

# North Darfur, Sudan

## Food Security Monitoring, May 2014



**World Food Programme**

## Executive Summary

- The post-harvest survey of the 2013/14 agricultural season revealed low crop production in North Darfur State and estimated the cereal deficit to be approximately 142,000 MT.
- Early this year, the State authorities, acknowledging the harvest results, proposed steps to bridge the gap, including an increase in the wheat flour quota and procurement of cereals from the Strategic Reserve which would be made available at a subsidized price. By May little had materialized in terms of wheat flour and no market interventions had been made.
- In March 2014, increased conflict between GoS force and rebel factions resulted in an upsurge of displacement in Al La'ait, El Tewaisha, Fasher, Tawila, Korma, Mellit and Kutum. Consequently WFP advanced its seasonal support by 1-2 months ahead of schedule in Malha and Kutum localities to respond to increased displacement and loss of food stocks due to conflict and the absence of a Government response to the cereal gap.
- In May 2014 the proportion of food insecure households had increased slightly for all community types compared to the same period of last year. Given the exceptionally low crop production, very high food prices and increased conflict, the current food security situation was better than expected, possibly as a result of increased food assistance helping to stabilize the situation.
- The proportions of households with acceptable food consumption in IDP camps, mixed and resident locations were 58, 83 and 70 percent, respectively. Results were similar to or slightly worse compared to May last year.
- The cost of a local food basket (LFB) in May was 4.3 SDG per person per day, the highest on record. The current price was 41 percent above the May 2013 level, almost 150 percent above the May 2012 level, and 250 percent above the May 2011 level. Price increases continued in all markets of North Darfur, however the rate of increase in sorghum prices slowed after the resumption of the seasonal food assistance by WFP.
- More than half of households in resident and IDP locations could not afford the local food basket. Purchasing power in surveyed mixed communities were better. Results for all groups were comparable to the May rounds in 2011, 2012, and 2013.
- Wage labor continue to be the main income source for IDPs in camps and households in mixed communities. In May, two-fifths of the income of camp IPDs and one-third of the income of households in mixed communities was generated from wage labor.
- Only 1 percent of children had very low MUAC (proxy SAM). Results were comparable to those from same time last year.

### The sample

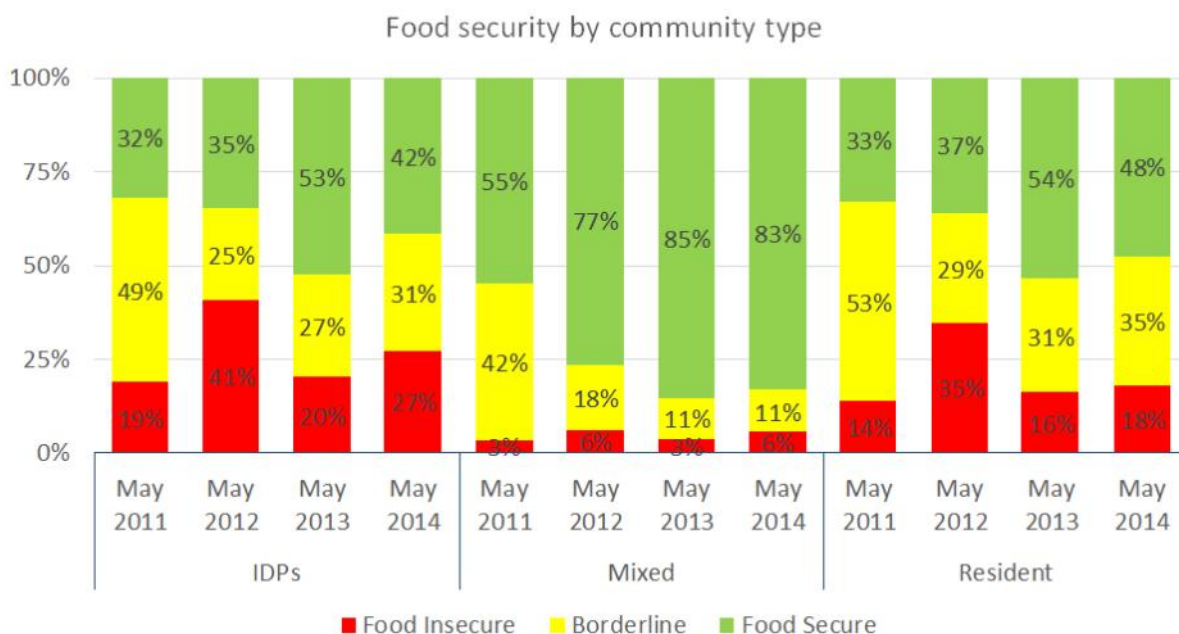
- Twenty-four out of 25 planned sites were covered in this round. Insecurity prohibited access to El Serif Town.
- In total, 630 households from camp IDPs, mixed and residents communities were assessed.
- Average household size was 6.5 persons. Thirty-seven percent of surveyed households were headed by a female.
- The proportion of households that reported being IDPs in camps, IDPs outside camps and residents were 38, 10, and 51 percent, respectively. 81 percent of camp IDPs had lived in the camp for more than 6 years.

