



Bulletin 7 – February 2016

Yemen



February 2016: Food insecurity of internally displaced households is worst on record

Key messages

- **As conflict continues, the food security situation has deteriorated at the national level since January. Food consumption has worsened in Al Dhale and households in Al Baydah are employing more negative food-related coping strategies.**
- **Internally displaced (IDP) households have the worst food security outcomes on record. A very high proportion of IDPs have resorted to negative food-related coping strategies such as limiting food consumption/portion size at meal times, borrowing food or relying on help from family/friends.**
- **Trend data shows that households headed by women tend to have a more fragile and unstable food security status than those headed by men.**

February situation overview:

The humanitarian situation in Yemen is rapidly deteriorating due to continued conflict. The food security situation is negatively impacted, with more than 50 percent of the population now food insecure: that translates to 14.4 million Yemenis being food insecure, of which 7.6 million are severely food insecure. According to the [2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#) the major increases in need have occurred in key sectors, including food security, nutrition and shelter. Currently, there are 2.4 million people internally displaced ([Task Force for Displacement and Migration, February 2016](#)). It is projected that by March 2016, many vulnerable households are likely to move from Crisis/IPC Phase 3 to Emergency/IPC Phase 4, as they are consistently unable to purchase and consume adequate food. The dire food security situation in Taizz is expected to endure through March 2016, and more households are likely to fall into Emergency/IPC Phase 4 due to constrained earnings to purchase food, the high number of displacements and large food consumption gaps ([FEWS NET, December 2015](#)).

Worsening food security conditions across Yemen

February data indicates a significant deterioration in the food security situation across Yemen, measured by the Food Consumption Score (FCS) and the reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI). The national mean FCS dropped from 49 to 47.6 and the national mean rCSI increased from 18.7 to 19.8 since the previous month. At the same time, the proportion of all surveyed households having poor food consumption significantly increased from 20 percent in January to 23 percent in February – indicating a very strained food security situation across the county.

As indicated in the paragraph above, the food security situation is deepening as violence and airstrikes – the main drivers of displacement – endure. Ground fighting and insecurity have constrained the movement of commodities and hindered market food supplies. In addition, fuel shortages and high prices have hit agricultural production and increased the cost of food transportation and pumping for irrigation – causing an upsurge in food prices. According to [WFP market monitoring in February](#), the national average price of fuel remained over 55 percent higher than during the pre-crisis period.

Similarly the price of wheat flour, vegetable oil and red beans were 7, 10 and 26 percent higher respectively than during the pre-crisis period. Households' livelihoods have been heavily affected by insecurity, which has devastated farming activities, livestock and agricultural infrastructure. There has been a stark increase in humanitarian needs and assistance, voiced through the survey respondents' replies when asked about the food security situation. Yet access to conflict affected zones has continued to be a challenge for humanitarian agencies.

IDPs' food security indicators are the worst since August 2015

As shown in figures 1 and 2, since January the mean FCS of both displaced and non-displaced households has fallen by 7 and 3 percent respectively (from 40.7 to 38 and from 50 to 48.7 respectively). For IDPs the mean FCS (38) and rCSI (27.9) were the worst since August 2015. The upward trend of IDPs' mean rCSI continued rising from 24.6 in December till 27.9 in February. While non-displaced households' FCS (48.7) and rCSI (18.9) were in line with those reported in November and October respectively.

However, in February there was a significant increase in the proportion of non-displaced households with poor food consumption, up from 18.8 to 21.8 percent, in tandem with a rise in their overall use of negative food-related coping strategies from 17.8 to 18.9 since the previous month.

IDP households' continued highly fragile food security situation is exemplified by the fact that about 65 percent had poor or borderline food consumption (35.8 and 29.5 percent respectively) plus a higher proportion of IDP households were significantly limiting their food consumption/portion size than in the previous month (79.4 percent in January versus 83.3 percent in February) or borrowing food/relying on help from family/friends to meet their daily food needs (63.7 percent in February versus 73.6 percent in January).

The proportion of IDP households who reported not consuming any dairy or fruit in the week before the survey increased from 59.4 to 67.4 percent and from 60 to 64.6 percent respectively. Meanwhile non-displaced households seemed to consume fewer vegetables and fats compared to the previous month e.g., one in every four households did not consume any vegetables in February (21 percent in January versus 24 percent in February). Nevertheless, the dietary diversity of IDPs remained more volatile than that of non-IDPs: 75 percent of IDPs reported not consuming any protein and 40 percent no pulses in the week before the survey, compared with 58.6 and 29 percent of non-IDPs not consuming protein or pulses respectively.

