



SUDAN: Blue Nile State

Food Security Monitoring

WFP established the Blue Nile Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) in March 2014, aiming to better understand and monitor the food security situation in the state, focusing on conflict affected populations. In December 2014, WFP in collaboration with the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner (HAC) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) at the state level conducted the second round of food security monitoring. The 25 fixed sentinel sites, distributed over five localities (Geissan, Kurmuk, Bau, Rosseris and Tadamon) were assessed to track trends in the level and causes of food insecurity. A total of 500 households were interviewed. One fifth of the locations were purposely selected in areas not receiving WFP assistance, for comparison purposes.

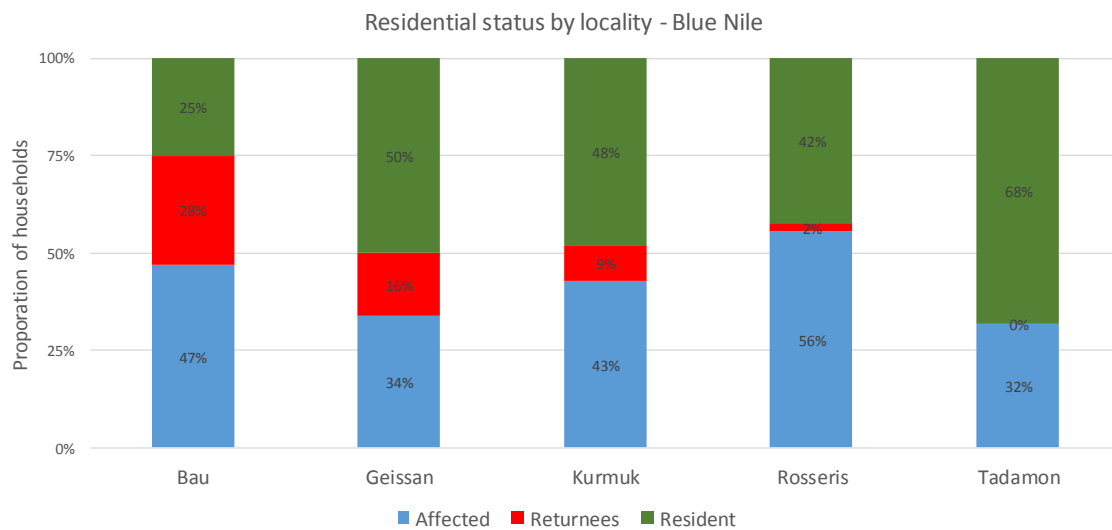
Highlights

- Acute food insecurity increased from March 2014 to December 2014 in three of the surveyed localities: Kurmuk, Geissan and Rosseris. The proportion of food secure households was 38, 48, and 53 percent, respectively, up from 63, 88, and 80 percent, respectively in March 2014. The three localities were also the areas where the level of food security was the lowest. IDP and returnee households were less likely to be food security compared to residents. There was no significant difference in food security between households receiving food assistance and other households.
- On average, 70 percent of the sampled households had acceptable food consumption in terms of food frequency. Households in Kurmuk and Geissan localities exhibited the worst food consumption, with 15 and 21 percent of households having poor consumption. Food assistance had been suspended in the three months prior to data collection due to insecurity.
- Following extreme inflation, sorghum prices in December was 114 percent higher than in March 2014. The proportion of households that could not afford even one local food basket was large in Geissan, Kurmuk, and Rosseris (39, 47 and 48 percent, respectively). These areas also saw a significant deterioration in purchasing power compared to March 2014. The price of sorghum was expected to decrease as December marked the start of the harvest. Goat prices dropped by 9 percent from March to December 2014.
- In December 2014, the main livelihood activities were agricultural related - household farming and agricultural wage labour, roughly equally - as a result of data collection coinciding with the harvest period. Other income sources included salaried work, the collection of firewood and charcoal, and small business.
- Forty-two percent of sampled households were IDPs, 11 percent were returnees and 46 percent were residents.