## Food security

The month of May marked the beginning of the lean season when income opportunities related to agricultural work decrease significantly in rural areas, with the exception of winter cultivation areas of Kebakbiya and Saraf Omra localities. The scarcity of jobs was coupled with food price hikes due to limited market supply and the exhaustion of household food stocks. This year the combination of low crop production and increased conflict disrupted livelihoods in many areas of the state. In February, tribal conflicts led to the temporary displacements of the entire town of Saraf Omra. The main market of the town was severely affected with commodities, including food, either destroyed or looted. Since May, conflict between GoS forces and rebel faction intensified in the eastern and central parts of the state and led to wide-spread displacement. By May, the situation had stabilized in Al La'ait and Tewaisha and the IDPs had returned. However, IDPs in Korma, western Fasher and east Jebel continued to be displaced. They will most likely miss the upcoming agricultural season as the security situation continue to prohibit returns.

In May 2014, the proportion of food insecure IDP households had increased by 7 percentage points compared to the same period of the previous year. For resident and mixed communities the proportion of food insecure households remain largely unchanged.

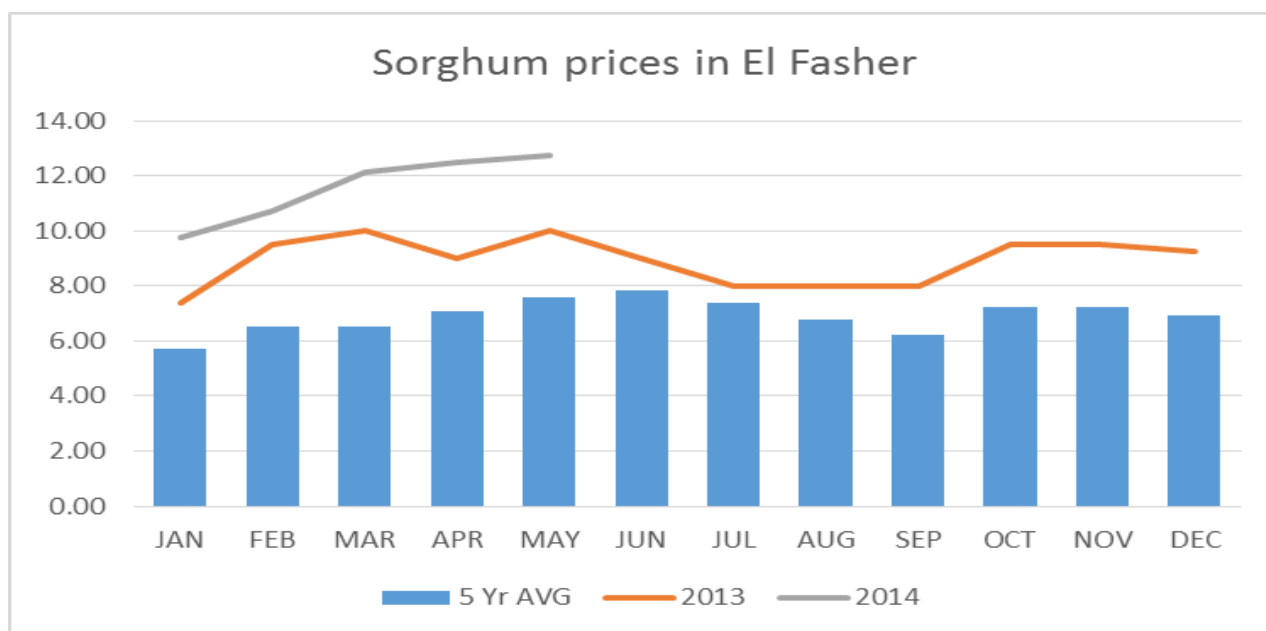
Mixed communities continued to display a much larger proportion of food secure households compared to IDP and resident communities. This could be attributed to their ability to gain additional income from the sale of vegetables crops from irrigated lands during the dry season, something that was largely unavailable to other community groups.