Figure 1: Mean FCS for all country, IDP and non-displaced households, August 2015* – February 2016

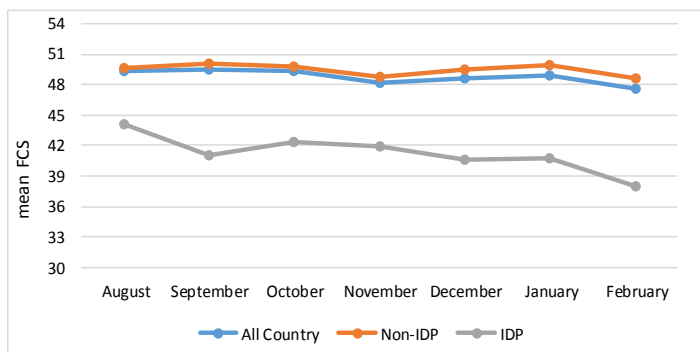
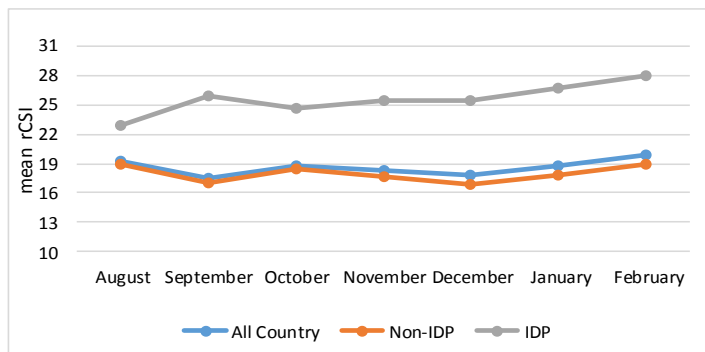


Figure 2: Mean rCSI for all country, IDP and non-displaced households, August 2015* – February 2016

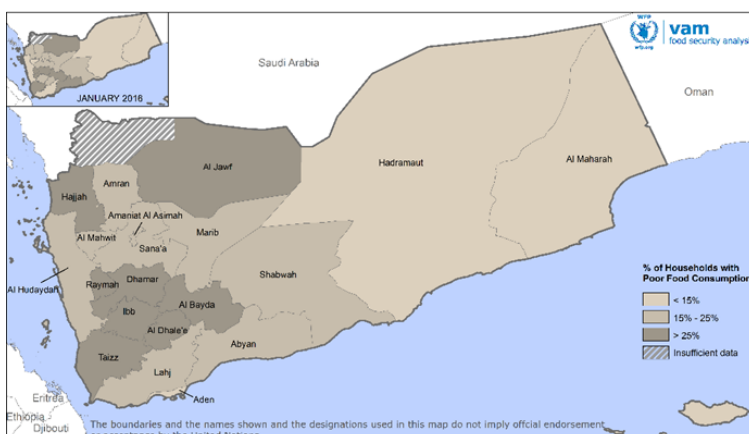


*Data for August is partial, collected between 18 to 27 August. More details on methodology are available [online](#).

The food consumption score drops in Al Dhale and coping levels increase in Al Baydah

February data shows a significant drop in the mean FCS in Al Dhale from 46.2 in January to 40.6. Al Dhale is among the worst conflict affected areas in Yemen and it faces a severe level of needs across all clusters. Additionally, the proportion of households with poor food consumption has increased by 71 percent in Sana'a city (Amanat Al Asimah) – up from 12.5 percent in January to 21.2 percent in February. The situation also remained stressed elsewhere, particularly, in Taizz, Al Jawf, Al Dhale and Raymah which had the highest proportion of households – over 30 percent – with poor food consumption in February (see Map 1).