Residence Status and Livelihoods

Residence Status

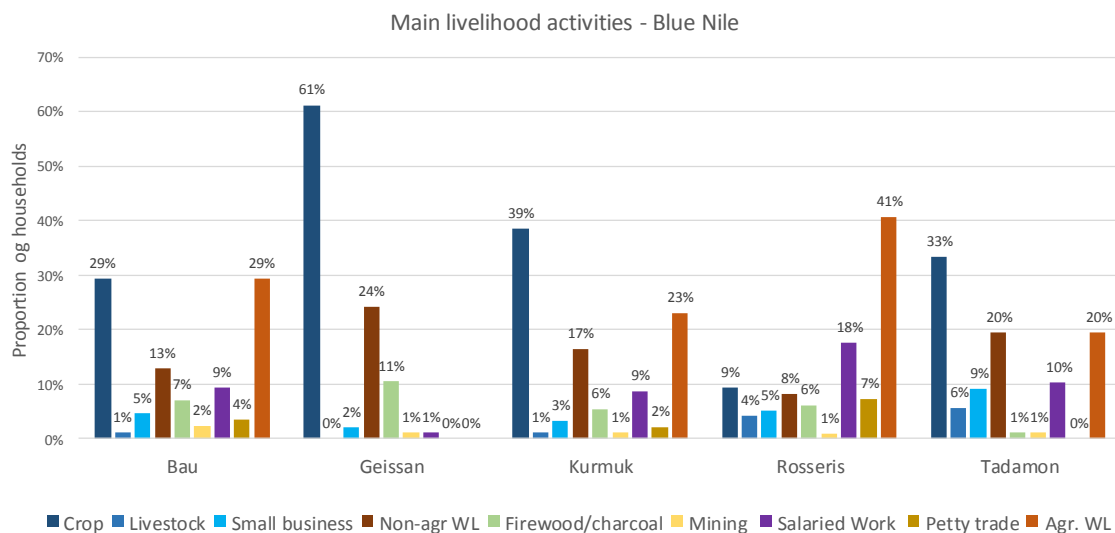
The residential breakdown of the sample varied across localities, although the IDP population represented over 30 percent of the assessed households in all localities. In Rosseris, IDP accounted for 56 percent of respondents. Residents accounted for more than 40 percent in Rosseris, Tadamon, Kurmuk and Geissan. Considerable number of returnees were found in Bau, Kurmuk and Geissan.



The most commonly used housing material was thatch, with a few households living in mud (or mud brick) houses. Access to safe drinking water in the second round of food security monitoring remained poor: 66 percent of sampled households reported poor access to safe drinking water. The situation was the worst for households in Tadamon, where 92 percent of households had no access to safe drinking water. On average, over 60 percent of sampled households used safe sanitation facilities. Households in Bau experienced the poorest access to sanitation facilities, while Kurmuk and Geissan localities had the best access, partly as a result of NGO and government interventions.

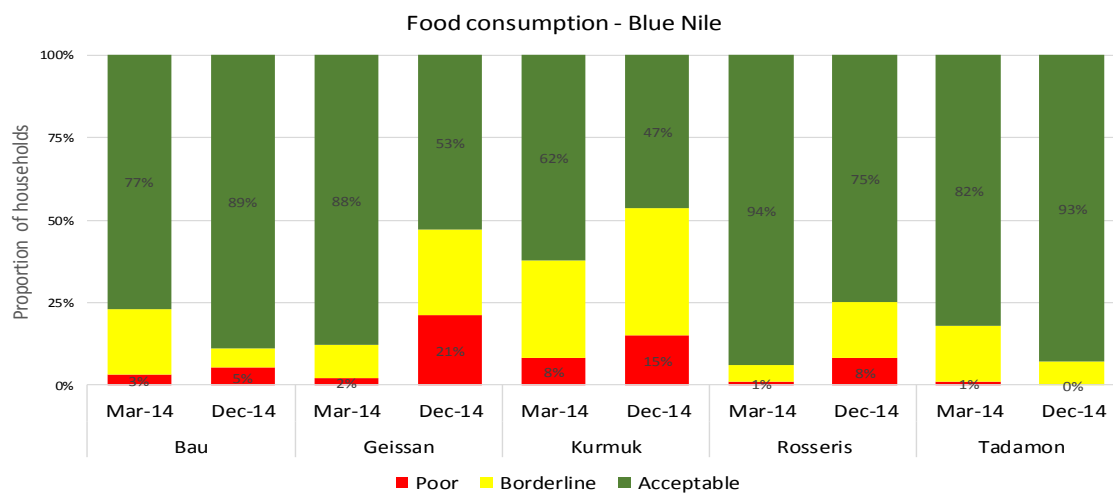
Main Livelihood Activities

The main livelihoods activities for the assessed population in December 2014 were agricultural related, as a result of data collection coinciding with the harvest period. Thirty-four percent of households indicated domestic crop production as their main income sources, 23 percent said agricultural wage labour and 2 percent said livestock rearing. Other income sources included salaried work, the sale of gathered firewood and charcoal, and small business. Assisted and non-assisted households were engaged in similar livelihood activities, although agricultural labour was slightly more common within households receiving food assistance.