## Markets and prices

Following last season's poor harvest, cereal prices started to increase in early January, a time of the year when prices are normally at their low. The rate of increase slowed at the time that WFP initiated its seasonal in-kind food assistance seasonal. Sorghum prices in El Fasher town in May 2014 were significantly above 2013 levels and far above the five years average. It was believed that sorghum prices in 2014 were checked by WFP food assistance, as most of the sorghum in North Darfur is supplied through either in-kind food assistance or from the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR). However, this year WFP food assistance to market-connected IDP camps in the El Fasher area were administered through vouchers. As of January 2014, WFP introduced Zamzam camp, the biggest IDP population in North Darfur, into the cash voucher program. The shift away from in-kind assistance was believed to have affected the

level of sorghum supply to El Fasher market. In addition, the government had not supplied cereals from the SGR during 2014.

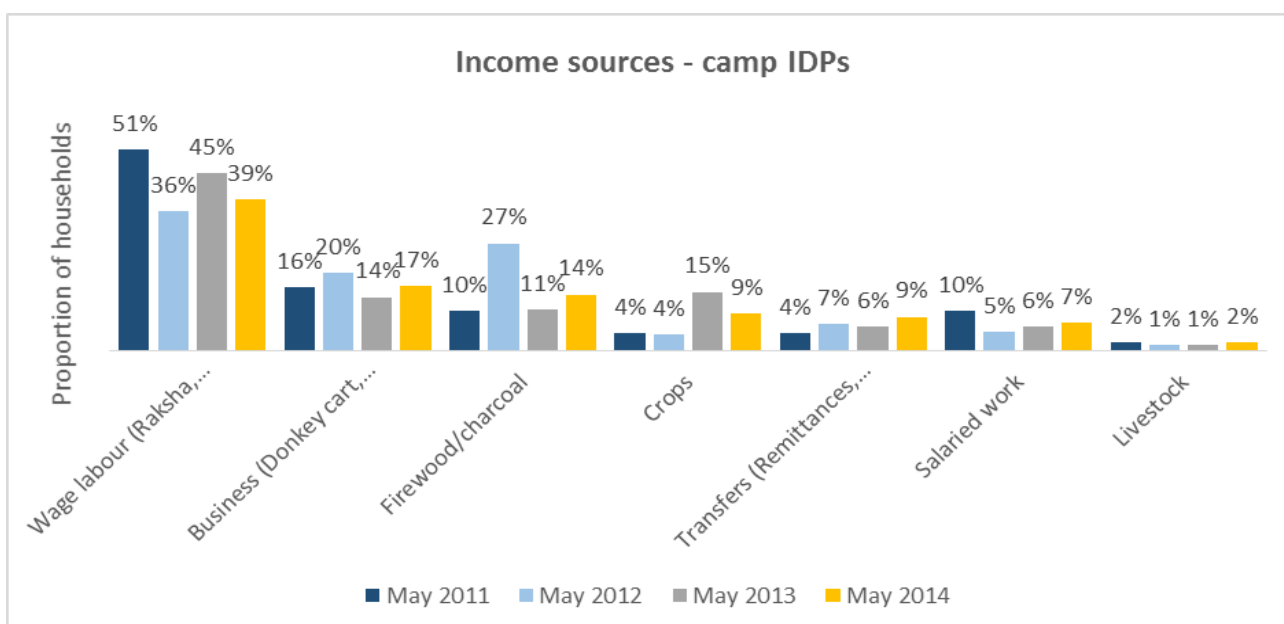


The term of trade between goat and sorghum (i.e. the amount of sorghum that can be purchased by selling a male goat) was below last year’s level and the five year average, due to stabilized goat prices coupled with increasing cereal prices. The situation benefited net sellers of sorghum over net sellers of goats.

### Income sources in IDP camps

Wage labour was found to be the most important source of income for IDPs in camps, constituting about two-fifths of household income, which was less than in May 2013 and slightly more than May 2012. The variation could be explained by the success of agricultural production, with households relying more on casual labour in periods of poor harvest.

Other important income sources for IDPs were small business, sale of firewood/charcoal and sale of crops, contributing to 17, 14 and 9 percent of household income, respectively. Those sources collectively account for two-fifth of household’s income.

