

Sierra Leone

April 2015: Coping remains high in Ebola-affected Kambia and Port Loko

Tracking food security during the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in Sierra Leone

Highlights

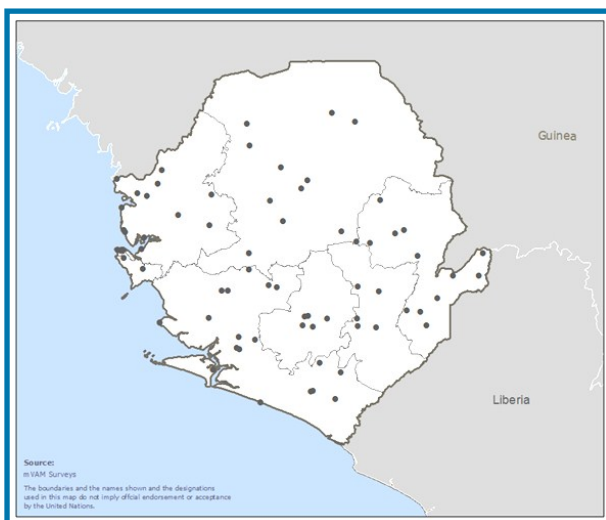
- In April, fewer households used negative coping strategies in Sierra Leone, notably in the districts of Kailahun/Kono and Bombali/Tonkolili/Koinadugu. The highest levels of negative coping are seen in the Ebola-affected districts of Kambia and Port Loko.
- Poorer households resorted to more negative coping strategies in April than in March.
- National food prices and wage rates remained stable.
- Significant market disruptions continue.

Negative coping levels fall in Sierra Leone

The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) measures the frequency and severity of the behaviours households engage in when faced with food shortages. A higher score indicates that households are resorting to more frequent or severe negative coping strategies.

SIERRA LEONE - Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI)
APRIL 2015

WFP
vam
food security analysis



Source: WFP mVAM

Methodology

April 2015 marked the seventh round of data collection. The data was collected by SMS over one week in mid-April. A total of 1,020 questionnaires were collected in Sierra Leone. The map to the left shows the cellphone towers from which responses were received. Details on methodology are available [online](#).

Ebola abates but new cases still reported

In the week to 12 April, Sierra Leone reported 9 confirmed cases of Ebola, the same total as in the previous week. Cases were reported from three western districts: Kambia (4 cases), Port Loko (1 case), and Western Area Urban, which includes the capital, Freetown (4 cases).

Source: [Ebola Situation Report - 15 April 2015](#)

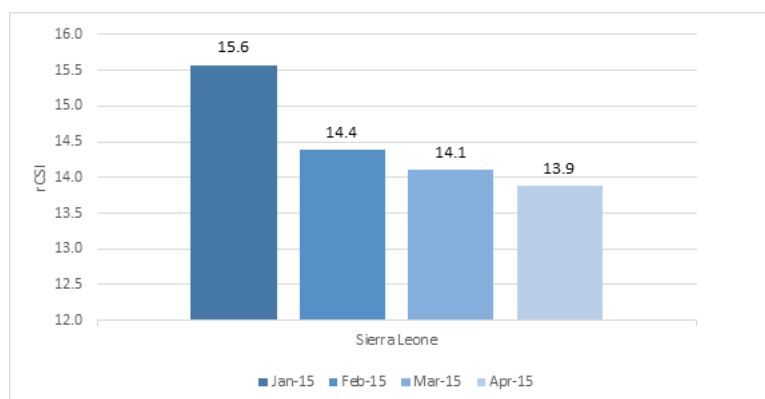
As Figure 1 shows, national average coping levels fell by 2 percent in April compared to March (rCSI=13.9, $p=0.05$). Off-season cropping may have improved food availability, and land preparation activities in February and March may have increased household income. The highest levels of negative coping are found in Kambia/Port Loko (rCSI=16.0); these were the only areas to report Ebola cases in April. Negative coping decreased by 4 percent in Kailahun/Kono (rCSI=15.9, $p=0.04$) and by 9 percent in Bombali/Tonkolili/Koinadugu (rCSI=14.9, $p=0.04$): these are areas with above-average levels of coping.

