

West Darfur, Sudan

Food Security Monitoring, May 2014



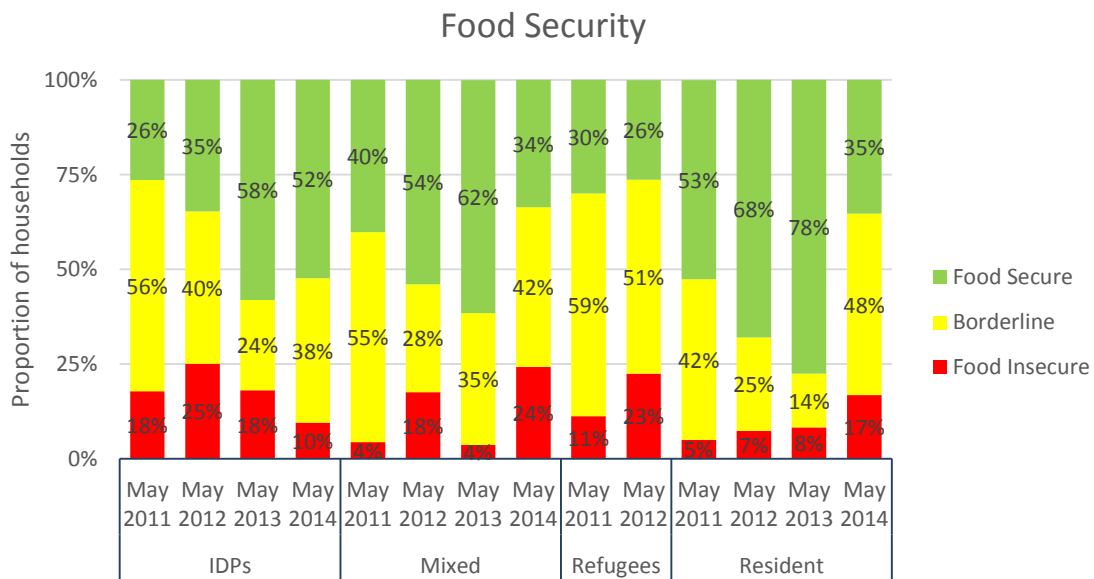
World Food Programme

Executive Summary

- **Data collection:** WFP carried out data collection jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in April and May, which marks the beginning of the lean season. 20 locations were covered in West Darfur.
- **Food security:** Reflecting the poor harvest in the 2013/14 season, food security had deteriorated compared to May 2013 for all types of communities – IDPs, Mixed and Resident communities. The situation worsened, in particular for residents for which the share of food secure households decreased substantially from 78 percent to 35 percent. IDPs were found to be less affected with a small decrease in the share of food secure households. The deterioration in the food security of IDPs was likely checked by the continued assistance from WFP.
- **Market conditions:** Sorghum prices increased sharply in March 2014 and have remain elevated, as a result of the poor agricultural season. The price of sorghum in May 2014 was more than double the five-year average, and 53 percent higher than in May of last year.
- **Expenditure:** Food remained the biggest share of households' expenditure, accounting for 55 percent of their total expenditures. This share had increased from 44 percent in May 2013, an indication of increased economic stress, especially among mixed and resident communities. This was likely due to the earlier depletion of households' food stocks – compared to the previous year – which forced many to rely more on market purchases.
- **Purchasing power:** The cost of the minimum local food basket (MLFB) is SDG 6.51 per person per day; this value was 49 percent higher than the May 2013 level (SDG 4.37). Purchasing power in May 2014 was found to be lower for all groups compared to last year. Mixed communities and resident communities were reported to have been affected the most, with 70 percent and 72 percent of the households, respectively, not being able to afford the MLFB. The situation for IDPs was also not favorable, with 48 percent of the IDP households not able to afford the MLFB.
- **Food consumption:** Food consumption had marginally improved for IDP households compared to the previous year illustrated by a decrease in the share of households with poor food consumption. For households in Mixed and Resident communities, the situation has gotten worse compared to the two previous years with a substantial decrease in the share of households with acceptable food consumption: only 38 percent and 45 percent, respectively, was found to have acceptable food consumption. The worsened situation was reflective of the poor 2014 harvest season.
- **Coping strategies:** IDPs reported having the most difficulty acquiring enough food: 37 percent of households in this category reported such difficulties in the seven days preceding the survey, an increase from 18 percent at the same time last year. The corresponding figure for Mixed and Resident communities were 27 and 15 percent, respectively. Both were improvements from last year. For the most part, strategies used by households to cope with food shortages were not severe.
- **Acute malnutrition:** The Middle Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) was measured on 280 children (6-59 months) within the 20 visited locations in West Darfur. The proportion of children found to have moderately or very low MUAC among IDPs, Mixed communities, and Resident communities were 8, 10 and 4 percent, respectively. Results indicated a deterioration from last year for IDPs in camps and for resident communities.
- **Income sources:** Wage labor continued to be the most significant source of income for IDPs, accounting for 42 percent of their total income. Wage labor is followed by business or petty trade (21 percent), and salaried work (15 percent).