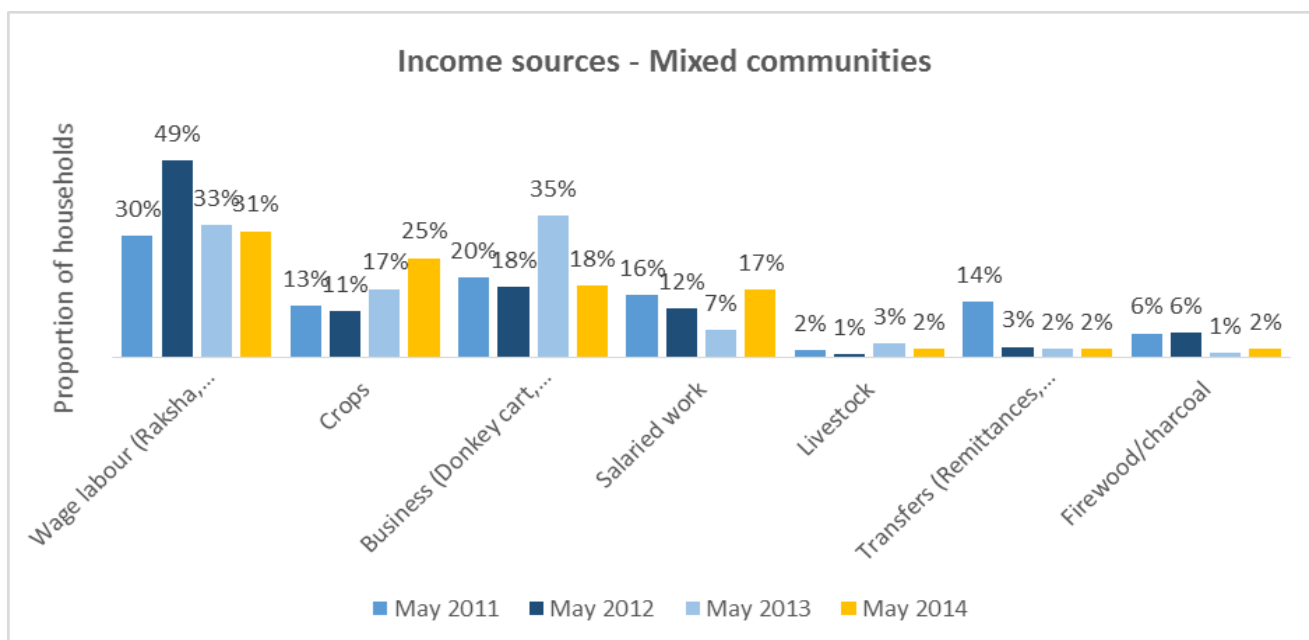


In the pre-lean season, the relative lack of agriculture-related income opportunities forced IDPs in urban areas to rely heavily on wage labour and small business, while IDPs in rural areas depended on the collection of firewood and charcoal.

### Income sources in Mixed communities

For Mixed communities, 31 percent of income was obtained from wage labour, 25 percent from sale of crops, and 18 percent from small business. Kebkabiya, Saraf Omra and Kutum, three mixed communities, were located in areas where summer season cultivation was made possible by the shallow water table along the main beds of the seasonal watercourses (*wadis*). Irrigated cultivation, which used shallow wells to produce a variety of vegetables, enabled the mixed communities to obtain income by the sale of crops in a period when agricultural production were very limited in North Darfur.

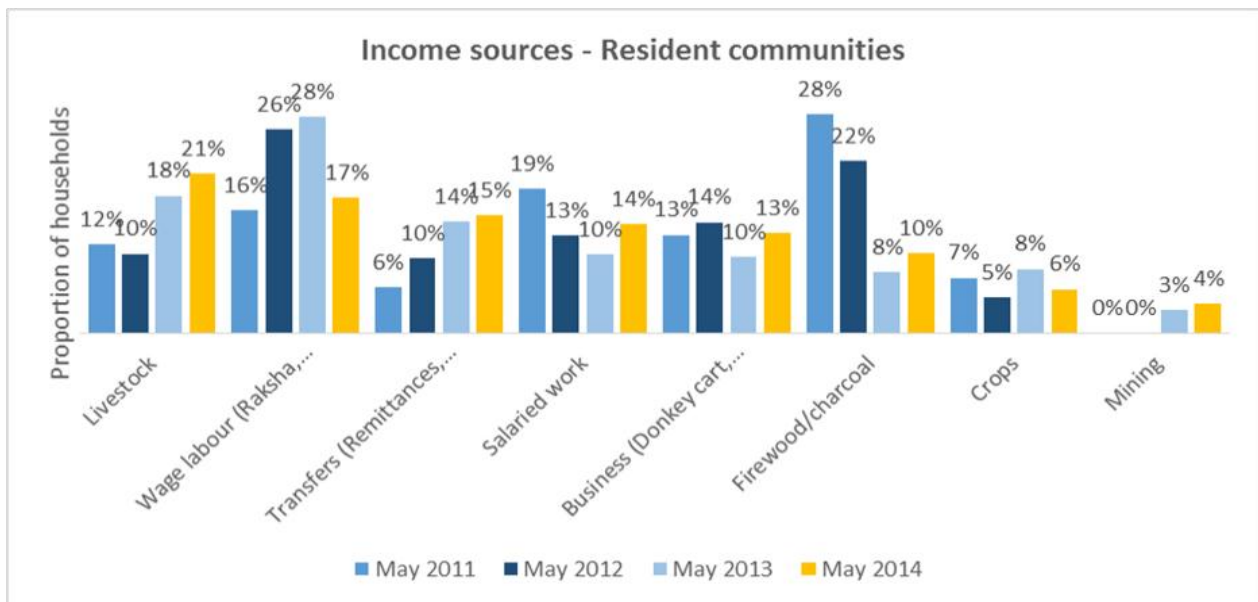
Winter cultivation in the three localities was largely curtailed by the presence of armed militia, which on many occasions levied fees and obligated farmers to share production. The militia also confiscated water pumps used for irrigation, which limited the scale at which pumps were in use and presumably increased the demand of manual labour for irrigation purposes. Some grazing was possible. Compared to the other community types, mixed communities have continuously demonstrated a relatively wide range of livelihood opportunities especially in Kebkabiya and Saraf Omra localities.