April data confirms that urban households tend to use fewer coping strategies than rural ones. The lowest coping levels were again observed in urban parts of Western Area (rCSI=11.4).

As in previous rounds, households headed by women are using more negative coping strategies than those headed by men (Figure 2). Moreover, better-off households are using coping strategies much less frequently than more deprived ones. Households with their own flush toilet have an rCSI of 9.1, which is less than half that of households using dirt pit latrine or the bush as toilets.

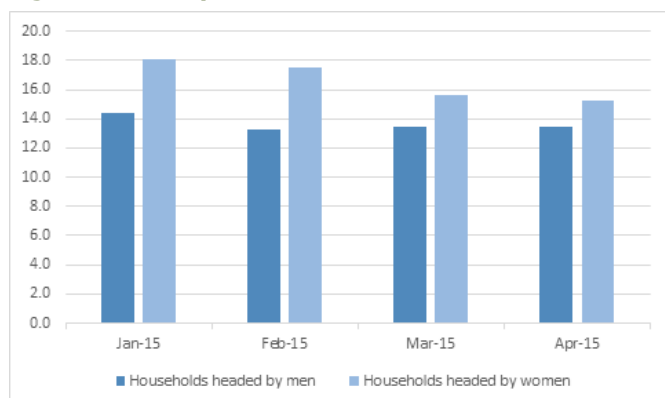
In April, the rCSI of better-off households was stable or decreasing. Yet households using dirt pit latrines saw a 35 percent increase in their negative coping level (rCSI=24.2, $p=0.03$). Overall, this could suggest that worse-off households are becoming more vulnerable. Poorer households reported a lack of jobs as the cause of food insecurity.

Figure 1: rCSI levels in Sierra Leone



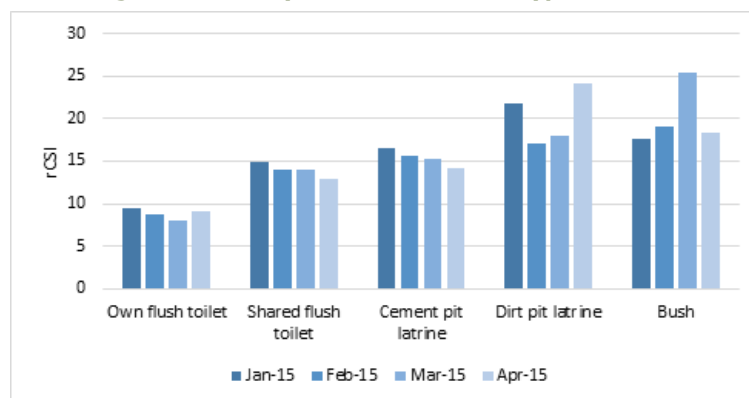
Source: WFP mVAM

Figure 2: rCSI by sex of household head



Source: WFP mVAM

Figure 3: rCSI by household latrine type



Source: WFP mVAM

Table 1. Food price trends

Aggregation	Feb - Mar changes			Mar - Apr changes		
	Imported rice	Local rice	Palm oil	Imported rice	Local rice	Palm oil
Sierra Leone	3%	2%	3%	-1%	0%	0%
Kambia/Port Loko	0%	2%	5%	7%	4%	-3%

Source : WFP mVAM

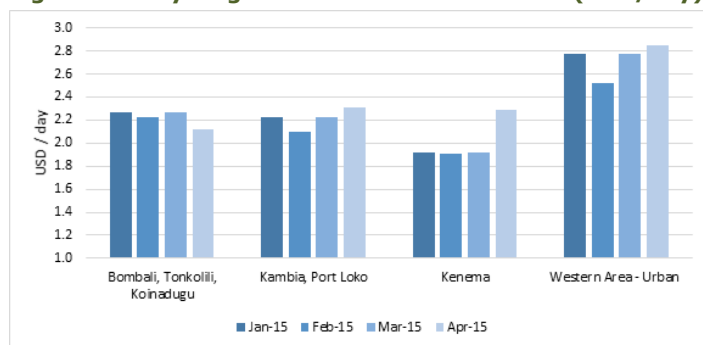
Food prices mostly remained stable or decreased

