Key points:

Access in Bala Buluk district has been severely constrained for the past few weeks, mainly due to insecurity and conflict. As a result, around 700 households are displaced to other villages within the district as well as to Farah City centre. As a result, the majority of people in the district are unable to go to work or to find new income opportunities.

The main market of Bala Buluk district is not functioning and most people are relying on temporary small-scale markets to access food. In addition, a limited number of people are relying on Farah central market to buy food.

Food prices have greatly increased compared to the previous month. Food shortages are widely reported, in particular perishables (vegetables, meat and dairy), but also grains and pulses.

In conclusion, household access to food in Bala Buluk is constrained both physically, due to insecurity and conflict, and economically, due to high prices for food in the local markets. The displaced are the most vulnerable group in the district.

Assessment Background

Due to an increase in armed clashes between government and anti-government forces in Bala Buluk district in the beginning of March, WFP launched a rapid phone survey on the 16th of March. A total of 15 interviews were conducted with key informants such as community elders, Shura leaders, traders and members of the Community Development Councils (CDCs), with the aim of getting a quick snapshot of the food security situation of households in Bala Buluk district to inform the humanitarian community.

Security and Access

Most of the respondents in Bala Buluk district indicated that traders are facing security and access issues when supplying food commodities from Farah central market to their district markets. They indicated that the security situation has deteriorated in the past few weeks particularly in centre of Bala Buluk district. Additionally, people in Bala Buluk districts are facing security and access concerns when traveling from villages to the district centers to buy food.

The transportation cost has also increased from Farah centre to Bala Buluk district for the traders which also has impact on food price increased in Bala Buluk markets.
The respondents in Bala Buluk district indicated that most of the households in the centre of the district have some limited access to buy food with cash and some with credit, while the majority of the people in the villages of this district have limited food stocks and are mainly relying on credit and borrowing cash to buy food. The displaced population are also relying on credit and borrowing cash as well as support from government.

**MARKET FUNCTIONALITY AND FOOD PRICES**

The main market of Bala Buluk district is not functioning, mainly due to insecurity and are faced with significant food shortages and limited supply. Most of the people in the district are relying on small scale temporary markets to buy food, which are functioning only for 2-3 days in a week.

These markets are faced with significant shortages of vegetables, fruits, and meat and chicken, as well considerable shortage of pulses, cereals and cooking oil.

The prices for perishable food (vegetables and fruits) in Bala Buluk district is significantly higher compared to the prices in Farah centre, and slightly higher for the staple foods (wheat flour, rice and cooking oil).

**Figure 1. Prices of selected food commodities in March 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Casual labour wage/day (AFN)</th>
<th><strong>Wheat flour price (AFN/Kg)</strong></th>
<th><em>Rice price (AFN/Kg)</em></th>
<th>Cooking oil price (AFN/Kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bala Buluk</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rice prices were collected for high quality rice from all the assessed traders.

**TERMS OF TRADE**

The terms of trade (ToT) between wheat flour and casual labor is a proxy indicator for household purchasing power, which shows the quantity of wheat flour that can be purchased with the wage earned from one day of casual (unskilled) labour.

The reported labour/wheat flour ToT in Bala Buluk district is reported to be 8 kgs/day wage, while the availability of the casual labor work opportunity is very limited (0-1 day/week). This is worrying as not only are households unable to find work, but when they do, the income earned buys them less food than it would in other parts of Farah province.

**LIVELIHOODS AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY**

All the respondents in Bala Buluk district reported that people were currently unable to go to work, mainly due to insecurity, and that there were no casual labour opportunities available. In general, people in this district have very limited access to livelihood activities compared to other districts of Farah province.

Around 700 households have been displaced from Bala Buluk district to other neighbouring villages and Farah centre. These displaced HHs are mainly relying on government and humanitarian assistance (exact source not known by key informants) and others relying on casual work and support from relatives.

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