### Income sources in Resident communities

The Resident communities had relatively diverse livelihood profiles and were less reliant on only one or two main income sources, as opposed to the IDPs and mixed communities. Consequently, they were less vulnerable to temporary or seasonal decline in any one income source.

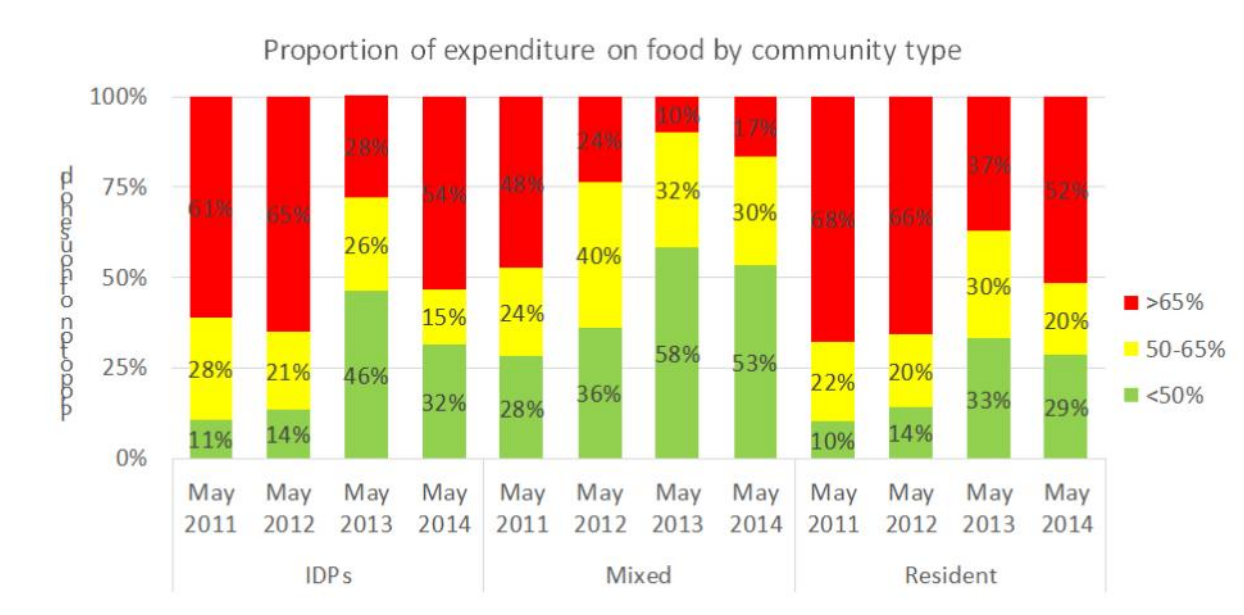
In this round, sale of livestock accounted for slightly above one-fifth of the income, followed by wage labour (17 percent), while remittances and salaried work stood at 15 and 14 percent, respectively.



## Expenditure

Overall, 62 percent of household expenditure was allocated for food items, compared to 57 percent in May 2013, likely a result of higher food prices, and indicating increased stress, as a result of poor crop production and high cereal prices. Much of food expenditure was for cereals, dry vegetables and meat (15, 13, and 9 percent of total, respectively). Cooking oil and sugar accounted for 8 percent each of total expenditure. Expenditures on non-food items mainly included health care (7 percent), education (6 percent), and firewood/fuel (4 percent).