Food Consumption

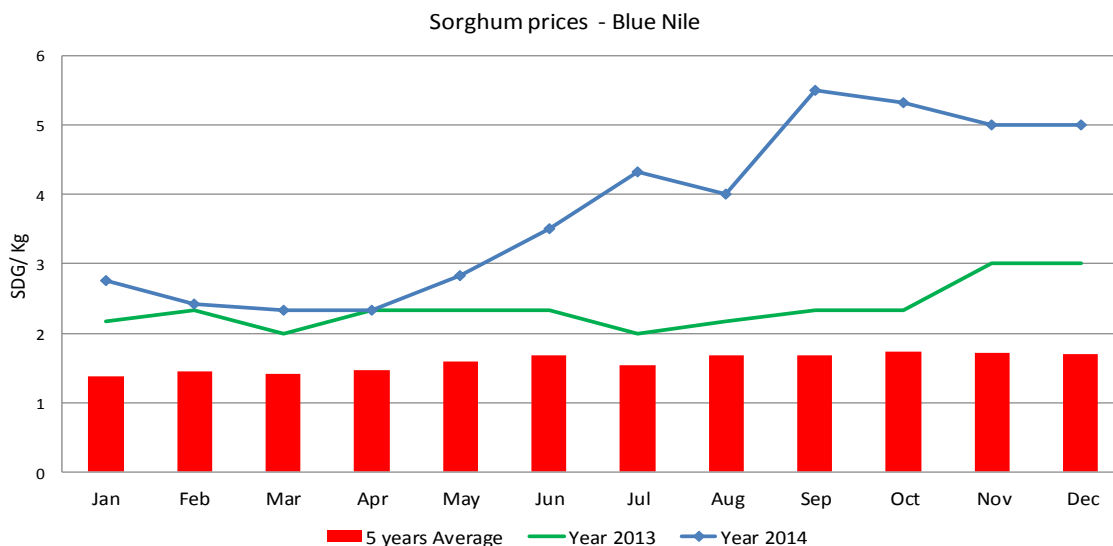
Food consumption data was collected and analyzed using standard WFP methodology: the variety and frequency of different foods consumed over a 7 day recall period was recorded to calculate a weighted food consumption score (FCS). Weights were based on the nutritional density of the foods. Using standard threshold, households were classified as having either poor, borderline or acceptable food consumption. On average, 71 percent of sampled households were found to have acceptable consumption, although differences between localities were marked: Only 53 percent of households in Geissan and 47 percent of households in Kurmuk had acceptable food consumption. Food consumption deteriorated from March 2014 to December 2014 in Kurmuk, Geissan and Rosseris localities, while it improved modestly in Bau and Tadamon. Food assistance was suspended in the three months prior to data collection due to insecurity. No meaningful difference in food consumption was seen between households receiving food assistance and those that did not. All consumption groups relied on market purchase as the main food source. Households with poor food consumption consumed sorghum, sugar and oil on a daily basis and meat one day per week.



