WFP Uganda
Mobile Vulnerability Analysis & Mapping (mVAM)
Karamoja Region Early Warning Bulletin—January 2017

Key Highlights
- The proportion of households with food stocks increased by 12% since November 2016;
- 55 percent of the overall households had acceptable FCS, showing a negligible increase from 53% in November 2016;
- Compared to November 2016, there was a significant increase in debt prevalence by 17%. Kaabong (81%) observed the highest increase;
- Average retail prices for maize and sorghum were high in December 2016 by 24% and 14% respectively. This was mainly in Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Kaabong;
- Total new admissions to SFP declined by 17% compared to November 2016. This decline was across all districts except Amudat and Nakapiripirit. Abim (64%), Moroto (51%) and Napak (44%) observed the highest decline.

Overview
WFP Uganda Country Office initiated mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) in May and June, which is carried out through phone calls. Main objectives of mVAM are to:

a) Provide real-time analysis of the performance of a few key indicators;
b) Serve as a core pillar of WFPs Food Security & Nutrition Early Warning System.

This issue is based on data that was collected between 27th and 31st January 2017.

A random sample of 420 telephone interviews evenly distributed across Seven Districts of Karamoja Region and due to the network connectivity, 95.5% (418) complete interviews were conducted.

Outlook for February and March, 2017

Despite an increase by 12% in the proportion of households with food stocks, crop performance in Moroto and Napak was significantly below average compared to other districts. The current food stocks are expected to last for nearly three months (82 days), implying that the majority of households will deplete their stocks by the start of the lean season. This could possibly be due to excessive sale of food by most households, reportedly in Kotido, Nakapiripirit and Kaabong. The debt prevalence increased from 34% in November 2016 to 51% in January 2017 with the main reason for borrowing being to buy food as reported by 39% of the households. Since food stocks are expected to deplete earlier than usual, households will heavily depend on markets amidst increasing market prices for staple foods in the region.

Recommendations
- There is need for sensitization of communities not only to address excessive sale of food but also food wastage;
- Market prices need to be closely monitored and also disseminated to communities and other stakeholders in a timely manner;
Food stocks

Proportion of Households with Food Stocks

The proportion of households with food stocks increased by 12% from 3% in November 2016. Despite an improvement, the current percentage of households with food stocks is less than expected and this could possibly be due to delayed rains and the dry spell in 2016, consequently resulting to low crop yields. Abim (48%) had the highest percentage of households with food stocks followed by Kaabong (30%). In Amudat, Moroto and Napak, the percentage of households with food stocks was below 5%.

89 per cent of the households with food stocks reportedly derived food from their own production, showing an increase by 39% since November 2016. This is not surprising since majority of the households realized a late harvest. Furthermore, the recent harvest resulted to a significant reduction on household dependence on markets. Dependence on markets was only observed in Nakapiripirit with 20% reporting market purchase as a source of food stocks.

However, food stocks are expected to last for nearly three months (about 82 days), implying that majority of the households will resort to market purchase as food stocks are expected to deplete by mid-April. This will result to an increase in the cost of living as prices for staple foods have continued to rise due to scarcity and increasing demands.

Food Consumption Score (FCS)

55 percent of the households had acceptable FCS while 32% and 13% had borderline and poor FCS respectively. In January 2017, Napak (80%) had the highest proportion of households with acceptable FCS. Similarly, the proportion of households with acceptable FCS significantly increased in Abim and Amudat by 24% and 18% respectively since November 2016. This could be attributed to the festive season where households could have purchased and consumed varieties of foods. The recent harvest could have also improved food stocks both within households and in Markets.

Despite the recent harvest, majority of the households are food insecure in Kotido (90%) and Kaabong (85%), with an observed increase in Kaabong by 34% since November 2016. Analysis indicated that while these districts had the highest debt prevalence compared to other districts, households mainly borrowed to buy food with 58% and 41% in Kotido and Kaabong respectively, an indication of stress in food acquisition. Analysis also showed that prices of staple foods were higher in December compared to November, not only in these districts but across Karamoja. Furthermore, there was reported excessive sale of food in both Kotido and Kaabong, all these factors could have been responsible for the deterioration in the food security situation, particularly in these districts.
Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)

There was a slight reduction in the rCSI from 18 in November 2016 to 17 in January 2017, and this implies that households in Karamoja have low levels of food consumption coping. While the rCSI reduced by 59% in Moroto since November 2016, Nakapiripirit observed an increase by more than two folds. However since July 2016, there is a continued decline in the rCSI in Amudat, Kaabong and Kotido.

The Reduced Coping Strategy Index (RCSI) measures food insecurity by considering the activities undertaken by households to manage food shortages. More information on rCSI can be found at http://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/6.