Food Security

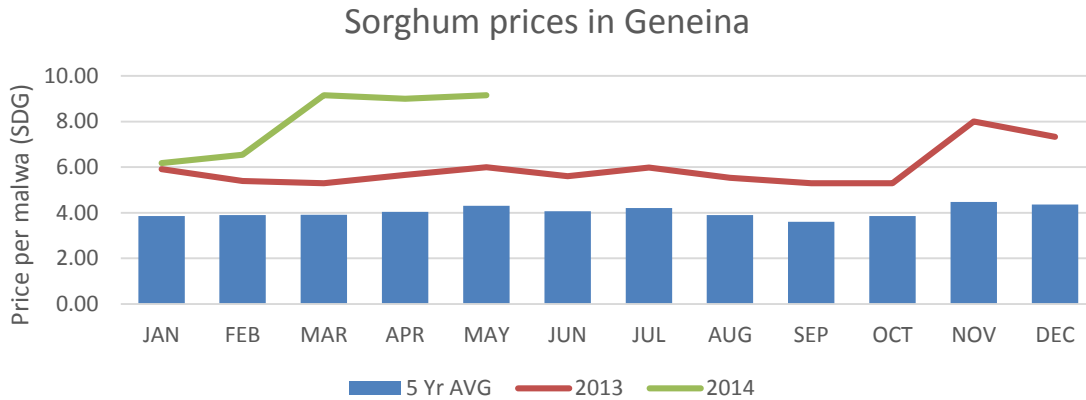
The food security situation in West Darfur remained fragile and threatened by conflict, insecurity, and price inflation. Reflecting the poor harvest in the 2013/14 season, food security had deteriorated dramatically compared to May 2013 for Mixed and Resident communities. IDP communities was the most food secure group and for them the situation remained relatively unchanged from last year, likely due to the continued assistance from WFP. The nature and drivers of food insecurity is discussed below.



Market conditions

The average price of sorghum has been very high since March at SDG 9 per *malwa* (3.5kg), even higher than the peak price in 2013. The price of sorghum in May this year was more than twice that of the five-year average, and 53 percent higher than it was in May 2013. The high prices observed this year may be partly attributed to low production in the 2013/14 season. According to the findings of the Ministry of Agriculture's Annual Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, low rainfall and subsequent delays in planting in 2013 led to the significant production shortfalls throughout the country. The country-wide production of sorghum, the main staple cereal, decreased by 50 percent compared to the production of the previous year (a good season) and by 30 percent compared to the five-year average.

A closer look at the situation in West Darfur confirmed the unfavorable food availability situation. According to the West Darfur State Ministry of Agriculture post-harvest assessment, delayed rains and continued dry spells in September 2013 forced some farmers to replant crops or to abandon land. In consequence, the total cereal production in West Darfur was 29 percent below the previous year's level.