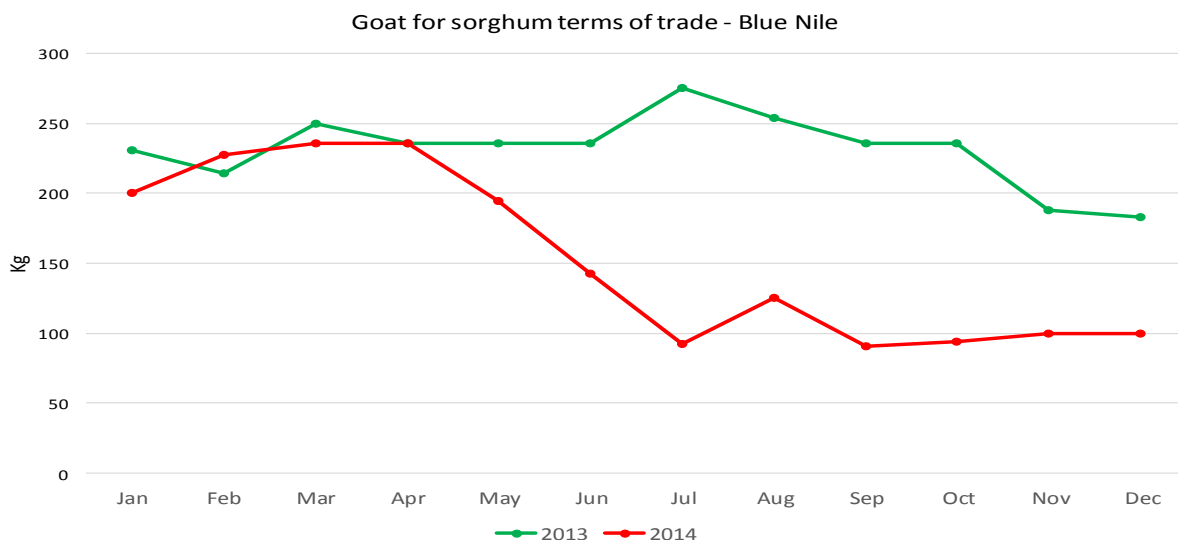
Prices and Purchasing Power

Market Prices

Sorghum price in December 2014 was 114 percent higher compared to March 2014 and far above the five year average. Unlike many other parts of the country, the price of sorghum did not fall significantly after August/September when the good rainfall created expectations of a good harvest. The general trend of cereals prices was expected to decrease in the near future as December marked the start of the harvest period in the area.



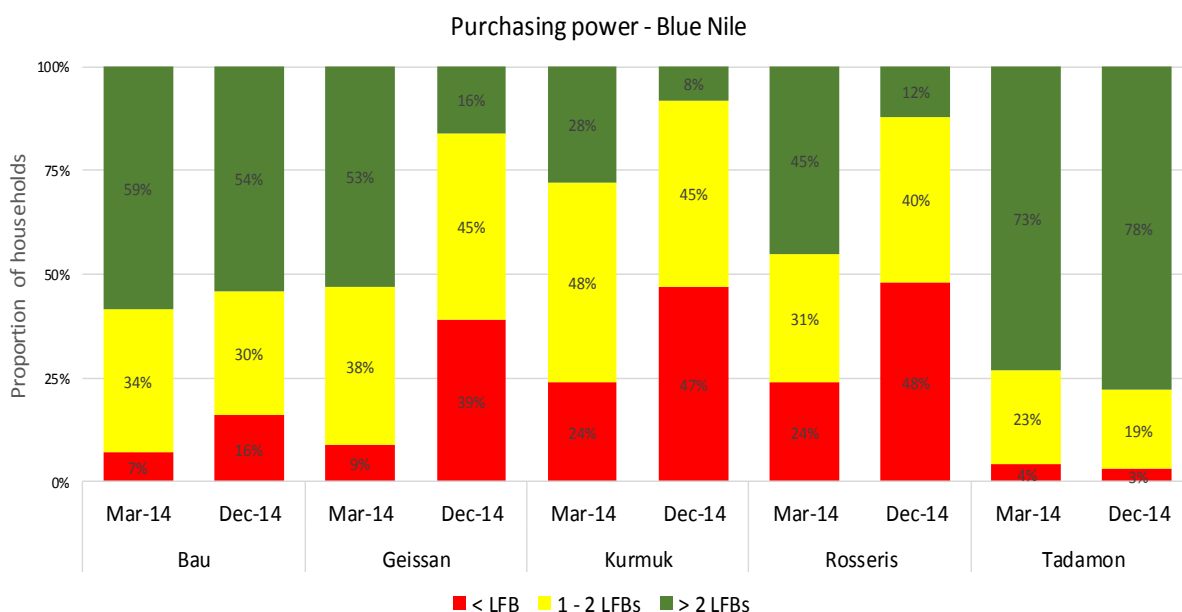
Terms of trade between sorghum and goat decreased by 58 percent from March to December. The drop was attributed to the sharp increase in sorghum prices and the simultaneous drop in goat prices (by 9 percent from March to December). The terms of trade favored net cereal producers.



Purchasing Power

Purchasing power was determined by comparing household income with the cost of a local food basket (LFB). The LFB consisted of nine food items: cereals (sorghum), milk, dry vegetables, cooking oil, goat meat, cow meat, onions and sugar. The amount of each food item was computed so as to minimize the cost of the basket, while meeting the minimum requirements of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day. Purchasing power was classified as poor (households that cannot afford the cost of one LFB), borderline (households that cannot afford between one and two baskets) and acceptable (households that cannot afford more than two baskets).