Household Income

Despite all households reportedly having at least an income earner, households are increasingly earning incomes from unsustainable livelihood activities. Households deriving incomes from sale of firewood/charcoal increased by 10% since November 2016. Napak (37%) and Kotido (34%) observed the highest proportion of households earning incomes from the sale of firewood/charcoal. While the percentage of households engaged in agricultural wage labor is declining, households are increasingly generating incomes from non-agricultural wage labor, and this is attributed to the drop in agricultural related activities as a result of the dry spell. Households engaged in agricultural wage labor declined significantly declined from 16% in November 2016 to only 3% in January 2017.

Additionally, 12% of the households in Karamoja reportedly sold livestock and/or animal products to earn income, with more than half (57%) in Amudat. This indicates that households are employing crisis strategies. More households are expected to employ crisis strategies in February through March as food stocks keep depleting.
Other income sources encompass; Fishing/Hunting; Food Assistance; Salary; Income derived from sale of Livestock and/or animal products; Remittances; Food crop production/Sale; Pensions, Government allowances; Gifts/begging; Cash crop production/Sales and Handicrafts

Prevalence of Debt
The overall debt prevalence was at 51%, this portrays a significant rise from 34% in November 2016. Kaabong (89%), Abim (82%) and Kotido (76%) had the highest debt prevalence. Compared to November 2016, there was a marked increase in the debt prevalence across all districts except Napak. Kaabong observed an increase by 81%, followed by Kotido (42%) and Amudat (23%). However, debt prevalence dropped by 40% in Napak. Majority of the saving groups across Karamoja start new cycles in January and households are compelled to borrow to either send children to school or meet basic needs like food.

Trends on borrowing to buy food (May 2016-Jan 2017)
While majority (39%) of the households borrowed to buy food; 17% borrowed to pay school, education costs; and cover health expenses (17%). 16 percent also borrowed to invest on other businesses. The highest proportion of households borrowing to buy food was noted in Kotido (58%), Nakapiripirit (47%) and Moroto (46%) and this could possibly be due to depleting food stocks especially for households that harvested earlier.

The number of households borrowing to buy food is expected to increase in February as food stock levels go down and households are expected to heavily rely on markets amidst escalating food prices. 27th and 31st

“People in the community are surviving on petty trade and this is helping them to earn some little income that they are using to feed their families during these tough days”, a Male respondent in Lokolia, Kaabong
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Karamoja Market prices of staple foods
In December 2016, average retail prices for maize grain and sorghum were higher compared to November by 24% and 14% respectively. Prices for maize increased across all districts, with the highest increase experienced in Kotido (50%), Moroto (33%), Kaabong (24%) and Nakapiripirit (15%). Prices for sorghum were high in Moroto (36%) and Nakapiripirit (29%) while prices for sorghum increased in Moroto (36%), and Nakapiripirit (29%). Prices for all staple foods mainly increased in Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Kaabong mainly due to the demand and poor crop performance.
The gradual rise in market prices is attributed to low stocks at household resulting from low yields in 2016, this could have increased the demand. Despite the high market prices, this is expected to escalate, portraying a projected increase in the cost of living especially among poor households and vulnerable people.

"Access to food is now challenging for the people within the community as food prices in the markets are high and besides, people are poor", a Male respondent in Kotido Rural, Kotido

Supplementary Feeding Admissions

WFP implements a supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP) at Health Facilities. Village Health Teams (VHTs) identify Moderately Malnourished individuals whom they refer to Health Centers for both treatment and enrolment to SFP. These individuals receive nutritious foods. Admissions to SFP provide an indication of the levels of malnutrition in the region.

SFP Admissions in Karamoja

In December 2016, 5,274 Moderately Malnourished individuals were admitted to SFP in Karamoja, indicating a decrease by 17% compared to November 2016. However, admissions to SFP remained high in 2016 compared to 2015. (See graph on the left)

"We used to depend on our animals for milk, but now all the cows have migrated far in search of water and pastures", a Male respondent in Loburin, Amudat

Admission Trends by District January-December; 2015/2016

In December 2016, admissions to SFP declined by 17% compared to November. The number of admissions to SFP declined across all districts except Amudat and Nakapiripirit. In Abim, numbers declined by 64% while in Moroto and Napak, there was a decline by 51% and 44% respectively, possibly due to the recent harvest that resulted to increased food stocks not only at household level but also in markets. However, the numbers were higher in Amudat and Nakapiripirit by 20% and 17% respectively. Access to milk and other animal products is always challenging during the dry spell due to inadequate water and pastures for livestock, forcing herders to migrate with their herds. Also in Nakapiripirit, there was excessive sale of food during and immediately after harvest.

At district level, admissions were below 1,000 across all districts except in Kaabong and Nakapiripirit.
ADMISSIONS OF MODERATELY MALNOURISHED CHILDREN AND MOTHERS INTO
SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAMME (JAN-DEC 2015/2016)

For further information please contact the AME unit, WFP Uganda.

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