APRIL SITUATION UPDATE

On 14 April, Iraqi troops recaptured the strategically important western town of Heet from ISIL after weeks of fighting. To the east, forces allied with the Iraqi Government are preparing for operations against the ISIL-controlled city of Fallujah, where an estimated 50,000 civilians are trapped and suffering from severe food shortages.

Iraqi Security Forces’ operations to retake Mosul from ISIL have slowed down in the wait for more troops to arrive to secure the operation’s staging grounds and stabilise the situation in Baghdad. In April, Iraqi forces retook just three small towns from ISIL in the Makhmour area, about 60km south of Mosul.

Meanwhile, humanitarian conditions across Iraq continue to deteriorate, with displacement increasing as military operations continue. In Tuz Khormatu (Salah al-Din governorate), nearly 14,000 people were displaced between 23 and 26 April. In central Anbar, around 60,000 people have been displaced since early March. In Erbil governorate, on the edge of the Mosul corridor, over 3,800 people have been displaced over the past two months.

METHODOLOGY – MVAM REMOTE DATA COLLECTION

In April 2016, mVAM conducted the eleventh round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 1,551 respondents via Korek, a major mobile network operator. WFP monitored respondents living in Iraq’s 18 conflict hotspots in 5 governorates, drawn from Korek’s database.

In addition to monitoring household food security, WFP collected market information in the central and northern governorates of Iraq, using live telephone interviews. In collaboration with Islamic Relief, 223 calls were successfully made in April, obtaining information using a simplified market questionnaire. Responses covered 49 different locations (sub-districts) in 6 governorates: Anbar (9), Diyala (9), Kirkuk (10), Ninewa (7), Baghdad (7) and Salah al-Din (7).

Highlights

- Poor and borderline food consumption is most prevalent in Ninewa and Salah al-Din; more households are resorting to negative coping strategies in these governorates.
- In Fallujah, households report severe food shortages for the fourth month in a row, and food prices are soaring.
- In Baghdad, the food basket has become more expensive, but purchasing power is still lowest in Salah al-Din.
FOOD CONSUMPTION DETERIORATES IN NINEWA

In April, the food consumption of sampled households in monitored conflict-affected locations remained largely unchanged compared to March 2016. Data indicated that between 58 and 99 percent of sampled households have an acceptable diet in terms of diversity and food frequency.

There were considerable differences in dietary diversity and food consumption between localities; ongoing military operations and long-term displacement could be contributing to these differences (see Map 2). More households reported poor food consumption in Ninewa governorate in the districts of Telaraf (rising from 9 to 13 percent) and al-Shikhan (rising from 10 to 18 percent). In April, Akre (n= 50) continued to report the lowest average food consumption score (FCS) average (48.6 percent) of all monitored locations.

However, there was a significant improvement in Sinjar, where the percentage of households with poor consumption fell by 11 percent from March to April. Monitored locations in Baghdad and Diyala governorates continue to report high levels of acceptable food consumption.

IDPs, returnees and residents continued to exhibit different levels of food security. IDPs and returnees remain especially vulnerable: 26 percent of IDPs (n=396) and 23 percent of returnees (n=89) said that their household is eating an "inadequate" amount of food (see Figure 1). Moreover, poor food consumption appears to be worst among those returning in April, compared to March.

At the governorate level, the highest proportion of poor consumption among IDPs was registered in Ninewa: IDPs reported ‘poor’ or ‘borderline’ FCS in Akre (48 percent), Telaraf (38 percent) and al-Shikhan (37 percent).
INCREASED USE OF NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES

Households were asked if there were times in the week before the data collection when they did not have enough food or money to buy food. More households reported experiencing food access issues in April than in March. Perceived food access issues were generally worse in conflict-affected locations, especially in al-Shikhan (48 percent), Telaraf (44 percent) and Sinjar (37 percent) in Ninewa governorate; and in Tooz (46 percent) and Balad (39 percent) in Salah al-Din governorate (see Map 3).

Moreover, negative coping was most prevalent among IDP and returnee households: more than half the IDP and returnee respondents reported resorting to negative food-related coping strategies (see Figure 2). In addition, IDPs in Akre, al-Shikhan, Sinjar, Telaraf and Balad are resorting to coping strategies more than IDPs living in the other monitored locations. The long-term and widespread use of negative coping strategies may increase the risk of food insecurity in the areas most affected by the conflict.