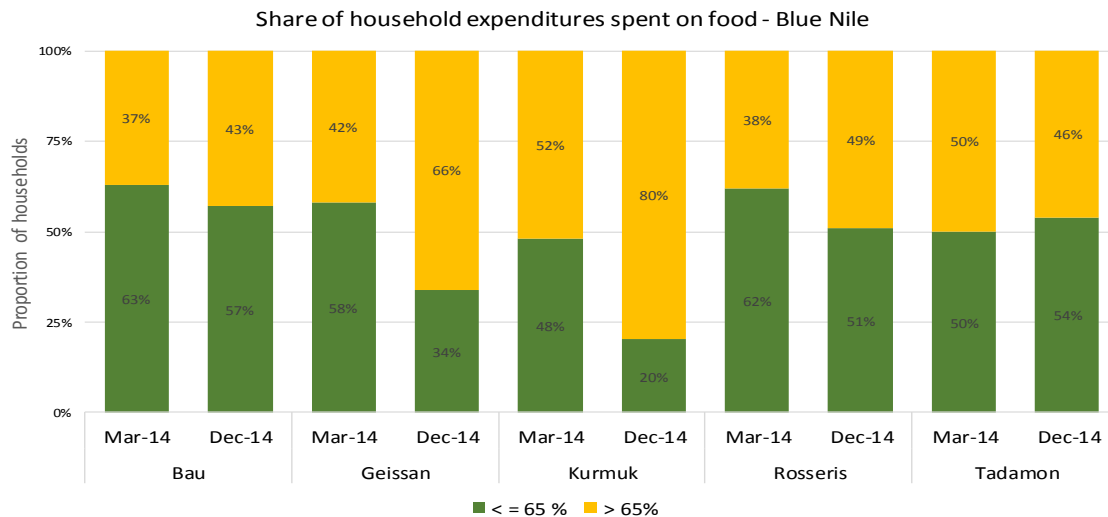
The cost of the LFB in December was SDG 4.1 per capita, which was higher than in March 2014, due to the continuous increase in the price of many food items from May to November. The proportion of households that could not afford even one food basket was large in Geissan, Kurmuk, and Rosseris (39, 47 and 48 percent, respectively). These areas also saw a significant deterioration in purchasing power compared to March 2014. IDPs were less likely to have acceptable purchasing power compared to other residential groups. Returnees were the residential type that exhibited the strongest purchasing power. Households that received food assistance had slightly better purchasing power compared to households that received no food assistance.



Expenditures and Coping Strategies

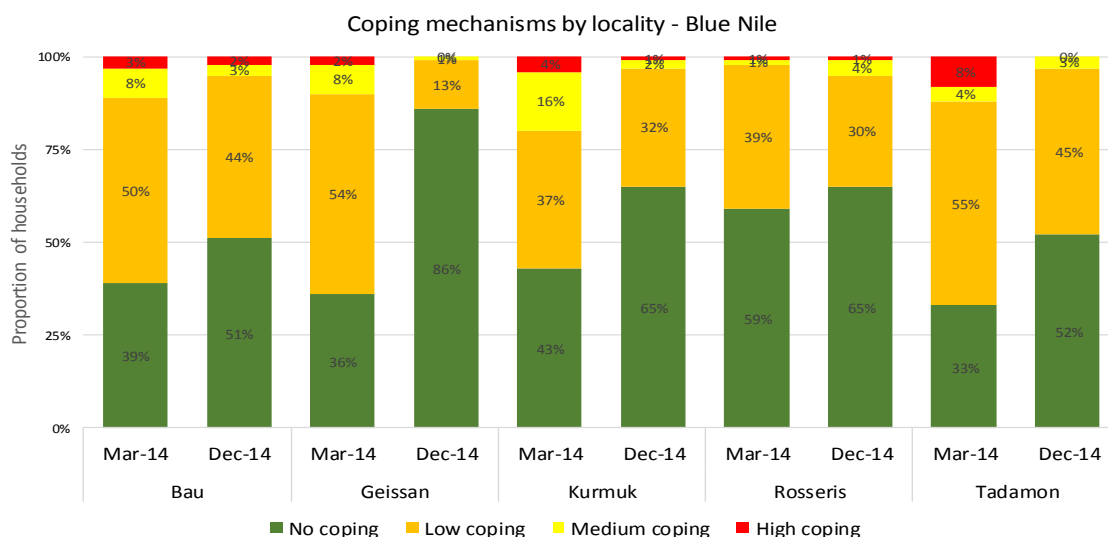
Household Expenditures

Overall, 67 percent of household monthly expenditure was for food items, compared to 61 percent during March 2014. (A larger proportion is often associated with increased economic stress.) The increase in households' expenditure on food could be attributed to the increase in food prices. Assisted and non-assisted households allocated a similar proportion of their expenditure to food (66 and 65 percent, respectively). One fifth of monthly household expenditures was for cereals, followed in order of importance by sugar, oil, meat and dry vegetables. The largest non-food household expenditure were health, clothing, education, debt repayments and milling (accounting for 8, 5, 4, 4 and 4 percent, respectively).