Map 1: Percentage of households with 'poor' food consumption by governorate



Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

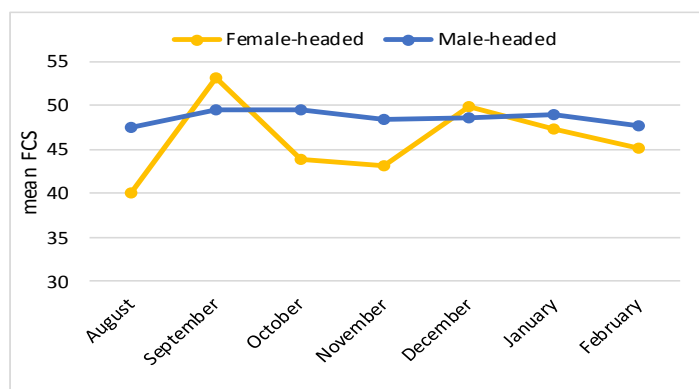
As map 2 shows, households in the centre-south (Taizz, Dhamar, Raymah, Al Mahwait, Sana'a city) and north-west (Hajjah, Al Jawf) reported high coping levels at above 20 percent in February. Additionally, a significant increase in the use of negative food-related coping strategies was observed in Al Baydah – where the mean rCSI increased from 16.3 to 21 since the previous month.

Food security indicators are worse for female-headed households than male-headed ones

As seen in figure 3, female-headed households (n=76) have a more varied mean FCS than male-headed households. This fluctuating trend reflects their food intake volatility and difficulty in consistently meeting their food needs. The trend line shows a decline in the mean FCS for female-headed households since December.

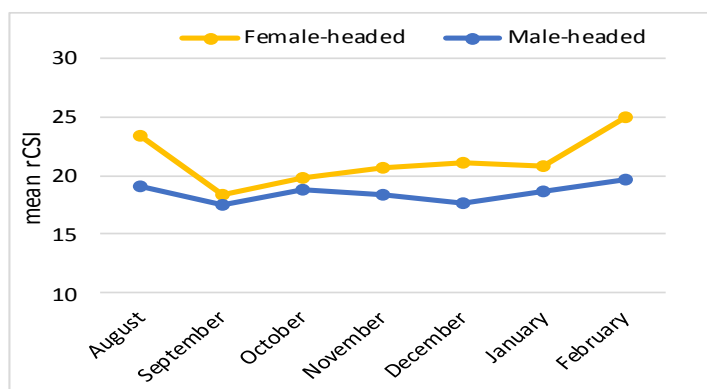
Likewise, female-headed households reported a higher level of using negative coping mechanisms than male-headed ones (see figure 4).

Figure 3: Mean FCS for female and male headed households, August 2015 – February 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

Figure 4: Mean rCSI for female and male headed households, August 2015 – February 2016



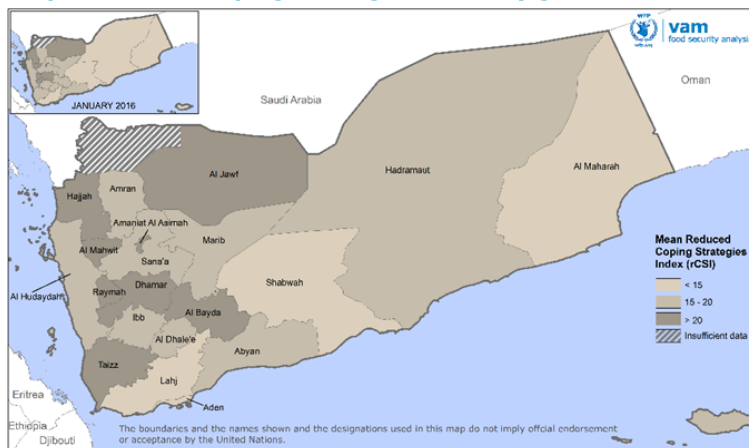
Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

Negative perception of food security in conflict affected governorates

Overall, households' perception of food security continued to be negative in February. However, the national mean sentiment score slightly improved by 15.5 percent since January. Sentiment improved slightly in Taizz, Shabwah, Sana'a city, Hadramaut, Amran and Al Mahawit (though continued to be unfavourable) while it remained most negative in Hajjah, Al Jawf, Ibb, Al Baydah, and Al Dhale (see Map 3).