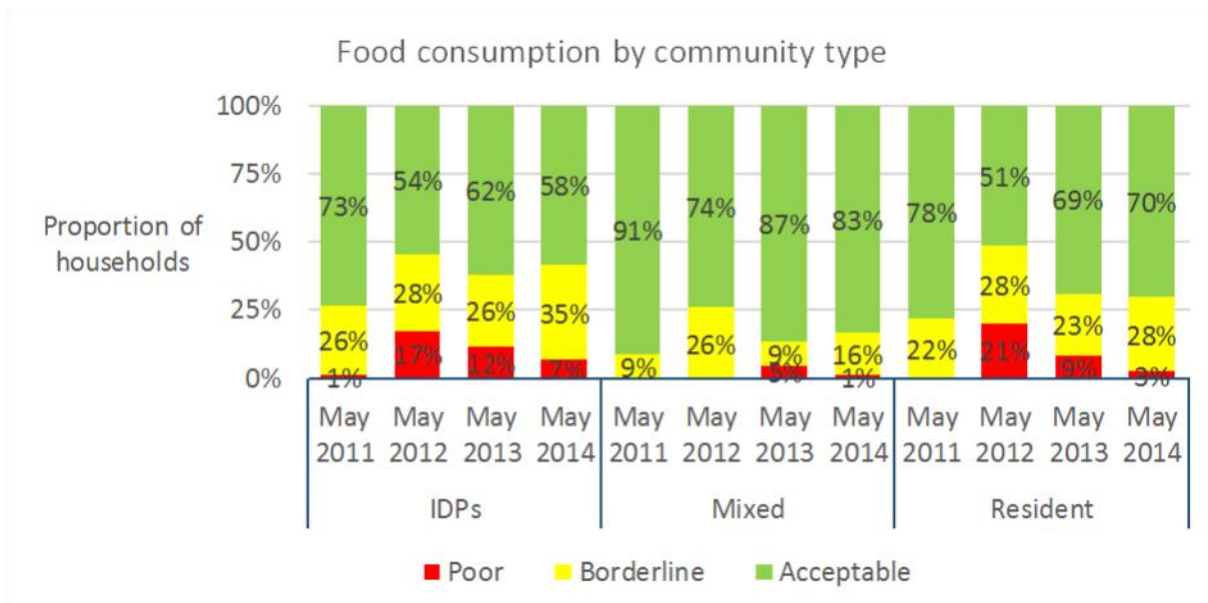
More than half of households in IDP and Resident communities allocated more than 65 percent of monthly expenditure for food (a threshold above which households are more likely to experience stress). This constituted a marked increase compared to the same last year. Much of IDP households' expenditure was for food even though they received food assistance, indicating a low level of cash combined with soaring food prices. For Mixed communities, only 17 percent of households allocated more than 65 percent of their expenditure for food. Many in these communities were able to maintain stocks of locally produced foods until May, but it was not clear if stocks could last into the second half of 2014. Items such as cereals and dry vegetables (mainly okra and tomato) could be produced locally.



## Food consumption

Food consumption was found to be acceptable for households in Mixed and Resident communities. Among IDPs, only 58 percent of households had acceptable food consumption. The corresponding figures for Mixed and Resident communities were 83 and 70 percent respectively. Only a very small proportion of households, also among IDPs, had poor food consumption. A large proportion of households in IDP camps and Mixed communities were receiving food assistance in the form of vouchers, which allowed them to access a more diverse range of food items.

There was a slight increase in the proportion of households who have borderline food consumption among the camp IDPs, Mixed and Resident communities compared to May 2013. For all community types the proportion of households with poor food consumption had decreased.