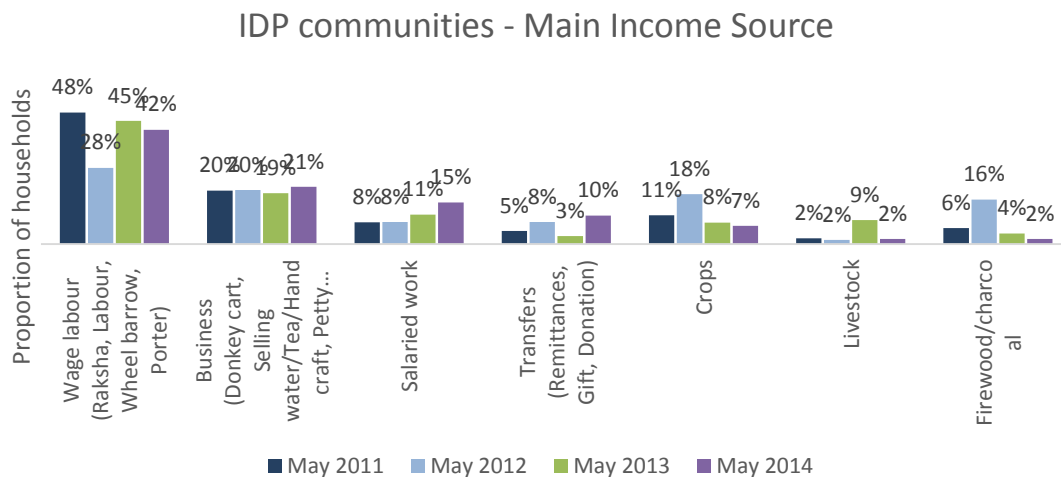


According to FEWS NET, the Sahelian region of Chad, which borders West Darfur, also experienced a below-average harvest in the 2013/14 season, therefore making cereal availability limited in northeastern Chad as well. Though this area generally supplies Darfur markets in good years, West Darfur markets could not benefit from this supply source this year.

Other factors pushing sorghum prices higher, besides the low cereals production in West Darfur and neighboring areas in Chad, were the lingering effects of the devaluation of the Sudanese Pound in July 2012, the subsequent depreciation of the currency and high inflation.

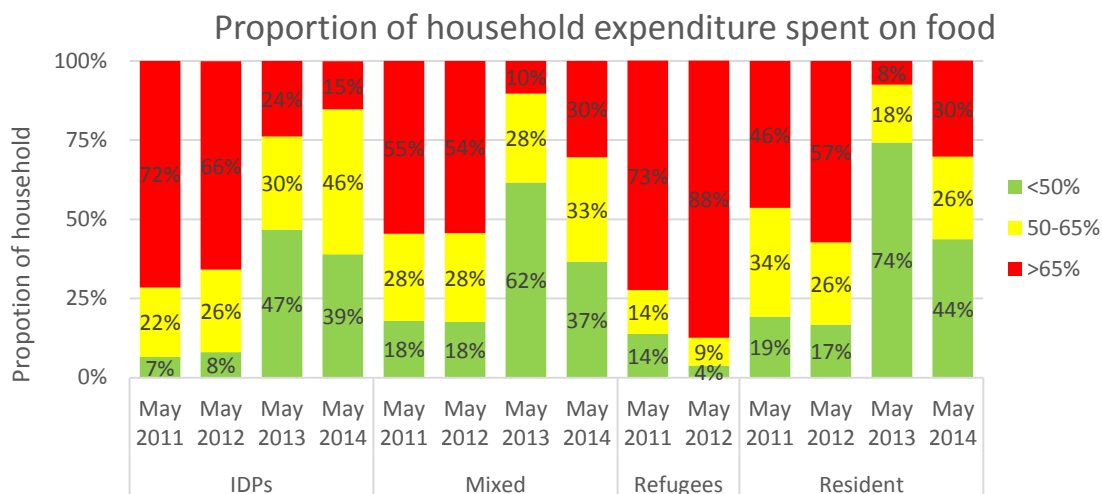
Income Sources

Wage labor continues to be the most significant source of income for IDPs, accounting for 42 percent of their total income. Engaging in business such as donkey cart, selling water, handicrafts, or other types of petty trade was found to be the second most important source of income, accounting for 21 percent of IDP households' total income. Salaried work was found to be the third most important source of income, accounting for 15 percent of the total income. The top three important sources have remained the same as last May. The share of income from transfers (remittances, gifts and donations) was found to be 10 percent – the highest observed level in the past four years.