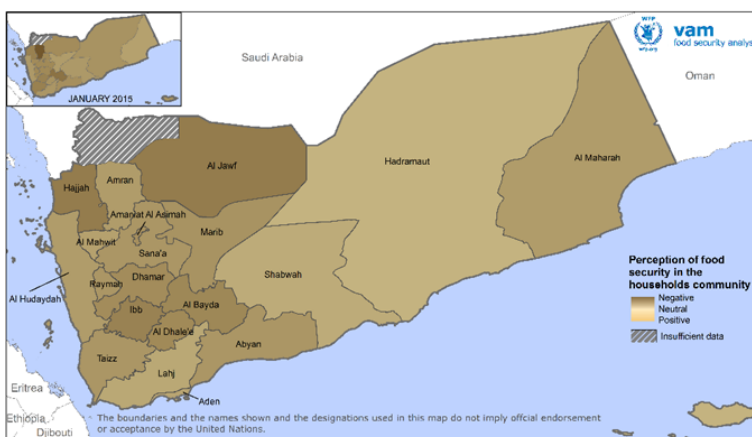
Nearly 50 percent of the respondents reported that the food security situation was bad and/or extremely bad, while about 25 percent reported it was moderate. Respondents continued to talk about the need for food assistance (8 percent) and to point out increasing food prices. Other key words/themes such as bad, help, high/expensive prices have been mentioned more frequently compared with the previous month.

Map 2: reduced Coping Strategies Index by governorate



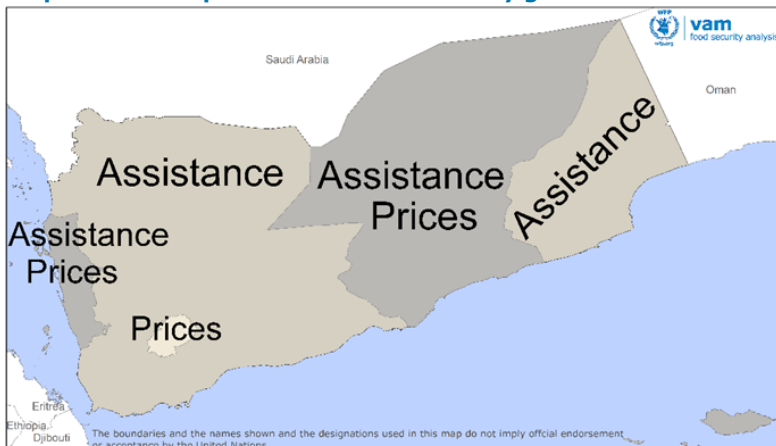
Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

Map 3: Average sentiment scores by governorates



Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

Map 4: Most frequent words mentioned by governorate



Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

Figure 5: Word cloud for Yemen



Source: WFP mVAM, February 2015

In the words of the respondents:

- “The food situation is bad and food commodities aren’t available” (Male respondent from Taizz).
- “The situation is bad and prices are expensive. Electricity is interrupted” (Male respondent from Sana’a city).
- “The situation is bad and the prices are very expensive. There is an absence of medicine and food commodities” (Female respondent from Sana’a).
- “The situation is very bad. The price of water is very high and cooking gas is not available” (Male respondent from Al Mahwit).

Methodology – mVAM remote mobile data collection

High levels of insecurity in Yemen currently prevent the implementation of traditional face-to-face surveys. In order to monitor the impact of the conflict on food security, WFP uses mobile VAM, its remote mobile data collection tool. In February, WFP concluded its seventh survey round. Calls targeted all mobile operators in Yemen and used random-digit dialing. The data presented here was collected from a sample of 2431 respondents from 21 governorates. More than one third of respondents were internally displaced.

mVAM surveys in Yemen collect two food insecurity indicators: the food consumption score and the reduced coping strategies index – a measure of food-based coping – and analyse answers to an open-ended question on the food security situation in the respondent’s community. To analyse these responses, we calculate the “polarity” of each response through computer algorithm scores that measure how positive/negative the statement is on a scale of -1.0 (very negative) to +1.0 (very positive). Aggregate data tables are available on the [mVAM page](#).

Limitations

Owing to the partial nature of mobile phone access in Yemen (68 subscriptions per 100 people in 2014 according to the World Bank) and the low electricity access rate, data collection by mobile phone involves biases. Responses are likely to be biased towards younger, somewhat better-off households who live in urban areas and have better access to electricity and phone charging services. According to data from the Yemen Comprehensive Food Security Survey 2014, 72 percent of the population in the poorest quintile does not own a mobile phone, which indicates that mobile phone surveys would be biased towards better-off households. We account for such biases as we interpret our results. Details on methodology are available [online](#).



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