Figure 2. Households using negative coping by respondent status, April 2016

PRICES RISE IN BAGHDAD

In April, the average cost of the food basket continued to fall in Kirkuk and Ninewa, and slightly increased in Diyala (+4%) and in Salah al-Din (+1%).

For the first time since November 2015, the food basket became more expensive in Baghdad (+6%), exceeding the cost of the food basket in other conflict-affected governorates, except Anbar (see Table 1).

Table 1. Cost of the food basket

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>April 2016</th>
<th>Price changes 1 month</th>
<th>Price changes 3 months</th>
<th>Price changes 6 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>IQD 904</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>IQD 1,007</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>IQD 874</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>IQD 843</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninewa</td>
<td>IQD 782</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>-15%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah al-Din</td>
<td>IQD 890</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WFP mVAM, April 2016
The terms of trade between the daily wage rate for unskilled labour and the price of the food basket decreased by two food baskets in Baghdad and Anbar, and by one food basket in Diyala (Figure 3). The fall in purchasing power in Baghdad corresponds with an increase of 6 percent in wheat flour prices and an increase of 12 percent in sugar prices. In Anbar, lower purchasing power is linked to a 9 percent drop in wages for daily manual labour. By contrast, purchasing power in Ninewa rose by two food baskets compared to March thanks to a decrease of 6 percent in wheat and rice prices. In Salah al-Din, purchasing power has remained the same for four consecutive months, with the lowest daily wage rate of all monitored governorates (16,500 IQD/ US$15), as well as the lowest purchasing power.

The mVAM survey documents sources of food to assess which specific sources are important to the population (such as own production, market purchases, gifts, etc.). As in the previous round, all non-IDPs said they had not received food or non-food assistance from NGOs or the government. Only 3 percent of interviewed IDPs reported assistance as their primary source of food. Some 96 percent of IDPs and 99 percent of residents said they buy food from markets, so high food prices in markets will influence their food security.

**PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM DELIVERIES ARE PATCHY**

Access to Public Distribution System (PDS) rations improved in Telaraf (Ninewa) and Kifri (Diyala) in April. However, access deteriorated in all monitored locations in Baghdad governorate. In Balad (Salah al-Din), 72 percent of households reported not receiving PDS in April and in Daquq (Kirkuk), the figure was 66 percent.

The majority of respondents in the other monitored locations reported receiving a partial ration and most of them complained about the quality of the food received and the delays in the distributions (see Map 4).

There was no significant difference in the level of access to PDS rations between IDPs and non-IDP households.
UPDATE ON ANBAR

Food prices continue to vary between accessible and inaccessible districts in Anbar (see Figure 4). In some of the accessible areas liberated in the past months, prices have fallen abruptly since December, even though they remain very high. Compared to December 2015 when military operations intensified, the food basket is more expensive in the inaccessible districts of al-Qaim (+8%), Haditha (+19%) and Heet (+13%). In Heet city centre, the price of the food basket fell by 23 percent compared with March after Iraqi forces recaptured the city on 14 April. However according to respondents from the Heet sub-district of Qubaytha, fighting is still ongoing and the town is not completely liberated. Reportedly shops are closed and food is scarce as people have been evacuated from the area.

WFP continues to be concerned about the food security of 50,000 people in besieged Fallujah, in western Anbar governorate. For the fourth consecutive month since the intensive siege began, mVAM remote monitoring found that respondents had exhausted their staple food supplies. The humanitarian situation in the city is worsening, and supplies are not reaching civilians. The city is inaccessible for assistance and market distribution systems remain offline. People are mainly dependant on dwindling stores of starchy vegetables — such as potatoes— as well as lettuce and aubergines. Key informants in al-Moalimin neighbourhood also say that the only food available does not come from the markets, but from the stocks that some families still have in their homes, which is sold at extremely high prices and in small quantities. As family stocks are depleting, food prices are increasing, reaching levels very few families will be able to afford given the lack of job opportunities in the area (see Table 2). None of the respondents in Fallujah said they were working.

Table 2. Average prices of basic food basket items in Fallujah, April 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Average price in December 2015: Fallujah (IQD)</th>
<th>Average price in February 2016: Fallujah (IQD)</th>
<th>Average price in March 2016: Fallujah* (IQD)</th>
<th>Average price in April 2016: Fallujah** (IQD)</th>
<th>Average price in April: Baghdad (IQD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat flour (kg)</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>16,300</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imported rice (kg)</td>
<td>2,650</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>39,285</td>
<td>1,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar (kg)</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>16,750</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable oil (litre)</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>26,250</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentils (kg)</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WFP mVAM, April 2016