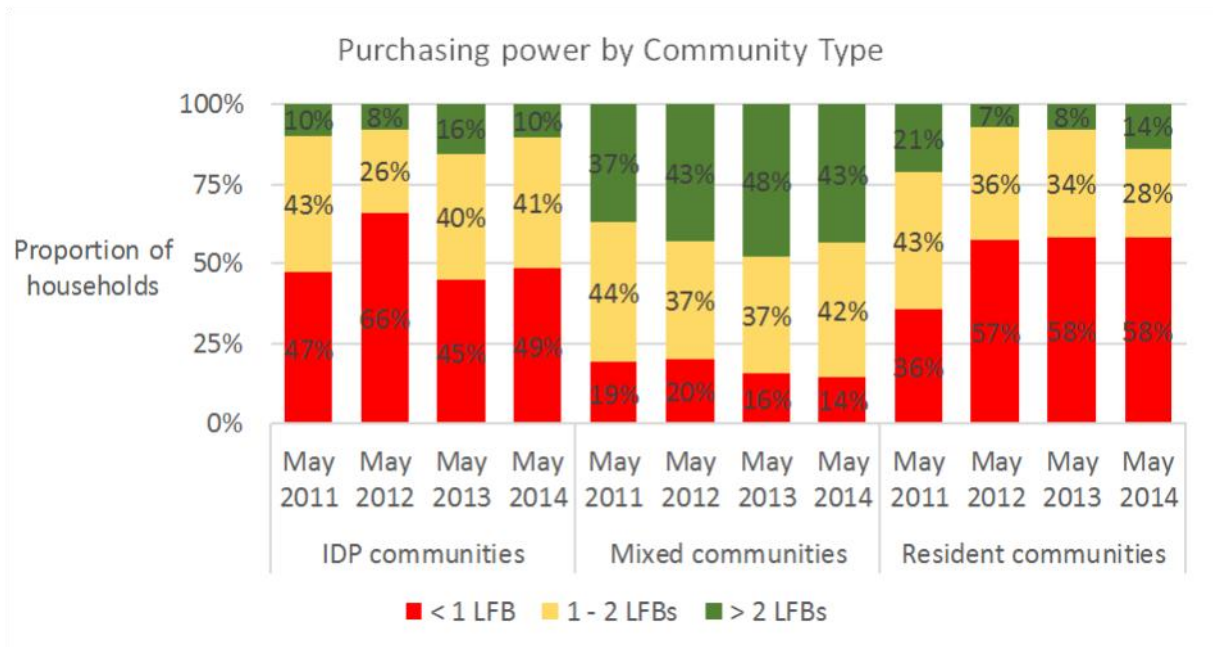


## Purchasing power

The current price of the local food basket (LFB) was 41 percent above the May 2013 level, almost 150 percent above the May 2012 level, and 250 percent above the May 2011 level. Prices were at unprecedented levels. Despite the recent increase in the price of food, purchasing power of all community types remained largely unchanged.

In May 2014, nearly half of the camp IDPs could not afford the cost of the LFB, which was similar to that of 2011 and 2013 but much less than that of 2012 when around two-thirds could not afford the LFB. In May 2014, only 10 percent of IDPs could afford two or more LFBs, a level of purchasing power where households were more likely to be able to meet their needs. IDP households that could afford two or more LFBs were predominantly located in camps near major towns, such as Fasher, where casual labour opportunities were more readily available.

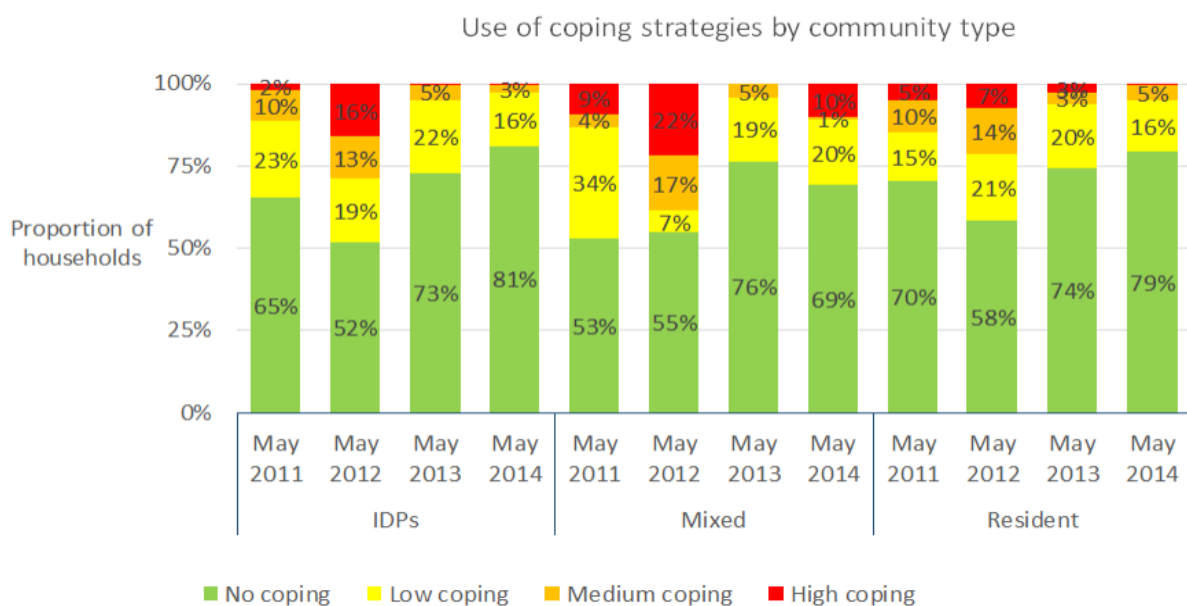
Among Mixed communities, only 14 percent of households could not afford the cost of the LFB. However, income opportunities were not very high, with 57 of households being unable to meet the price of two or more LFBs. Purchasing power was similar to that of the previous three years. With the exception of Kutum town, the mixed communities (Kebkabiya and Saraf Omra) had the advantage of being able to participate in winter cultivation through irrigated systems, benefiting from the shallow water table along the seasonal water courses. Communities in both localities cultivated onion, the price of which tend to increase notably towards the end of the season in June, positively impacting the income of net sellers. The entire population of Saraf Omra town was displaced in February this year due to tribal conflict, resulting in the destruction and looting of much of the commodities in the markets. The situation had stabilized at the time of data collection.