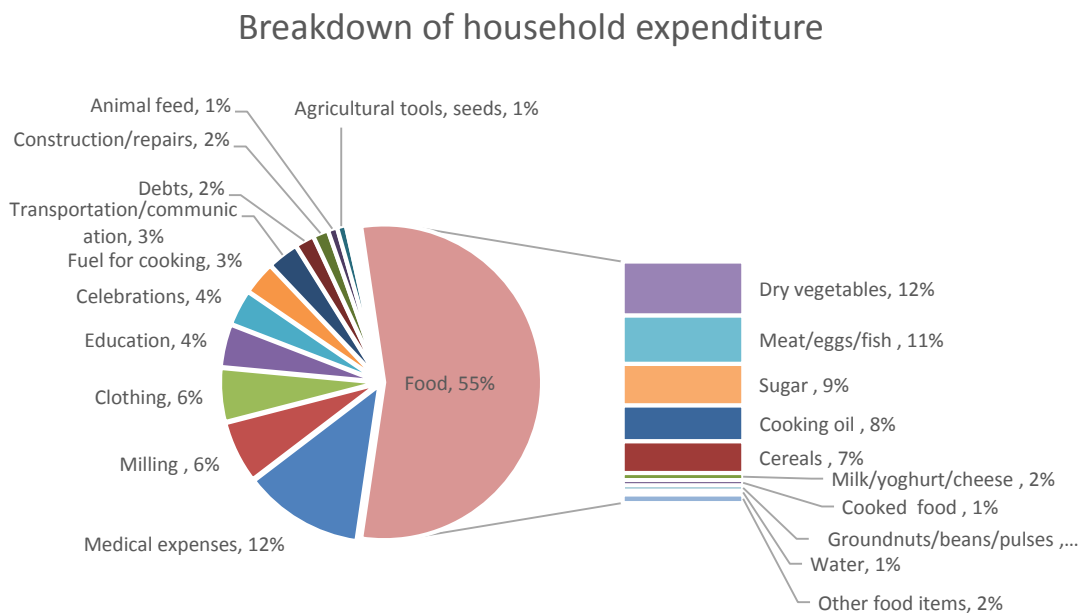


Expenditure

The proportion of total household expenditure that is spent on food is used as an indication of economic stress, as a large proportion may make it difficult for households to cope with food price increases or to satisfy essential non-food needs. In May 2014, food purchases accounted for 55 percent of total expenditures, an increase from 44 percent from the year before. The increase was probably due to food stocks running out more quickly than in the previous year and households were obliged to rely more on markets for their food needs. This trend was consistent across all community types.



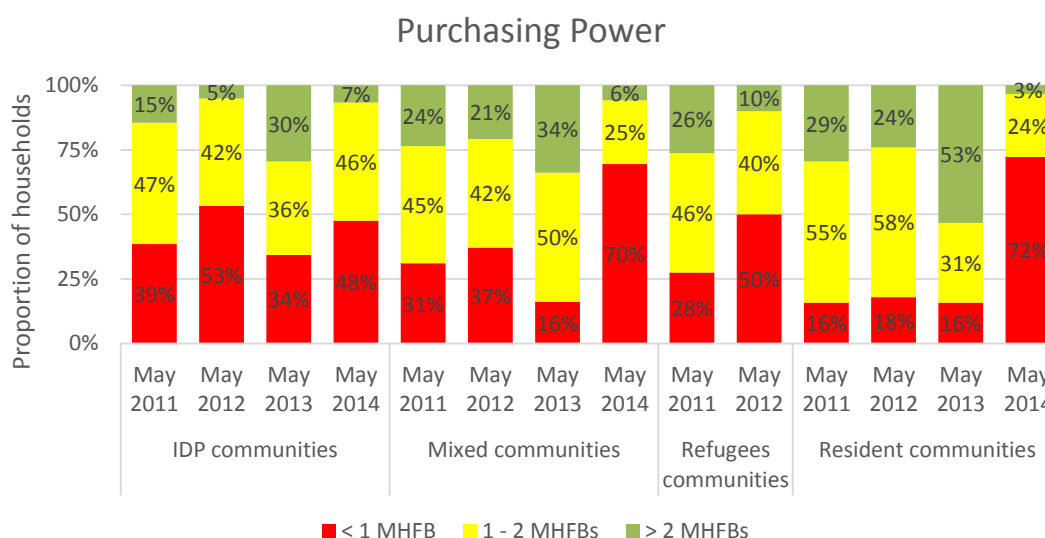
The main foods in households' budgets were dry vegetables (12 percent of total expenditures), animal protein (11 percent) and sugar (9 percent). Among non-food items and services health care (12 percent), milling (6 percent) and clothing (also 6 percent) were the largest.



Purchasing Power

In May 2014, the cost of the minimum local food basket (MLFB) was SDG 6.51 per person per day; this value is 49 percent higher compared to May 2013 (SDG 4.37), and 170 percent higher than May 2012 (SDG 2.41). This dramatic increase in the cost of the MLFB is due to the increases in the prices of staple foods, including as sorghum, as discussed above.