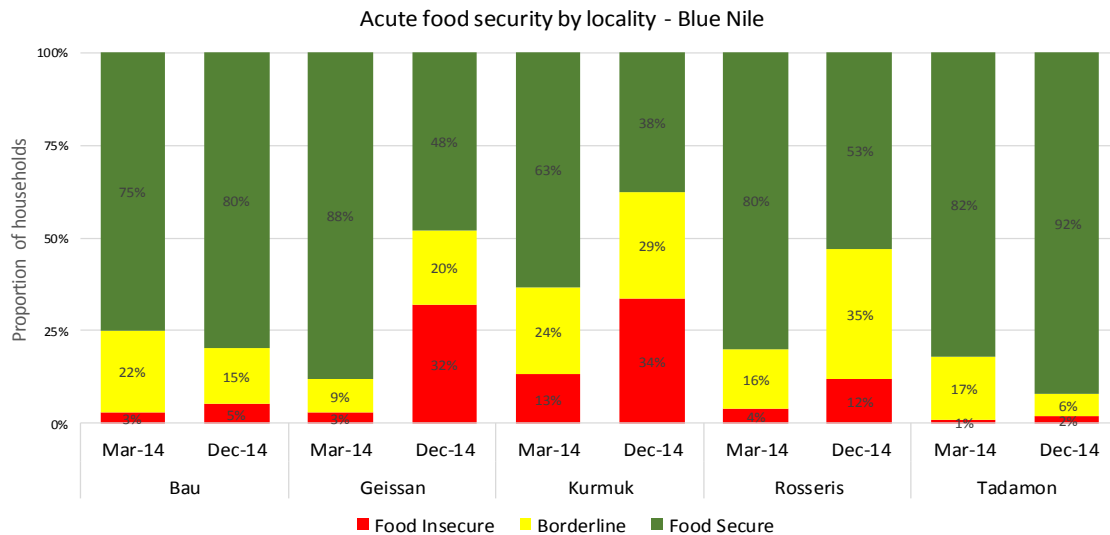
Coping Strategies

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 food access problems. In average, 36 percent of sampled households reported experiencing food access problems, a significant improvement compared to March 2014. IDPs and returnees were more likely to report food access problems compared to residents. Households not receiving food assistance were more likely to report difficulties to access food. Forty-two percent of households with borderline consumption had food access problems, compared to one third of households with poor and acceptable food consumption. Household level food access problems could be attributed to poor purchasing power and high market prices during December. The most commonly used coping mechanisms and included relying on less expensive or less preferred foods, borrowing food (or money to buy food) and relying on friends and relatives, which indicates the strength of the social network in the assessed areas.



Household Food Security

Acute and chronic food security were measured at the household level, with a focus on food access issues. Acute food insecurity was measured using three indicators of a short-term nature: share of monthly expenditure spent on food, weekly food consumption and monthly purchasing power. Chronic food insecurity was constructed from asset wealth (the number of assets owned by the households), food consumption and the share of monthly expenditure spent on food. For both composites households were classified as either food insecure, borderline or food secure.



Twenty-one percent of sampled households were found to be borderline food secure and 17 percent food insecure. Acute food insecurity increased in Kurmuk, Geissan and Rosseris localities compared to March. These areas also had the lowest levels of acute food security. The large number of IDPs in these localities, high food prices, and limited access to livelihoods and income sources were among the main factors impacting food security. IDP and returnee households were less likely to be food security in all localities, with exception of Bau, when compared to residents. Acute food security had improved moderately in Tadamon and Bau localities from March to December.

Chronic food security followed a similar pattern to acute food security, which was expected as short-term and long-term food security often correlate and that some indicators in the two measurements overlapped. The main difference was seen in Rosseris locality, where relative asset wealth brought the proportion of borderline households to 18 percent. Long-time displaced households faced chronic food insecurity as well as acute food insecurity.