After price increases in March, the national average prices of rice – local and imported – and palm oil have stabilised. However, the picture is mixed at district level. The price of imported rice fell in all districts, except in Kambia/Port Loko (+7%) and in Bonthe/Pujehun/Moyamba (+5%). Local rice prices decreased in all districts, except in Kambia/Port Loko (+4%), Bo (+4%) and Bonthe/Pujehun/Moyamba (+5%). The increases in Kambia/Port Loko – a surplus-producing area – may be linked to continuing Ebola transmission and measures that restrict trade.

A mixed picture for unskilled labour wages

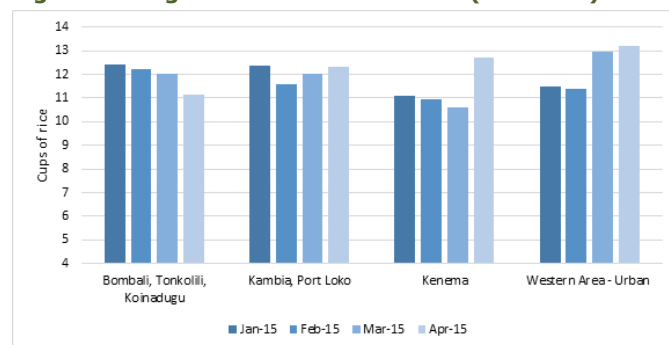
Manual labour wage rates rose by 1 percent in April, following a 7 percent increase in March. Wage rises were seen in most districts, led by Kenema (+19%), urban parts of Western Area (+3%) and Kambia/Port Loko (+4%). Wage rates fell in Kailahun/Kono (-3%) and Bo (-2%).

Figure 4: Daily wage rates for unskilled labour (USD/day)



Source: WFP mVAM

Figure 5: Wage-to-rice terms of trade (local rice)



Source: WFP mVAM

Wage-to-local-rice terms of trade were stable in April: wages and food prices remained unchanged. The most significant improvement was seen in Kenema, where purchasing power rose by 20 percent. Smaller increases were also noted in Kambia/Port Loko and parts of Western Area. By contrast, terms of trade fell in all other districts, most noticeably in Bombali/Tonkolili/Koinadugu (-8%), Bonthe/Pujehun/Moyamba (-8%) and Kailahun/Kono (-7%). The lowest purchasing power was observed in Kailahun/Kono, where a day's wage purchases 11 cups of rice, compared to 13 cups in Freetown.

Ebola-related trade restrictions have led to the closure of almost all periodic markets. As a consequence, accessing markets has been difficult for many people over the past months. The closure of these periodic markets has created job losses, thereby reducing purchasing power. As a result, even though prices have not gone up, poorer households are unable to buy enough food to meet their basic needs.

Perceptions of food security in April

'Ebola' was the third most-mentioned term in Sierra Leone in April, while it was used much less in neighboring Liberia. This observation is in line with the latest Ebola trends in both countries.

Many respondents attributed Ebola as a cause of road blocks, a lack of farming and high food prices. The term 'expensive' was the most-mentioned term, particularly in Port Loko, where many respondents reported that prices of local products are 'skyrocketing'.



Conclusion and Outlook

In April, labour and economic activities in Sierra Leone continued to recover, albeit moderately offset by seasonal trends. Public services have also improved, although food insecurity remains a concern. Food prices were mostly stable, with some districts experiencing increases caused by higher transportation costs, trade restrictions in Ebola-affected areas.

Coping levels are still higher in rural areas that have been affected by Ebola, as well as for households headed by women and for the poorest households. In fact, poorer households have actually seen their rCSI increase, while for better-off households, rCSI is either stable or falling. As the June–August lean season approaches, assistance should make these more vulnerable groups a priority.



For further information please contact the VAM Food Security Analysis Unit:

Arif Husain

arif.husain@wfp.org

Jean-Martin Bauer

jean-martin.bauer@wfp.org

Simon Renk

simon.renk@wfp.org

To download mVAM data on the Ebola-affected countries, please visit:

http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/index.html