks are primarily associated with agriculture, lack of household purchasing power, disease and climate vagaries. For example, recurring floods (especially in Upper Guinea) affect between 50,000 and 69,000 people each year. A quarter of households report being unable to respond to shocks during the six months prior to the study.
PROFILE OF FOOD-INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS

Food insecurity affects primarily the poorest households. Level of education is a determining factor of poverty and food insecurity levels of households. As education level increases, wealth and food security also increase. The number of households that have achieved a higher level of education or received professional training is greater among groups of food secure households.

Results also show that more than half of households who rely on the sale of agricultural products, mining, livestock raising and hunting or foraging, are poor.

PERSISTENT CHRONIC MALNUTRITION

The underlying factors contributing to food insecurity in Guinea are complex. First, constraints to agricultural production are numerous: absence of storage structures, difficulty selling food and animal products on the market, poverty and over exploitation achieved a higher level of education or received professional training is greater among groups of food secure households.

CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY IN GUINEA

The EDS 4 and SMART surveys conducted in 2012 reported high chronic malnutrition rates, with levels increasing from 34% to 40% by region, as well as a deterioration of global acute malnutrition rates to above the threshold of 10% in Upper Guinea’s mining zones. Degradation of care practices, limited access to medical services, inadequate hygiene practices and a lack of food diversity explain these levels.
of land, lack of agricultural inputs, irregular rains and predatory attacks.

It should also be added that access difficulties, notably the remoteness and isolation of villages and socio-political conflicts, make households vulnerable to market price increases and reduce production levels.

Uncertain physical access is aggravated by recurring floods. The lack of financial access also causes households to fall into the vicious spiral of debt and poverty, as they adopt strategies that compromise their livelihoods (sale of productive assets, for example).

Finally, the lack of revenue forces households to reduce spending on health and education and limits their access to basic services. This prevents the poorest households from improving their knowledge of nutrition and changing food habits that lead to inadequate food consumption.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FOOD SECURITY** - Awareness-raising related to diversified diets (especially among children and pregnant women); fortification and transformation of products; strengthening of food security monitoring systems and cross-border flow of food products; updating of National Food Security and Nutrition Policy; support for social safety nets (especially school feeding).

**AGRICULTURE** - Facilitate access to inputs, credit, and cultivation techniques to enhance soil fertility; support trade of food products; strengthen village granaries and storage; involve beneficiaries in agricultural and food security projects; encourage local purchase and enrichment of goods.

**REMOTENESS** - Build new rural roads; improve rainwater drainage; facilitate communication between isolated communities.

**HEALTH, WATER, NUTRITION** - Increase coverage of health infrastructure in rural areas; promote access to drinking water and treatment/purification tools as well as the use of improved latrines; prevent and treat malnutrition; provide training to promote good practices and innovations.

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