### Coping strategies

Households were asked if there were times in the one week prior to data collection when they did not have enough food (or money to buy food). If they experienced such situations, they asked what strategies they employed to cope with the shortage. Approximately four-fifths of households in both camps and Resident communities did not report food access problems, a slight improvement compared to May 2013. For the Mixed communities 69 percent of the households did not have food access problems, which reflects a slight deterioration compared to the same time of last year.

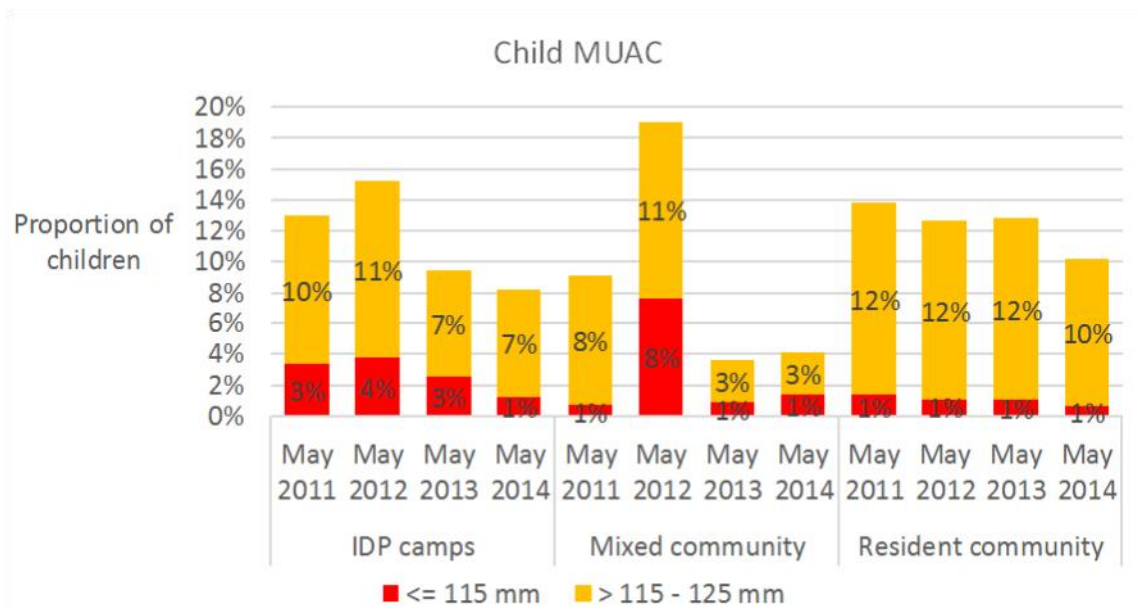
Households in IDP camp and Resident communities that had faced food shortages had employed less severe coping strategies such as relying on less preferred and less expensive foods, relying on help from relatives and borrowing food. Ten percent of households in Mixed communities used severe coping strategies, including limiting portion sizes, restricting adult consumption to allow children to eat and reducing the number of meals.





## Nutrition

The mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) of all children aged 6-59 months in surveyed households was measured and classified as very low (below 115 mm, a proxy for severe acute malnutrition), moderately low (between 115 and 125mm, a proxy indicator for moderate acute malnutrition), and normal. Only 1 percent of measured children, irrespective of their residential status, recorded very low MUAC. Results were similar to May 2013 levels. The proportion of children with moderately low MUAC was the smallest among mixed communities, followed by IDP camps and then resident communities. Looking at the historical data, it appears as though, for IDP camps and mixed communities, the nutrition status in the May FSMS rounds of 2013 and 2014 were somewhat better compared to the previous two years.



## Food assistance

In 2014, the State authorities were alerted early about the need to undertake measures to bridge the cereal gap, after the low cereal production of the previous harvest, where the cereal deficit was estimated to about 142,000 MT. In an effort to triple the wheat flour quota for the State, the State allocated funds to avail cereal from the Strategic Reserve aimed at subsidized market intervention. However increased conflict in the eastern and central parts of the state in March, leading to displacement of resident communities, has diverted the state's efforts. Displacement continued until June 2014 in the areas of Fasher, Tawila and Korma.

In May 2014, camp IDPs were receiving regular GFD, either through in-kind or through cash vouchers. Three of the IDP camps, namely Zamzam, Abu Shouk and El Salam, were assisted by cash vouchers. Eighty-six percent of households Mixed communities also reported receiving food assistance. For Resident communities, only Malha, Kutum and Dar Zaghawa localities were planned for WFP seasonal support. However, increased insecurity in March and the lack of appropriate government response to the food gap, necessitated WFP to start the seasonal support earlier than planned, for Mellit, Fasher rural and Umkedada localities. WFP seasonal support to Malha and Kutum localities started in April and May instead of as planned in June. At the time of the assessment 57 percent of the households in Resident communities reported receiving food assistance.