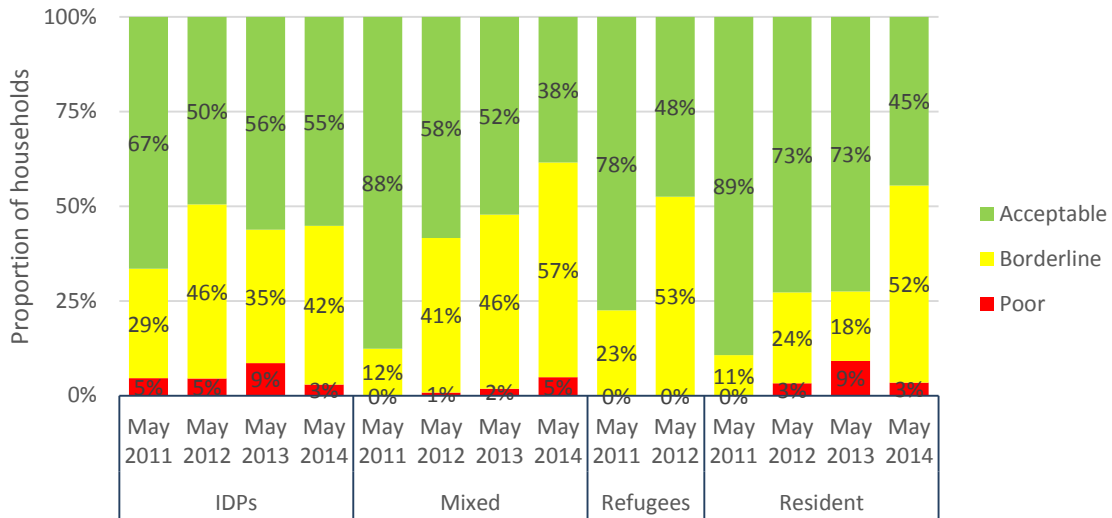
An approximation of purchasing power was arrived at by calculating the number of MLFBs a household could afford. Purchasing power was found to be very poor, with a very large proportion of households not being able to afford the basket (48, 70 and 72 percent respectively for IDPs in camps, Mixed communities and Resident communities). The deterioration from May 2013 to May 2014 was stark: the increase in the proportion of households unable to afford the basket increased by approximately 55 percentage points for both Mixed and Resident communities. Purchasing power also weakened substantially among IDPs in camps, but to a lesser degree.



Food Consumption

Food consumption was categorized as poor, borderline, and acceptable based on the variety and frequency of consumption of different food items by the interviewed households, within seven days prior to the FSMS data collection. Food consumption had marginally improved for IDP households compared to the previous year with a decrease in the share of households with poor food consumption. For households in Mixed and Resident communities, the situation worsened compared to the two previous years with a substantial decrease in the share of households with acceptable food consumption, to 38 percent and 45 percent respectively. The proportion of households with poor food consumption is small (only 3-5 percent), but the size of the borderline group, and that it had increased compared to last year, was worrying. The worsened situation for many households was reflective of the poor harvest in the 2013/14 season.

Household Food Consumption

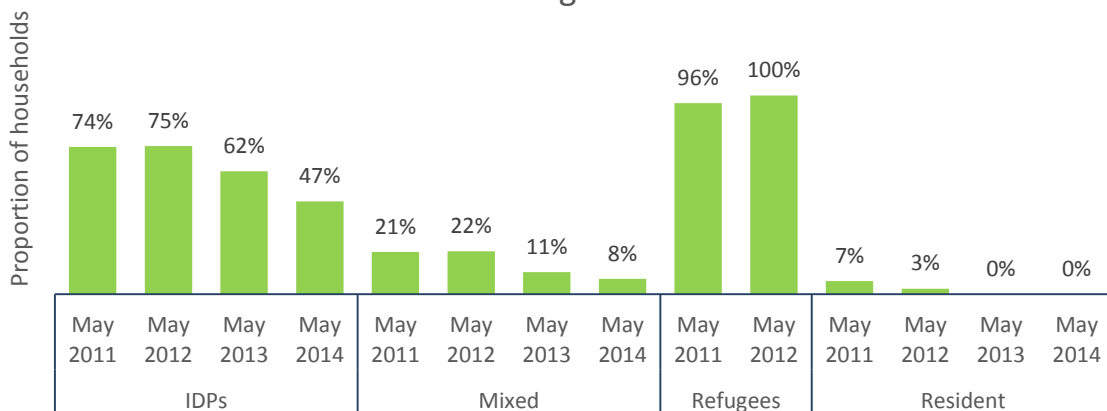


Food Assistance

This section provides information on the access and utilization of food assistance within a period of six months prior to data collection. Forty-seven percent of IDP households reported to have received food assistance in the last six months prior to data collection, which is less than expected for IDP households who receive general food distribution from WFP every month. The relatively low food assistance coverage could in part be a result of discontinued food assistance to rural IDP camps, since 2012 in response to funding shortfalls, and that beneficiary verification processes had left some households without ration cards. In Habila Town, approximately 2,000 individuals had registered complaints concerning lack of ration cards. (The total number of beneficiaries in Habila Town was approximately 15,000.)

Faced with a shortage of resources, WFP had discontinued general food distribution in West Darfur to IDPs living outside camps, in resident communities. In addition, GFD had not been distributed to mixed and resident communities since 2012. Only 8 percent of mixed communities and no resident households reported to have received food assistance from WFP.

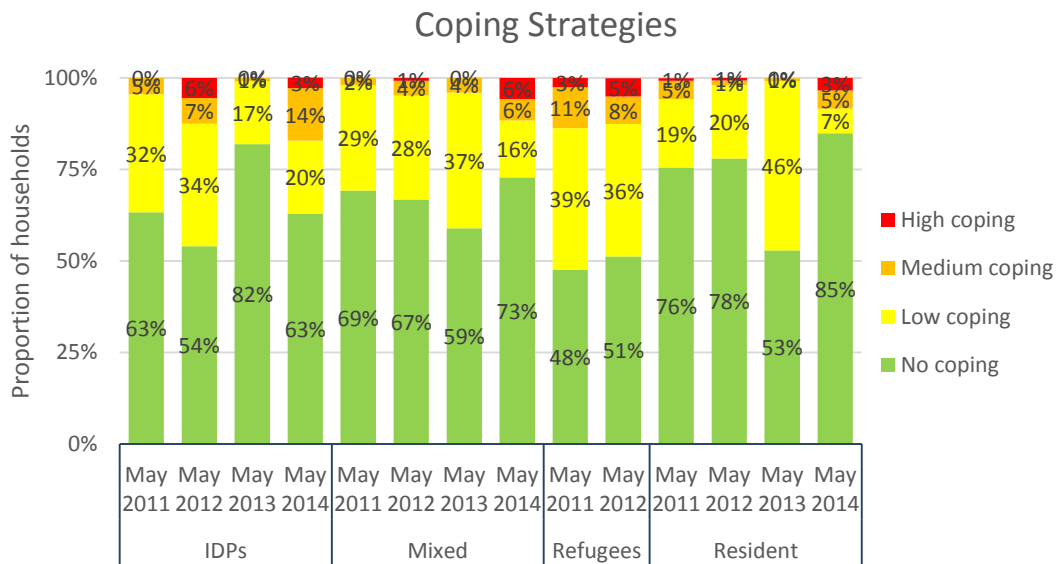
Households receiving food assistance



Among IDP households, it was reported that 61 percent of them take less than half an hour to reach the distribution point. Thirty percent spent more than one hour. Very few IDP households reported selling or bartering cereals and pulses they received from WFP. Seventy-seven, 61, 57, and 64 percent of the IDP households reported that they are satisfied with the taste, physical condition, cooking time, and color of WFP food assistance, respectively. In 80 percent of the households, women were the sole decision-makers about how to utilize the food aid. Seven percent said that men decided and 13 percent said that decision were taken together.

Food Shortage Perceptions

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 were asked what strategies they employed to cope with the shortage. Among IDPs in camps, 37 percent of households reported having insufficient amounts of food, an increase from 18 percent at the same time last year. The corresponding figure for Mixed and Resident communities were 27 and 15 percent, respectively. Both were improvements from last year. Among the IDP households facing food shortages, 20 percent, 14 percent, and 3 percent of them adopted low, medium, and high coping strategies, respectively. It is logical that low production and high food in 2014 have caused more IDPs to adopt coping strategies compared to the same period in the previous year. However, interestingly, the severity of coping strategies has decreased since last year for households in mixed and resident communities, despite simultaneous deterioration in food consumption and purchasing power. It is possible that after many years of livelihood disruptions the ability of households to apply coping strategies have declined.



Child 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 115mm, a proxy for severe acute malnutrition), moderately low (between 115 and 125mm, a proxy indicator for moderate acute malnutrition), and normal. A total

of 280 children within the 20 visited locations in West Darfur were measured. The combined proportion of children with moderately low MUAC and children with very low MUACH among IDP, Mixed and Resident communities was found to be 8, 10 and 4 percent, respectively. That constitutes a moderate deterioration compared to last year for IDPs in camps and Mixed communities. Residents remained unchanged from last year.

